

Bertra 2050

A Community Stewardship Vision

ACT
Accelerating Change Together

Statement and Acknowledgements

Bertra Connected's Vision

Our vision for 2050 is to have a healthy beach-dune habitat that provides us and nature with benefits such as recreation and storm protection, and to develop the infrastructure in a way that accommodates visitor use while allowing the beach and dunes to function naturally thereby enhancing its status as a special area of conservation .

Bertra Connected's mission is to actively work together, and draw in others to help and give their views, knowledge and enthusiasm. We hope to achieve our vision through restoration and management actions that are appropriate* to achieving a healthy habitat and enhanced visitor experience - within 10 years. We understand that nature, climate and people are not static, so natural cycles of erosion and change may be expected and ultimately may completely alter this wild Atlantic beach and the way we appreciate it.

"Appropriate" means our restoration and management actions and visitor use do not accelerate erosion (or have other negative impacts on the site or block natural processes from functioning, for example the movement of sand) in line with the conservation objectives of the site.

Goals

Our mission goals to achieve this vision are

1. To restore the dunes, and the natural functioning of the beach dune system
2. To design a visitor infrastructure that allows for an enhanced experience of this special area of conservation as part of a wild Atlantic landscape
3. To develop an adaptive co-management & planning culture to achieve goals 1 and 2.

Vision Partners



Funded by



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Project Background

Bertra's dunes and its beach are under increased pressures from sea level rise, increased storm frequency and increased recreational use, all of which cause erosion. From 2010 to 2022, the cover of marram grass which holds the dunes together has reduced by 62%. While over the years various interventions have been implemented on Bertra, erosion has continued and even increased, creating the need for a different approach to halting the damage.

As a response to this, a group of concerned citizens from Murrisk, Mayo County Council and the University of Galway came together in 2018 to look at the issue of erosion at Bertra Beach. By Feb 2021 this group, Bertra Connected, had widened to become a 18+ person Working Group looking at climate adaptation for a wider area. The group has previously engaged in a media campaign and workshop process but damage of the dunes has continued.

The development for a collective, long-term vision for Bertra was identified and a key goal to achieve in order to stop and even reverse the damage that has been caused to Bertra.

International best practice demonstrates that local communities are best placed to be guardians of their own natural surroundings. Bertra Connected secured funding from the Heritage Council to develop such a Vision for Bertra.

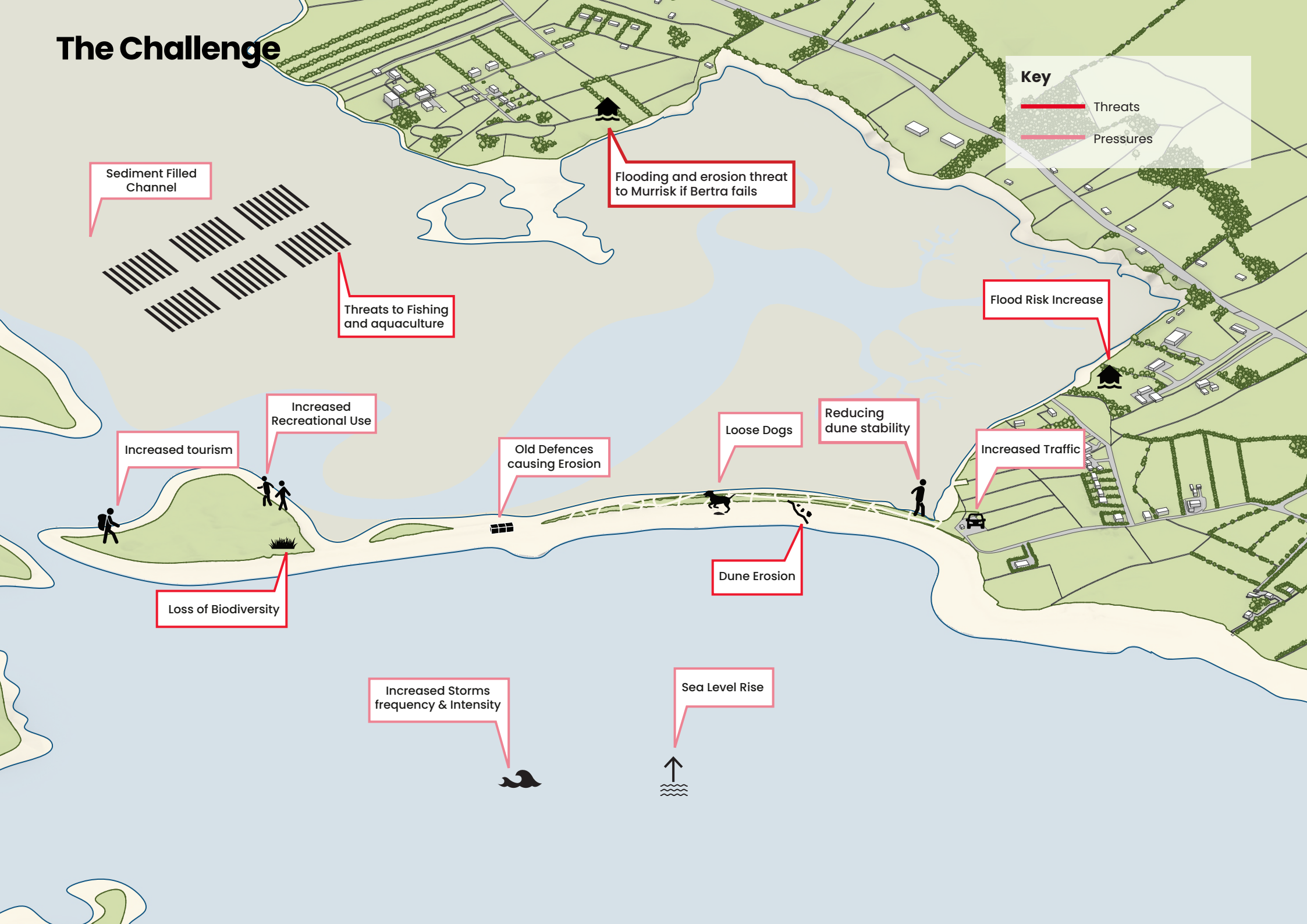
ACT was appointed to produce the Bertra 2050 Vision through an engagement process with all stakeholders. Through workshops, open to everyone and widely publicised, this collective vision was developed with the concept of community stewardship at its core.

This vision will be a roadmap for Bertra into the future.



Bertra Connected

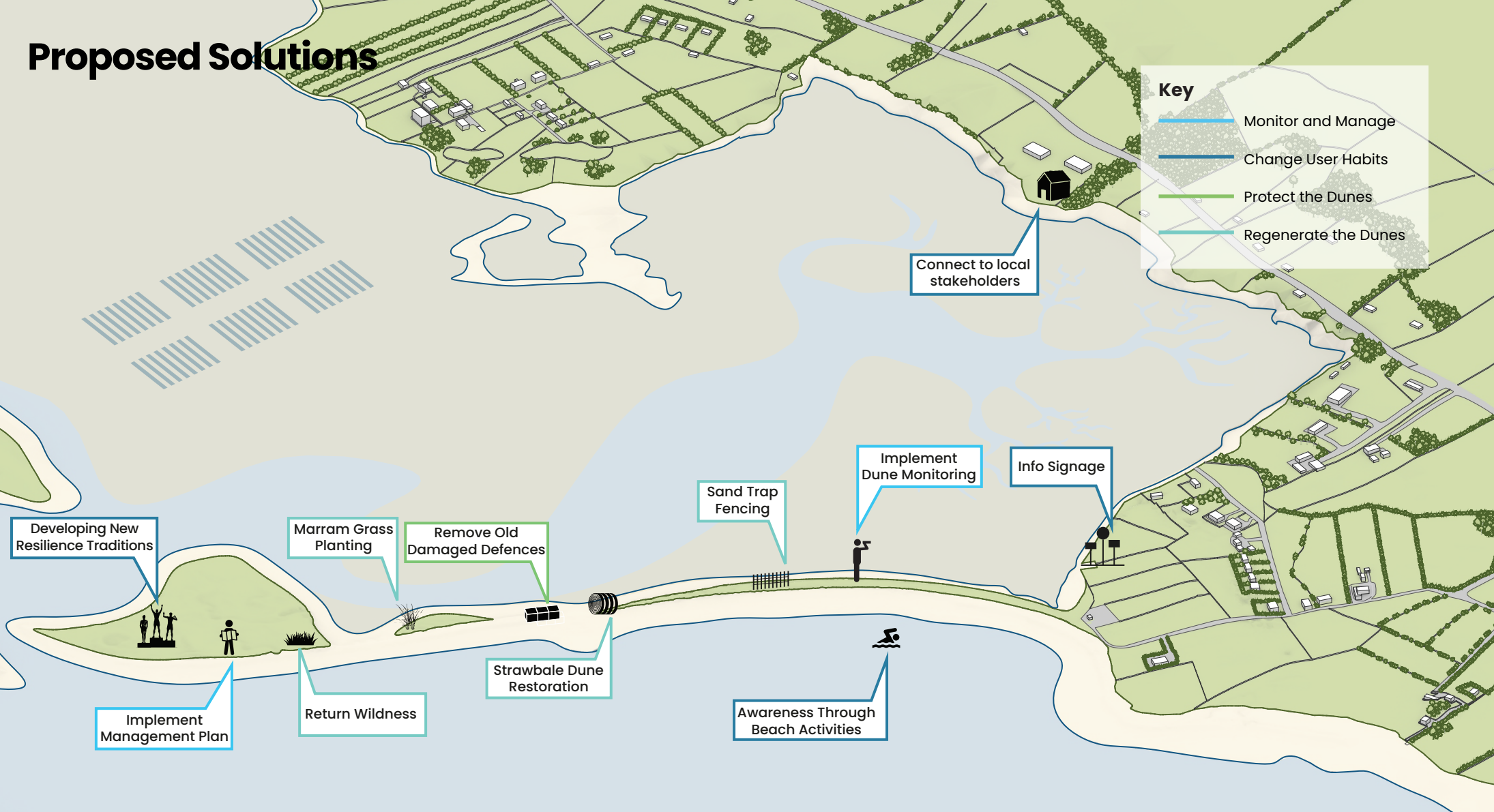
The Challenge



Proposed Solutions

Key

- Monitor and Manage
- Change User Habits
- Protect the Dunes
- Regenerate the Dunes



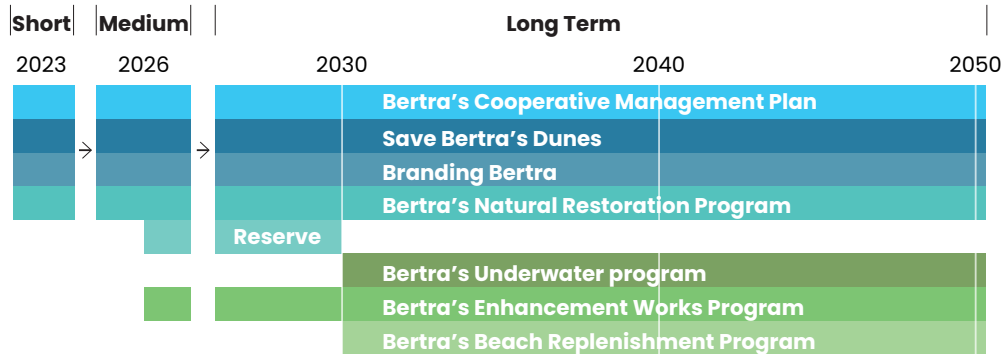
Long-Term Solutions

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Regenerate the Dunes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controlled Grazing | <p>Protect the Dunes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Walk Beach Replenishment Vertical Column Farming Sea Grass Restoration | <p>Change User Habits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Murrisk Car Park Designated Recreational Area |
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Programs and Actions

Implementation

Vision implementation is broken into three stages, Short-Term (1yr), Medium-Term (within 3 years), and Long-Term (between 3 and 30 years). four program are suggested to begin with the short-term period as it is believed that these can be actioned in the shortest time period.



Goals and Actions

1. To restore the dunes natural functioning of the beach dune system.

Restoration Program

- Plant Marram Grass
- Install sand fencing
- Install straw bales
- Test innovative methods
- Implement controlled grazing

Dune Reserve (if required)

- Implement dune fencing
- Implement parking Restrictions
- Consult with locals on pedestrian access to Murrisk carpark

Underwater program

- Implement Vertical column fishing
- Implement sea grass restoration

Beach Replenishment

- Deliver Beach Replenishment

2. To design a visitor infrastructure that allows for an enhanced experience of this special area of conservation as part of a wild Atlantic landscape.

Enhancement Works

- Remove damaged defences
- Return old carpark to gravel
- Implement crossings
- Implement designated recreation areas
- Implement board walk

Branding Bertra

- Develop campaign
- Increase engagement installations
- Engage Artist to collaborate on future campaign

Underwater program

- Implement Vertical column fishing
- Implement sea grass restoration

3. To develop an adaptive co-management & planning culture to achieve goals 1 and 2.

Save Bertra's Dunes

- Develop Community Charter
- Host Awareness Events
- Continue Online Campaign
- Establish a community network
- Establish new traditions

- Review and update plan
- Continue previous actions

Management Plan

- Appoint vision coordinator
- Develop management plan
- Implement beach monitoring
- Establish citizen science initiative

Recommendations

Leadership

Find Local Champions to join Bertra Connected and support the implementation of the vision

Lead by example – The public bodies and specialist groups that have participated in the process of developing the vision have an important role in implementation

Operations

Employ a Dedicated Resource – One or more funded part-time positions will have a large impact on improving the deliverability of the vision programs.

Link to Other Organisations – Connecting to organisations that share the ambitions of this vision, such as habitat restoration will be an effective way to support the project.

Link to Other Initiatives – Initiatives such as the aim to create a UNESCO Biosphere designation for the Clew Bay have the potential to both contribute and benefit from this vision.

Develop, Deploy and Evaluate – A flexible and evidence-based approach will be required and should inform any implementation approach.

Funding

Utilise the Varied Stakeholder Avenues

Leverage Local Funding Potential

Governance

Establish a Representative Working Group

This is to ensure that there is alignment between the various stakeholder groups and interests.

Formalise Bertra Connected into a company like a CLG to open new avenues for the receipt of funding and supports.

Collective Ownership – It is recommended that this vision is co-owned by the stakeholder groups that participated in its co-design through the representative stakeholder board.

Establish Program Subgroups & Leads – Setting up subgroups for the programs will allow effective delegation and create a more efficient realisation of the program actions.

First Implementation Steps

Measure the Dunes' Health for a defined Period

Clear the Beach and Dunes of debris – return Bertra to a natural state.

Find the Easy Wins

Consider Closing the Dunes for a Period