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WATERWAY CORRIDOR STUDY 2006

The Shannon River from Meelick to Limerick



Appendix 4

IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes - Explanatory Note

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1. Introduction

Proposed Policies 6.5.3 and 6.5.4 of the Waterway Corridor Study 2006 recommend that the local and regional planning authorities, the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and various institutional and private land owners jointly consider the establishment of an IUCN Category V Protected Landscape in the South Shannon Waterway Corridor.

The IUCN is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and is the body responsible for the promotion of conservation by designation and management of protected areas by legal or other means. The IUCN defines conservation as 'the concept of human ecology and the use, without depletion, of natural resources to further development'. In 1994 the IUCN identified six categories of protected area, each suited to a particular set of environmental, social and economic circumstances and objectives (IUCN, 1994):

- I Strict Nature Reserve / Wilderness Area:** Protected area managed for (Ia) science or (Ib) wilderness protection.
- II National Park:** Protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation.
- III Natural Monument:** Protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features.
- IV Habitat / Species Management Area:** Protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention.
- V Protected Landscape / Seascape:** Protected area managed mainly for landscape / seascape conservation and recreation.
- VI Managed Resource Protected Area:** Protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

Phillips (2000, p.83-84) explains: "Categories I to III focus on areas which are in a broadly natural state (subject to the important proviso... that in practice there is little if any truly natural environment remaining anywhere). Categories IV and VI are subject to rather greater manipulation, that of Category IV for conservation purposes and that of Category VI sites so that local communities can derive natural resources sustainably. Category V involves the greatest degree of modification: it represents the idea of protecting humanized, managed landscapes – landscapes in which people live, work and exploit natural resources".

This re-definition of the protected area categories confirmed the international shift away from the 'setting aside' of areas, or islands, of biodiversity towards an approach based on integration of nature and culture. It is clear that in the highly humanized / exploited landscape of Europe, such an approach to conservation is appropriate, and Category V (Protected Landscape) areas now represent a significant part of the protected area estate in Europe. Local communities are central to this approach. Citing Brown et. al. (2000), Phillips identifies that where nature protection or conservation used to be managed at a national level, increasingly it is to be found at the local and international levels (Phillips, 2000, p.84).

The World Commission on Protected Areas has published a document entitled *Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas – Protected Landscapes and Seascapes* (hereafter referred to as the *Management Guidelines*, available at <http://app.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAG-009.pdf> November 2006). This document provides comprehensive guidance on the selection, planning and management of Category V Protected Areas, as well as descriptions of experience gained in its application worldwide.

2. Characteristics of IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes

The main features which underpin and drive the Category V approach are listed in the *Management Guidelines* (p.12-13).

The Protected Landscape approach...

- *is concerned with both people **and** their environment;*
- *is concerned with a range of natural and cultural values;*
- *focuses on areas where people/nature relationships have produced a landscape with high aesthetic, ecological, biodiversity and/or cultural values, and which retains integrity;*
- *is both a type of protected area with combinations of special qualities, **and** a management process to guide change;*
- *reflects a visionary and pro-active approach, aiming to enhance values rather than simply to maintain or protect existing assets;*
- *views communities, and their traditions, as fundamental to the success of the approach: therefore stakeholder and partnership approaches are required, e.g. co-management;*
- *recognises the value of, and the need to support, the stewardship role of the private landowner or manager (including that of Land Trusts or similar bodies);*
- *usually involves management arrangements that are determined by local circumstances and needs, and resolved through decision-making at local government or community levels;*
- *places a special emphasis on effective land use planning;*
- *depends therefore on the presence of transparent and democratic structures which support peoples' active involvement in the shaping of their own environment;*
- *brings social, economic and cultural benefits to local communities;*
- *brings environmental, cultural, educational and other benefits to a wider public;*
- *requires that all management activities be integrated, and promote sustainability;*
- *can be used to help resolve conflicts over resource management;*
- *can offer models of sustainability for wider application elsewhere in rural areas; and*
- *like all protected areas, requires effective management systems, including setting of objectives, planning, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, review and feedback.*

2.1 Co-Management of Resources

One of the key characteristics of Protected Landscapes is co-management. Also termed participatory, collaborative, joint, mixed, multi-party and round-table management, the *Management Guidelines* (p.93), citing Borrini-Feyerabend *et al*, 2000, define this as *"A situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources"*.

2.2 Protected Landscape Names

A wide variety of names have been applied to Category V Protected Areas around the world, depending on national legislation, circumstances and needs. The following are taken from a list provided in the *Management Guidelines* (p.22):

Austria: Protected Landscape
Brazil: Environmental Protection Area
Canada (Ontario): Conservation Area
Canada (Québec): Nature Park
China: Scenic Area
China (Hong Kong): Country Park
France: Regional Nature Park
Germany: Landscape Protection Area/Nature Park
Italy: Regional or Provincial Nature Park

Japan: National Park (some)
Korea, Republic of: National Park
New Zealand: Conservation Park
Poland: Landscape Park
Saudi Arabia: Hima Traditional Reserve
Sweden: Nature Conservation Area
UK: National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Scenic Area
USA: many different terms are used at State level
Venezuela: Protective Zone
Zimbabwe: Recreation Park

3. The South Shannon Waterway Corridor – Candidate for a Category V Protected Landscape?

The IUCN defines Category V areas as follows:

An area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and / or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

The distinctive waterway corridor landscape, moulded by the residential, agricultural, industrial and recreational utilisation of its unique combination of terrestrial and aquatic natural resources, is such an area.

Almost the entire length of the South Shannon including the shoreline and islands is covered by either international (cSAC and SPA) or national (pNHA) designation based on criteria relating to habitat quality, species complement and ecological processes. Article 10 of the Natura 2000 Directive (COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) states that *“Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land-use planning and development policies and, in particular, with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, to encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora... Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems for marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species”*. The Shannon River in its entirety, along with all connected landscape features such as feeder streams, shoreline vegetation, woodlands and fields is such a feature, recognised and required by EU legislation to be protected through land use, planning and development policy.

In terms of cultural heritage, the Shannon River as both a corridor and an obstruction for transport and communication, has been a determining factor in the social, economic and political development of Ireland. A high density of archaeological monuments and artefacts indicates the presence of humans in the corridor from prehistory onwards. A recently discovered site near Castleconnell has revealed settlement dating back to the Mesolithic period (c. 7000BC to 4000BC). The Shannon itself has been a repository for artefacts from the Neolithic period (c. 4000BC to 2300BC), the bronze age (from c. 2500BC onwards) and the iron age (c. 500BC to 500AD). The most dramatic concentration of Neolithic materials ever found in Ireland was recovered from the channel at Killaloe. There are networks of sites representing prehistoric, secular, ecclesiastical, military and industrial activities. Some elements of the cultural landscape have an international dimension, e.g. the monastic settlements (as centres of learning and pilgrimage and as targets for international raiders), Viking and Anglo-Norman sites and

Napoleonic fortifications. Some, such as the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme and the Navigation itself, are of major national significance. As such the waterway corridor can be considered a landscape of international cultural heritage significance.

In recognition of the above, the Waterway Corridor Study has concluded that the South Shannon Corridor should be considered a landscape of international significance. In a period of rapid socio-economic change, its interactions of people and nature must be encouraged to evolve appropriately to ensure the continued integrity of the landscape.

A wide range of parties including the local authorities, state and semi-state bodies, institutions and private land owners share ownership of this landscape. These parties individually manage and develop that portion of the landscape under their control according to their own needs and objectives, irrespective of the cumulative impact on the landscape, natural and cultural heritage.

It is also significant that, with ongoing (and further expected) changes in European and national agriculture policy, and international trade agreements, portions of the corridor are likely to become uneconomical to farm in the coming decades. To the west of the Shannon in particular, there are extensive areas of limited land use capability due to soil character, slope and drainage conditions, indicated by a high proportion of bogs and transitional scrub. If the land were to go fallow or be put to alternative use there would be large scale landscape and socio-economic change. The same policy and economic drivers may affect the more fertile lands in the corridor, where farming will most likely intensify. Here, the modernisation of farming practices in the effort to optimise productivity, may lead to the loss of field boundaries and other traditional land management practices, with landscape and ecological consequences.

In addition, improvements in access infrastructure have opened up portions of the area to commuter development serving the regional employment centres of Limerick, Ennis, Shannon and Nenagh. There is also consistent (but lesser) pressure for the development of tourist accommodation and facilities due to the scenery, heritage and recreation value of the corridor. The East Clare LAP asserts that: *"Holiday and second home developments have been a significant feature of housing developments over recent years especially along the shore of Lough Derg... Escalating land prices and development pressures in these areas are a result of the tax incentive scheme under the Relief for Renewal and Improvements Scheme"*. While there are notable concentrations of development pressure in the main settlement cores, the pressure on the radial routes accessing the towns is also strong, as is the pressure for one-off houses in rural areas. The 'potential value' of development sites, in conjunction with the reduced value of lands as an agricultural resource in parts of the corridor, is fuelling this pressure.

At such a time of dramatic socio-economic change, with implications for the landscape, natural and cultural heritage, the waterway corridor would benefit from some form of integrated, strategic management, a framework for its socio-economic evolution and development which ensures conservation of the valued natural, cultural (including farming practices) and scenic landscape elements.

4. Management Principles for IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes

The *Management Guidelines* identify 12 key principles for the management of Category V Protected Areas (p.39-42):

Principle 1 *Conserving landscape, biodiversity and cultural values are at the heart of the Category V protected area approach.*

Though much emphasis is placed in the *Management Guidelines* on economic and social considerations, Category V is a conservation approach which should reflect the over-arching

objectives of all protected areas (defined in Section 2.2.3 of the *Guidelines*). It is therefore about managing change in such a way that environmental and cultural values endure: change should take place within limits that will not disrupt those values.

Principle 2 *The focus of management should be on the **point of interaction** between people and nature.*

“Safeguarding the integrity of (the) traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of the area” (IUCN, 1994, p.22). Thus, whereas in many other kinds of protected areas it is nature itself that is the main focus of management, what distinguishes Category V is that management primarily addresses the **linkage** between people and nature.

Principle 3 *People should be seen as stewards of the landscape.*

As the occupants of lived-in, working landscapes that are of great value to society as whole, the people living within Category V protected areas should be supported in their role as stewards of the landscape. They are the architects of much that we value in the landscape, and their support is needed to ensure its survival. Ideally, they help to shape and care for the environment with the traditions of the past, but with an eye to the future. In that sense, they may more correctly be described as ‘the managers’ of Protected Landscapes than the professionals who are employed with that formal title: good managers in the professional sense will therefore see their role as ‘facilitators’ and negotiators’.

Principle 4 *Management must be undertaken **with and through** local people, and mainly **for and by** them.*

This principle recognises that the full involvement of local people is essential, and that Category V protected areas should never be planned **against** their long-term interests. It also recognises that local communities should play an important role in delivering protected area objectives and be among the principal beneficiaries of these. However, local people are not the only source of expertise. Moreover, there are other stakeholders who can derive benefits from protected landscapes: for example, visitors from nearby urban areas or further afield, resource users from afar (e.g. consumers of water supplies downstream), or the wider community interested in biodiversity or landscape protection.

Principle 5 *Management should be based on co-operative approaches, such as co-management and multi-stakeholder equity.*

It follows from Principles 2–4 that structures and processes are needed to ensure that people are involved fully in shaping management decisions and come to see the protected area as theirs. This will require the operation of open, transparent procedures based on democratic principles. Co-management approaches may be particularly appropriate to Category V protected areas.

Principle 6 *Effective management requires a supportive political and economic environment.*

The foregoing principles cannot be followed unless broader governance structures and practices in society at large are committed to certain standards. The management of Protected Landscapes will be easier to achieve if the government recognises the need for a quality of life perspective, follows democratic processes, and engages willingly in participatory planning based upon a fair and equitable approach to all groups and respect for a plurality of cultures. It will also be greatly helped by a top-level national commitment to sustainability, the alleviation of poverty, addressing the root causes of inequality, promoting gender equity and supporting civil society.

Principle 7 *Management of Category V protected areas should not only be concerned with protection but also enhancement.*

Because Category V protected areas are lived-in landscapes, the environment will have been manipulated more than is the case with other categories of protected areas. It follows that a more active role for management is appropriate, not only in the protection but also in restoration of natural or cultural values that have been eroded or lost. It may on occasion also include the creation of new environmental and social assets which are ecologically or culturally appropriate: examples would be a new woodland or forested areas established on degraded soils, and the development of a new market for goods produced by local people.

Principle 8 *When there is an irreconcilable conflict between the objectives of management, priority should be given to retaining the special qualities of the area.*

Because Protected Landscapes have important social as well as environmental objectives, there is considerable potential for conflict between objectives. As far as possible, management should seek to reconcile such conflicts. In the last analysis there need to be clear rules about what would have priority in such a situation. This principle states that when this happens, priority should be given to protecting the qualities that make the area special (what economists sometimes call 'critical environmental capital'). Because such a claim is likely to be contested, the principle may need to be embodied in legislation.

Principle 9 *Economic activities that do not need to take place within the Protected Landscape should be located outside it.*

As a lived-in, working landscape, a Category V protected area will contain a variety of economic activities and land uses, such as agriculture, forestry, tourism and some forms of industry, commerce and retailing, as well as residential areas, infrastructure, etc. The tests for whether such an activity or use is acceptable within the protected area, are whether (i) it is sustainable, (ii) it contributes to the aims of the area, and (iii) there are strong reasons for it to be located within it. Where the proposed activity fails these tests, it should either be totally re-designed to fit Category V objectives or located outside the area altogether.

Principle 10 *Management should be business-like and of the highest professional standard.*

Notwithstanding the strong social and environmental emphasis in the management of Protected Landscapes, the operation of management should be business-like, and hardheaded if necessary. It requires effective marketing of conservation approaches too. While this may be difficult to achieve in the short term, financial sustainability should be an aim, rather than 100% reliance on public funding. Procedures should be put in place to ensure that public, private and voluntary funds and other resources are used with due regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. And all decision-making concerning the use of resources should be transparent and accountable.

Principle 11 *Management should be flexible and adaptive.*

Like protected area management in general, that of Category V protected areas needs to be capable of adjustment over time in light of experience and changing circumstances – but since its scope embraces both natural and human systems, the need for flexibility is all the greater. Management of Protected Landscapes should also be flexible and adaptive in the sense that it should respond to the very different social, cultural and economic situations in which it takes place: it should always be culturally appropriate and economically relevant.

Principle 12 *The success of management should be measured in environmental **and** social terms.*

Though absolutely central, biodiversity measures are only one of several indicators: others include social and economic welfare and the quality of life for local and other people, other environmental considerations such as energy efficiency or natural resource management, and measures relating to the conservation of the cultural environment. An aim should be to demonstrate the maximum social and economic benefits for the local community with the minimum environmental impact. The setting of objectives, allocation of resources and monitoring of effectiveness should all be undertaken with this breadth of interest in mind.

5. Use of IUCN Category V Protected Landscape Designation Worldwide

At present there are no Category V Protected Areas in Ireland. The seven existing National Parks are managed in line with the IUCN Category II model, i.e. for conservation and recreation, and are owned by the State. This model does not reflect the Irish cultural and economic attachment to the land. Nor does the very limited coverage of the landmass by park designation reflect the fact that much of the island's biodiversity is found in the privately managed, agricultural landscapes.

The Category V Protected Landscape designation has been employed to good effect in Europe, most often in conjunction with agri-environmental schemes, as reported in the IUCNs *Parks* journal, Volume 13, no.2, 2003 (p.5-7) in relation to the Snowdonia National Park in Wales:

"The Snowdonia National Park (a Category V Protected Area) covers 213,100 ha of which 70% of the land area is in private ownership and supports approximately 1,400 hill/mountain sheep farms. The viability of farming is almost totally dependent on financial support from the European Union's Common Agricultural Programme, but despite this, agriculture continues to decline. It was for this reason in 1992 the Tir Cymen Environmental Stewardship scheme was introduced, in an attempt to provide a new approach to farming.

"The objective of the scheme was to combine, on a whole farm basis, good farming practice with the conservation of semi-natural habitats, landscape conservation and the protection of archaeological features whilst at the same time promoting opportunities for the public to enjoy the countryside. In return farmers sign a 10-year whole Farm legal agreement and conform to a conservation code of practice. The scheme effectively offers farmers payments to change their farming practices and recognises in monetary terms, the environmental value of the biodiversity and cultural heritage resources of farmland in the Park. By 2001, 411 whole farm agreements existed, covering 71,770 ha or 33% of the National Park area.

"Since their introduction, the schemes have not only enhanced the biodiversity and landscape of the Park but also reduced environmentally damaging farming practices. In addition, new job opportunities have been created, farm diversification initiatives and the farming community's awareness of environmentally sensitive farming practices has increased. The multiplier effect of extra spending by farmers in the local economy has also created additional local employment and the demand for new services. Introducing changes of this kind that reduce the economic productivity of agricultural land (where it is practical or desirable to do so), however represent a potential loss of income for farmers, few of whom can afford to reduce their productivity without some form of compensation. Public funds are therefore important to enable these schemes to succeed. It is therefore clear that where farming practices are adapted and become more sustainable, the heritage of landscapes and the popular culture of Protected Landscapes are safeguarded and made more economically relevant to those who live and use these areas. As confidence in the approach grows and where opportunities to promote them exist, so the schemes create more employment and help maintain and revitalise rural ways of life".

This model is also employed extensively in mainland Europe (*Parks*, Volume 13, no.2, 2003, p.9): *“the Peneda Gêres National Park [Portugal] covers 71,422 ha of which 7.2% is State owned, the remainder of the land being private or owned by local communities. Although the Park has suffered severe depopulation, agriculture and tourism still remain important. The implementation of a European Union funded project has enabled an integrated approach to the management of agriculture across the whole Park to be achieved. Products with quality labels recognised by the EU (honey, meat from local breeds of cows and goats) and other products such as aromatic plants are all grown and harvested in a manner which links farming to the conservation of the Park. The creation of new markets for these products has provided new sources of income for farmers. In addition and as part of the sustainable management of the area, a species recovery programme has been introduced along with measures to eliminate invasive species... Despite initial resistance, local farmers now view the Protected Landscape as an asset rather than a threat to their interests. By working together, the Park Authority and local farming communities have developed effective communication networks, improved their working relations and most importantly increased their levels of mutual trust”.*

In North and South America the Category V Protected Landscape model has been used primarily as a driver for tourism development, seeking to establish a ‘sustainability image’ from the internationally recognised designation. One example is that of the Quijos River Valley in Ecuador, where Government is pursuing Category V management principles due to three distinguishing characteristics (*Parks*, Volume 13, no.2, 2003, p.47):

1. *“emphasis on the value of interactions between people and nature over time and linking conservation of cultural and natural heritage;*
2. *potential to bring benefits to local communities and contribute to their well-being; and*
3. *accommodation of diverse management regimes, including customary laws governing resource management that can build on existing institutional responsibilities and continue traditional practices and governance within the culture.*

“The designation has also been advanced as a possible administrative framework to help guide ecotourism in the area... Protected Landscapes exist to protect areas that are outstanding examples of positive interactions between humans and nature over time. Their management plans are designed to accommodate local customary rights and traditions in order to support the traditional activities that help maintain these working landscapes... [The] attractions are not only the unaltered forests but also the farmed hillsides and villages. In a Protected Landscape then, ecotourists would not only seek pristine nature but also appreciate the manifestations of the interactions of culture and nature.

“Much of the tourism activity in the valley is currently occurring outside of public protected areas, in adjacent private reserves, on common-owned lands and in areas that are considered open access. A Protected Landscape designation would provide a common framework for the region’s stakeholders to guide the development of ecotourism under each of the land management regimes”.

In North America, the accommodation of various ownership and management regimes by the Category V model has been used to ensure cooperative, regional management and development of particularly large areas of heritage significance, such as the Blackstone River Valley Corridor (*Parks*, Volume 13, no.2, 2003, p.34): *“The... Corridor encompasses nearly 400,000 acres located within central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island, along 46 miles of the Blackstone River. The national corridor was designated by the US Congress in 1986 to preserve and interpret for present and future generations the significant value of the Blackstone Valley. The corridor area includes 24 cities, towns, villages and almost one million people. The valley’s distinctive character was shaped by the American Industrial Revolution, which transformed the Blackstone Valley’s landscape... The Industrial Revolution also left behind distinctive living landscapes of neighbourhoods where ethnic traditions, languages and foods are still important*

parts of the culture. The Corridor's natural areas... provide habitat for indigenous and migrating wildlife species and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors...

"Typical of areas with this designation, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park System; however the federal government does not own or manage any of the land or resources in the corridor. Instead the National Park Service, the state governments of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, dozens of local municipalities, businesses, non-profit historical and environmental organisations, educational institutions and many private citizens, all work together in partnerships to protect the Valley's special identity and prepare for its future".

The similarities between the South Shannon Waterway Corridor and these examples of IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes are clear. They illustrate the variety of benefits, socio-economic and environmental, which could be derived by the corridor residents, visitors and the management authorities through application of the approach in Ireland.

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