

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 Location

An Mhuiríoch is a small dispersed rural settlement/village set on the eastern edge of Smerwick Harbour in a high value undulating landscape setting. The topography of the village is of land gently sloping from the east towards the beach to the west. An Mhuiríoch is situated in close proximity (c. 1 km) to Baile na nGall and is functionally linked to Baile na nGall and An Bóthar Buí. The village is situated some 9 km northwest of Daingean Uí Chúis on the R559 Sleah Head Drive – an important tourist route.

1.2 Population

There are no specific population statistics for the plan area of Muiríoch. The smallest available statistics relate to the DED of Cill Maolchéadair in which Muiríoch is located. Currently the total population of the DED is 476, which is down 6.3% down from the figure of 511 in 2006. This in turn is down 6.9% from a figure of 549 in 2002.

The census figures for those able to speak Irish in An Mhuiríoch was 88.5% in 2006 (88.0% in 2002 & 88.8% in 1996) with those stating that they spoke Irish daily at 84.5% in 2006 and 85% in 2002.

1.3 Functions & Facilities

The village functions as a small local focal point for its surrounding rural community, with a shop, community hall, national school, a disused tennis court and the An Ghaeltacht G.A.A. football pitches and clubhouse. The village does not benefit to any great extent from tourism traffic on the Sleah Head Drive, or from its fine beach. However there is potential for An Mhuiríoch to benefit further from tourism.

Students of the Irish language attend classes in the local community hall during the summer. Similar to the other settlements in the area, provision of accommodation for these students is an important source of income for many householders

There are a number of bed and breakfast operations and quite a number of holiday homes in the village. The adjacent beach and walking routes provide outdoor recreational opportunities for local people and tourists alike. An Chorca Dhuibhne Rugby & soccer pitches and clubhouse are located in the locality.

1.4 Infrastructure

The existing sewerage treatment consists of Primary Treatment (a septic tank discharging to tidal waters) which is considered to be overloaded based on current population. A new WWTP is required to treat current and future loading, however there are no plans and no funding at present to provide these facilities. The village is served by a public water supply

1.5 Urban Form

An Mhuiríoch is a dispersed rural settlement with no streetscape and is developed on an undulating rural landscape with services located a distance from each other. There is no obvious service focal point in the village, although the cross roads to Baile na nGall defines a geographic centre.

The predominant settlement pattern is of small to medium sized detached single storey dwellings on small plots with a random layout reflecting a traditional clachan style settlement.

Extensive development of one off housing has occurred on local roads in the vicinity of the village creating a haphazard development pattern which is unsustainable, erodes the rural environment and undermines the development of a compact village form.

1.6 Built Heritage & Archaeology

While Mhuiríoch is set in an area rich in archaeological remains, there are just two recorded monuments in the plan area.

KE042-013	Murreagh	Souterrain Possible
KE042-014	Carraig	Quern Stone

There are two existing protected structures (cottages) in the plan area.

1.7 Natural environment and Amenity

There is a designated pNHA in the southern portion of the plan area and immediately to the south west of the plan area which comprises a complex of fixed sand dune and dune slacks, fringed by young sand dunes on the seaward side and a series of freshwater marshes on the land ward side. The conservation interest of the site lies in the variety of habitat types it contains in the rich diversity of locally uncommon plant species that it supports. It also supports a population of Chough, a rare bird species listed in annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive. The Dingle Peninsula SPA for the Chough is also located in the vicinity of the plan area

The area between the R559 Sleah Head Drive and the sea within the development boundary is designated as Secondary Special Amenity in the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-15.

1.8 Employment

The 2006 Small Area Population Statistics for the DED in which An Mhuiríoch is located indicate that the main source of employment for males in the area is the construction industry (20%) and agriculture(20%) followed by manufacturing(14%). The majority of employed females are professionals, followed by those working in the service sector.

The development of ecotourism and other niche markets along with the sustainable extension and diversification of tourist facilities are a possible source of employment. The provision of local based industry/ craft is seen as forming a significant part in the provision of sustainable employment in the area.

This concept needs to be combined with nurturing existing indigenous talent to provide products which are unique to the area and capitalise on creative local talents.

1.9 Growth and Residential Development

Like other towns and villages in the county, An Mhuiríoch experienced a period of growth as evidenced by the number of new dwellings built in the villages. The majority of dwellings built in the last ten years have been second homes and holiday homes. The level of residential planning permissions granted in the period 2008 – 2011 has indicated a limited growth potential over the next number of years. It is necessary to increase the proportion of permanent homes required to develop a critical mass of permanent residents and services necessary for the village to flourish all year round.

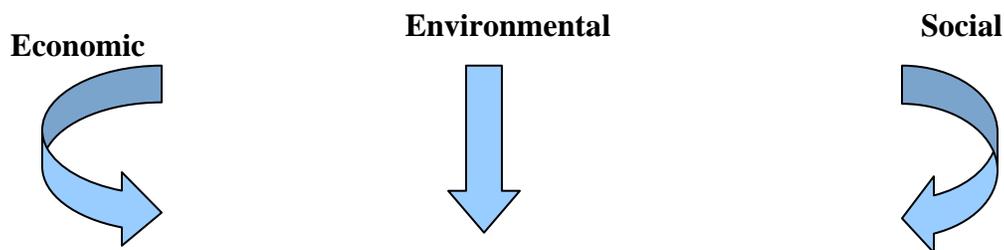
The development boundary for An Mhuiríoch defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for some expansion for development adjacent to the village core. During the lifetime of this Plan, development will focus mainly on these lands, located close to the village core.

It is the an objective of the plan to encourage the development of a compact and sustainable village structure by ensuring that new development is contiguous with existing development and makes effective use of backland and infill sites. All new development shall occur within the development boundary subject to compliance with the development management standards set out in the County Development Plan 2009-15.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The overall vision for An Mhuiríoch is to promote a compact and sustainable village which is an attractive place to live in and to visit, while maintaining the existing traditional settlement pattern of the area. Future development should be in-depth to create a strong and identifiable village core and to avoid ribbon development along the approaches to the village.

The development strategy for the village is to:



- Support the existing role and function of the village as a rural service centre and small tourist village having regard to the scale of the existing settlement and the setting of the village in an attractive rural landscape.
- Ensure that all new development is of traditional design and layout and does not detract from the character of the settlement.

- Ensure that all new commercial and residential development is located within the settlements development boundary.
- Preserve and enhance the use of the Irish language.
- Ensure that any future tourism developments be sensitive to the existing character and natural heritage of the village and be appropriate in scale. Developments which are open on a year round basis should be encouraged.
- Ensure that all residential development within the village cater for the needs of the local population who wish to live in the area on a permanent basis.
- Encourage the creation of commercial services & craftwork enterprises within the village which in turn will provide local employment and improve the quality of life of the local community.

3.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	It is an objective of the Council to:
OO-1	Ensure that the high quality natural setting of the village is maintained and protected from inappropriate development.
OO-2	Protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht in An Mhuiríoch including the promotion of Irish as the community language.

4.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	Amenity It is an objective of the Council to:
A-1	Provide for the development of a playground area.

Objective No.	Institutional/community Facilities It is an objective of the Council to:
ICF-1	Reserve the lands for future expansion of the waste water treatment facility. Any development shall be subject to an Ecological assessment.
ICF-2	Reserve the lands for future expansion of the community hall facility

Objective No.	Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic It is an objective of the Council to:
T-1	Seek the improvement of footpaths / walkways/junctions as indicated on the Land Zoning Map
T-2	Facilitate the improvement of the existing road to the beach.
T-3	Facilitate provision of car parking at a central location near the beach, together with pedestrian access from same to the beach.

Objective No	Views & Prospects It is an objective of the Council to:
VP-1	Ensure that the views and prospects from the L-5006 (An Mhuiríoch to Baile na nGall) road be protected as indicated on the zoning map.

Objective No.	Nature Conservation It is an objective of the Council to:
NC-1	Ensure that development proposals shall pay due regard to the rich natural heritage and biodiversity of the area. All proposals shall be screened for AA so as to ensure the conservation of adjacent Natura 2000 sites.

Objective No.	Flood Risk Management It is an objective of the Council to:
FM-1	Ensure that any development proposals on these lands shall be subject to a flood impact assessment