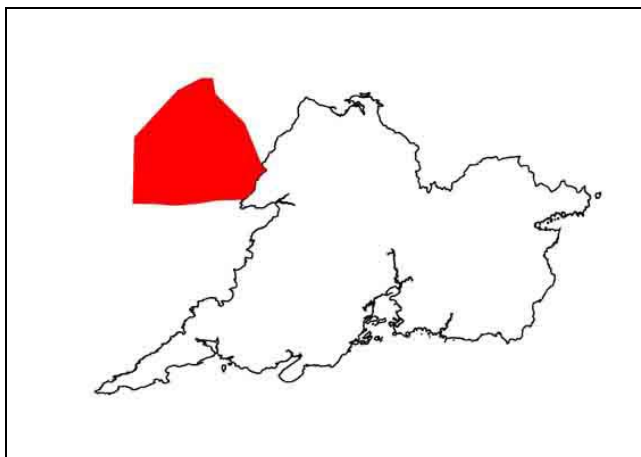


AREA 3: CLIFFS OF MOHER



Key Characteristics

- The seascape of the Cliffs of Moher is considered valuable due to its high visual amenity, ornithology, ecology and geology.
- Characteristic area of water known as the South Sound.
- Tourist boat trips are also available along the cliffs.
- Infrastructure consists of a ferry crossing between Doolin (Roadford) and Inisheer, a coastal scenic drive and visitor facilities.
- Unspoilt and undeveloped landscape on the approaches to and in the vicinity of the Cliffs of Moher.
- Four wrecks are recorded for the inshore waters off Doolin
- Emergence of tourist villages are evident e.g. Doolin.

Typical Photograph: Cliffs of Moher



Landscape Character types and habitat types

LCTs	HLTs	HLT codes	HT	HT codes
Coastal Plateau	Coastal Intertidal	CI	Sedimentary sea cliffs	CS3
Coastal Farmland	Enclosed Land 2	EL2	Sea caves	LR5
	Enclosed Land 3	EL3	Exposed calcareous rock	ER2
	Enclosed Land 4	EL4	Amenity grassland	GA2
	Rough Ground 3	RG3	Improved agricultural grassland	GA1

Seascape Character Area Extent

The Cliffs of Moher seascape extends from Doolin Point to Hags Head along the western coast of County Clare.

Geology and Landform

The area is underlain by Namurian sandstone shale. High carboniferous cliffs are a distinctive part of the landscape. The cliffs are up to 203m high and extend for 7km northeast-southwest and are formed from horizontal sandstones and shales. The lines of the cliffs exhibit good faulting and slumping.

Coastal Ecology

Vegetation within this SCA is sparse with small windswept shelterbelts and occasional trees, predominately hawthorn reflecting the Atlantic influence.

The Cliffs of Moher, a Special Area of Conservation (SPA), are an internationally important area for breeding Razorbills. The area is also an important site for Fulmars, Kittiwakes and Puffins as reflected in its status as a bird habitat protected under the Wildlife Act. Maritime flora provide considerable interest to this site, where a number of rare lichens are present.

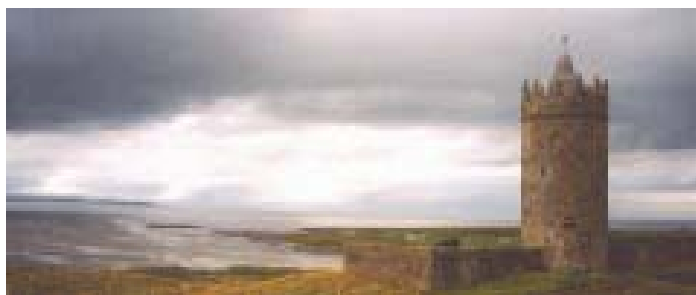
Historic Seascapes and Historic Influences

The area immediately behind Hags Head is open rough ground (RG3) but the backdrop to Branaunmore is enclosed land with irregular straight-sided fields (EL4). Long rectilinear fields are evident in the area around Doolin (EL2 – possibly enclosed former commons). In addition small castles or tower houses cluster near Doolin and overlook the Aille River crossings.



Cliffs of Moher with a narrow strip of rough ground (RG2) and straight-bounded fields behind (EL4)

Ballylaan promontory fort is a significant feature in the landscape and commands extensive views down the coast and across to the Aran Islands, and was the site of later signal towers. Doonagore Castle (signal station below) also provides a focal point and is used as a 'transit', aligned with radio masts to provide a bearing into Doolin Quay.



Doonagore Castle

There are extensive views to the Aran Islands' large stone forts, limestone pavements and small irregular fields (EL1) that are characteristic of subsistence farms.

Condition and Sensitivity

The landscape on the approaches to the Cliffs is unspoilt and undeveloped, however expanding tourist facilities in the near vicinity of the cliffs and at

Doolin are a concern. The Location, nature, and extent of all additional facilities is considered crucial to avoiding negative impacts on the existing landscape and seascape surrounding the Cliffs of Moher.

Forces for Change

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- Further tourism development in sensitive landscapes in and around the existing access area to the Cliffs of Moher
 - Impacts of upgrading roads to accommodate coaches
 - Water pollution due to discharge from existing facilities
 - Increasing tourism development e.g. car parking and caravan facilities
 - Excessive signage
 - Trampling of cliff top vegetation
 - Demands for day time recreation facilities from domestic and foreign sources
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Principles for Seascape Management

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- New developments should be sensitive to the seascape and reflect traditional design forms in siting, layout and boundary treatment
 - Promote and develop tourism and traffic management plans for existing and potential tourism hotspots e.g. Cliffs of Moher
 - Linear development along the coastline should be avoided and all other development should be screened appropriately
 - Careful planning and allocation of coastal tax incentives is needed
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