



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative



National Trails Office/Irish Sports Council

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS

A REVIEW OF NATIONAL WAYMARKED WAYS IN IRELAND



1. Introduction

The Irish Trails Strategy, published by the Irish Sports Council in 2007, was based on the broad vision “to create, nurture and maintain a world class recreational trail network” in Ireland. The first of three ten year objectives within the strategy was to position Ireland in the top tier of European countries for availability of quality recreational trails, spread throughout the country.

This was seen as attainable, given the impressive network of long distance walking trails laid down and developed over the previous thirty years, and the widespread pool of expertise and commitment residing in both voluntary and statutory bodies throughout the country. However, needs, expectations and opportunities have changed since pioneers like J. B. Malone blazed a trail across Wicklow, and inspired others to develop walking trails and make available to many the experience of enjoying Ireland’s scenic rural areas on foot.

The National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC) and the National Trails Office (NTO) have recognised the potential offered by all National Waymarked Ways to serve as the backbone of a national trails network, if they are adapted to meet current and prospective needs, and are maintained and managed to provide a variety of experiences for the many different users, both residents and visitors. The results of the detailed review, undertaken through 2009 by a dedicated group under Joss Lynam’s expert guidance, offer an exciting menu of development ideas and recommendations with a view to making our walking trails even more enjoyable, and attractive to walkers of many varieties. The review is based not only on information gathered and detailed knowledge on each route, but also importantly on the outcomes of extensive and much appreciated consultation with the local management committees. The NTAC and NTO hope that the recommendations will meet with widespread approval and support, and can form a secure basis for an intensive development programme over the coming years.

In the current difficult economic circumstances, it will not be easy to implement the programme. However, as all hill walkers will appreciate, the key to success is to have a carefully prepared route map which takes account of the prevailing conditions, while never losing sight of the ultimate destination. The next challenge is to agree the implementation plan with all those who can help deliver; to improve the assurance and availability of resources for ongoing maintenance; and to work with management committees to assist them to be as good as they can be in managing and promoting the increasing use of the trails.

I would like to acknowledge the continued efforts and hard work of all involved with National Waymarked Ways throughout the country, the continued support of the state bodies Coillte, Waterways Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Bord Na Mona and also the ongoing contribution and support of private landowners and members of the farming community throughout the country.

This has been a demanding and important review and much work lies ahead in its implementation. On behalf of the Irish Sports Council and NTAC, I would like to thank sincerely and place on record our appreciation of all the members of the group which undertook this task including Joss Lynam, Cormac MacDonnell, Jean Boydell, Doug Corrie (National Trails Office) , Ciara Scully (Fáilte Ireland) and Daithi DeForge (NTO + Coillte) .

**J. O’Dwyer,
Chairman – National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC)
March, 2010.**



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Executive Summary
3. Review Overview
4. Review Objectives, Scope & Process
5. Review Context
6. Facts & Achievements
7. Review Findings
8. General Recommendations
9. Individual Trail Recommendations
10. Review Implementation
11. **Appendices**
 - Appendix 1 - Review Stakeholders
 - Appendix 2 - Summary Of Management Standards For Walking Trails In Ireland
 - Appendix 3 - Criteria For International Standard Long Distance Walks (Draft)
 - Appendix 4 - Review Information Notes
 - Appendix 5 - Review Assessment Criteria

NTO/ISC would like to acknowledge the photographic images provided by Fáilte Ireland for this publication.





national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative



SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

The review examines the current condition of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland with a view to improving the overall quality and services on each route to ensure that they continue to develop and meet the expectations of both local people and visitors to Ireland. This network was developed throughout the Republic of Ireland during the period 1980 – 2007. It represents an impressive achievement in terms of recreational infrastructure in the country and offers extensive opportunities from a tourism, recreation and health perspective in future years.

- **Usage:** We consider that significant capacity exists to increase trail user numbers (both day and multi-day walkers) on all National Waymarked Ways. This capacity will only be realised if all trails are developed and managed to a high standard and are promoted much more widely. The development of short looped walks off existing trails aimed at attracting leisure walkers is recommended on many routes.
- **Quality:** Overall standard has improved in recent years and while a number of routes are in good condition, others have deteriorated in quality and fall short of the standard required for accreditation with the new management standards for walking trails in Ireland. Meaningful investment will be required to bring all trails up to standard.
- **Awareness:** Much work at local and national level is required to increase awareness both domestically and internationally. Few routes have a dedicated website or up to date guidebook and information relating to accommodation, local transport and other local services falls short on many routes. A broad range of marketing and promotional measures are proposed in the review to increase awareness of trails among local people and visitors alike.
- **Management:** Best results are being achieved where a co-operative approach is being adopted between Local Development Companies (formerly Leader & Partnership companies), Local Authorities, community representatives and landowners. Representative trail management committees need to be established on all National Waymarked Ways and trail maintenance and management plans need to be developed for all routes.
- **Prioritisation & Development:** The review recommends that the 38 National Waymarked Ways reviewed be retained and sub-divided into three categories - National Long Distance Trails, National Waymarked Trails and National Waterway Trails. All National Waymarked Ways should be retained but some should be reconfigured to attract more casual walkers as opposed to experienced walkers. All trails should work towards full accreditation with recommended trail standards. Fourteen trails have been identified as having the potential to be brought to a level comparable with international standards for multi-day walks, with an appropriate level of investment. Of these, five are considered as the most iconic walks, having the highest potential, and these should be prioritised for development. The review recommends the continued implementation and possible refinement of the National Walks Scheme and/or the establishing of a new National trail development and maintenance programme to support the development and annual maintenance on all trails, the strengthening of management arrangements on all trails and a number of specific recommendations for each individual National Waymarked Way reviewed.
- **Funding** arrangements for trail maintenance and management needs to be formalised. The review recommends that a 10 year funding strategy (similar to the approach taken in New Zealand to develop its world class trail system) be adopted in Ireland covering the development, promotion and annual maintenance on National Waymarked Ways in the State. Capital funding for new trail upgrade work will be required on sections of many trails and increased funding for trail maintenance is also necessary. However, funding requirements for National Waymarked Ways cannot be considered in isolation as there are many other trails including, pilgrim paths, looped walks and Coillte recreational trails that make up an emerging national trails network. Funding requirements for all trails should be quantified and presented as a comprehensive trail development strategy to the appropriate authority. Additional work is also required to quantify the benefits and value likely to accrue to the State from an economic, social and health perspective from investment in National Waymarked Ways and all other trails in the State and it is recommended that this work be undertaken as a priority following the completion of this review and included in the



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative



SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

REVIEW OVERVIEW



Review Overview

The Wicklow Way, opened in 1980, was the first waymarked trail developed in the Republic of Ireland. This was followed by the South Leinster Way and the East Munster Way in 1984 and the Kerry Way and Táin Way in 1985. Prior to these developments, there was little by way of developed walking trails in Ireland suitable for tourism promotion. These first multi day walking routes were modelled on the Ulster Way in Northern Ireland and other successful multi day walks in the UK and other EU countries. All were developed to improve walking opportunities for local people and to attract increased numbers of international visitors into rural and scenic parts of Ireland.

The Dingle Way and Slieve Bloom Ways were opened in 1987 and through the continued work of local volunteers, development groups, tourism development agencies, local authorities and other state agencies, a total of 38 routes were developed, extending into 24 counties and covering over 3,500km by 2007¹.

National Waymarked Ways were developed mainly by local walking enthusiasts, Local Authorities and a range of State Agencies with agreement from local landowners. The development of the network was guided by a National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee (National Long Distance Routes Committee / Cospoir) and Fáilte Ireland. Funding was provided mainly by the State through a range of tourism infrastructure development programmes including the European Infrastructure Development Fund.

Walking related tourism in Ireland has developed well over the past thirty years and it is now recognised as a very important contributor to Ireland's overall tourism offering, attracting in excess of 500,000 visitors annually. The development of this extensive network of waymarked trails throughout the country, based on voluntary efforts, enthusiasm and hard work represents a very significant achievement and also an opportunity for the future.

Much has changed both in terms of tourism trends and demands internationally over the past thirty years and also the requirements and expectations of Irish people in respect to walking trails and outdoor recreation facilities has also developed and it is important that these trends are reflected in the quality and services offered on all walking trails in Ireland.

This review is intended to examine the current position, usage levels, overall quality and management structures on all National Waymarked Ways in Ireland with a view to improving the overall quality and services on each trail ensuring that Irish trails continue to develop to meet the expectations of both local people and visitors to Ireland into the future.

Acknowledgements: On behalf of the working group I would like to thank all who contributed to this review especially all the representatives of the trails who attended meetings and sent in feedback. In completing this review, the working group has attempted to maintain an objective and independent position in reporting the current position as accurately as possible and recommending future developments. The undertaking of this review has been a very positive experience in that it has stimulated discussion and activity on many National Waymarked Ways and set out a new course for future developments, all with the aim of attracting more people onto our walking routes countrywide.

Joss Lynam Chair NTAC Review Working Group.





national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

**THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL**



AN tSAGHAIRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

REVIEW OBJECTIVES



Review Objectives, Scope & Process

Review Objectives

1 To review the current quality, usage levels, management and promotion arrangements and future potential of National Waymarked Ways in the Republic of Ireland

2 To identify the existing routes with greatest potential for further development to an International standard²

3 To make individual recommendations for each National Waymarked Way and identify measures that need to be taken to improve the overall quality and sustainability of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland.

Review Scope

38 National Waymarked Way were considered under the scope of this review. This is made up of 32 individual Ways, the Avondu Way & Duhallow Way (which both make up the Blackwater Way) and 4 separate routes that make up Bealach na Gaeltachta / Sli Dhún Na nGall. A number of other waymarked walking trails including St. Kevins Way (Pilgrim Path), Cosan Na Niamh (Pilgrim Path) , Lough Derg Pilgrim Path, Foxford Way, Bangor Trail, Croagh Patrick Heritage Way, Nore River Valley Way, Hymany Way, Multeen Way, Aran Way and the Beara Breffni Way were not included in the scope of this review. These trails will be considered in a follow up piece of work.

Review Process

The review was coordinated by the National Trails Office within the Irish Sports Council and a small working group established by the National Trails Advisory Committee including representatives from Fáilte Ireland, Coillte and the National Trails Office. The review has also included input from all management committees and a number of walking tour operators.

The following summarises the process used in completing this review:-

- Review Working Group established
- Trail contacts notified
- Trail Assessment Criteria agreed by Working Group
- Preliminary Trails Assessment completed and sent out to trail contacts - Each route was initially reviewed and awarded a score under thirteen headings. Details on these headings are listed in Appendix 5
- Feedback was received from trail contacts
- Feedback was reviewed and Final Assessment Score agreed
- Final Assessment Reports were issued to trail contacts
- Consultation meetings were undertaken with all trail contacts
- Draft Findings & Recommendations were presented to National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC)
- Final Review Report was completed.

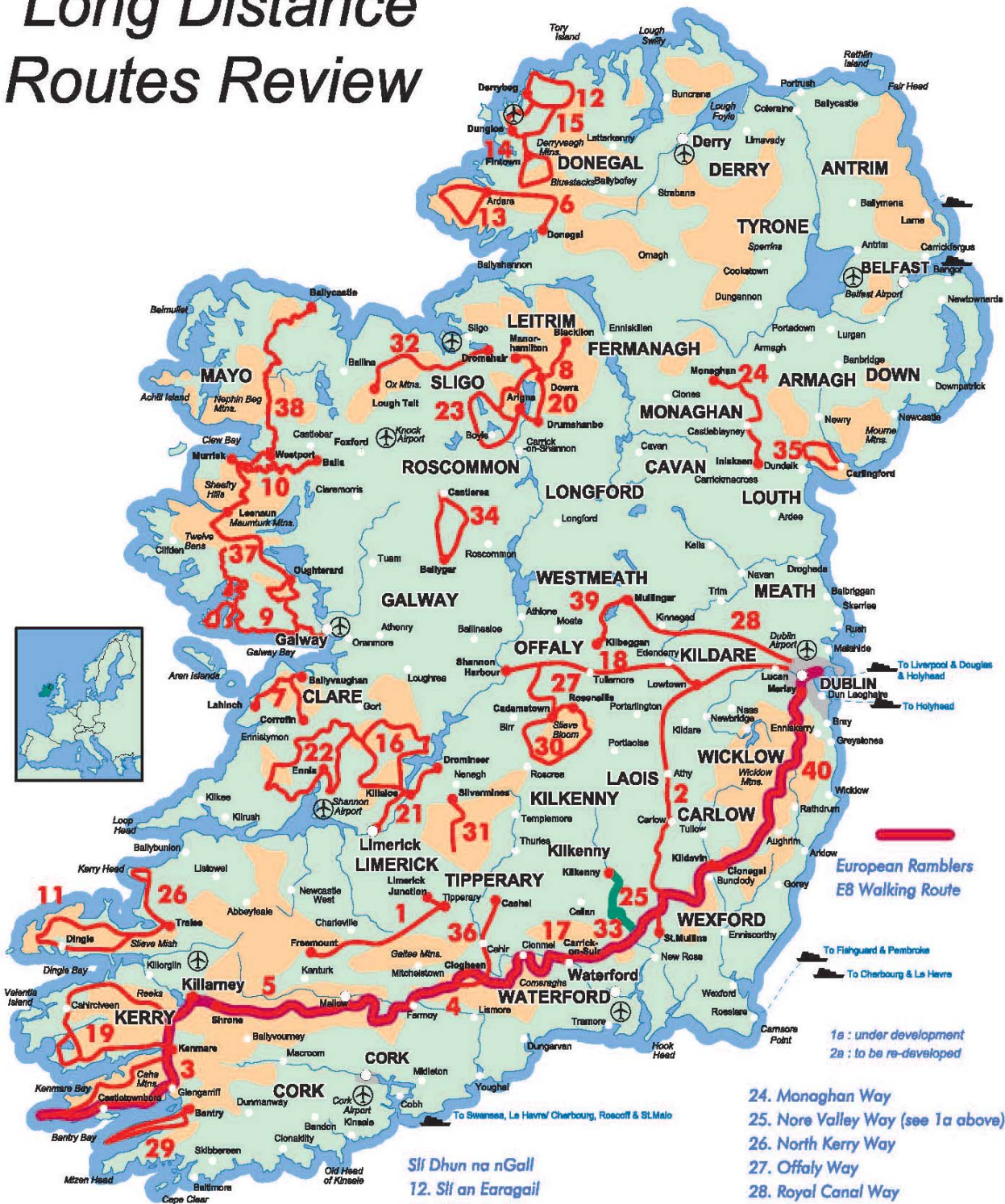
² International Standard criteria, (draft) are set out in Appendix 3. This summarises the typical trail features and services found on internationally recognised multi day walks. The research report - Walk in the West, published by the Western Development Commission in 2005 has contributed to these criteria.



Consultation Meetings

Meetings were undertaken with all committees and individuals involved with each route. The meetings have proven to be an important part of the review process as they have brought people together, stimulated thinking and discussion and identified some of the ongoing and likely future problems being experienced by local management committees in respect to their walking routes. Overall a strong sense of ownership and local pride exists on every National Waymarked Way and the commitment, enthusiasm and work of all individuals involved with National Waymarked Ways in Ireland is acknowledged. The conclusions and recommendations in this report have incorporated the views expressed by trail management committees during the consultation meetings.

Long Distance Routes Review



- 1. Ballyhoura Way
- 2. Barrow Way
- 3. Beara Way (E8)
- 4. Avonduhu Way (E8)
- 5. Duhallow Way (E8)
- 6. Bluestack Way
- 7. Burren Way
- 8. Cavan Way
- 9. Slí Chonamara (see 2 a above)
- 10. Croagh Patrick Heritage Trail
- 11. Slí Corca Dhuimhne / Dingle Way

- Slí Dhun na nGall
- 12. Slí an Earagail
- 13. Slí Cholmáille
- 14. Slí na Finne
- 15. Slí na Rosann

- 16. East Clare Way
- 17. East Munster Way (E8)
- 18. Grand Canal Way
- 19. Kerry Way (E8)
- 20. Leitrim Way (see 2a below)
- 21. Lough Derg
- 22. Mid Clare Way
- 23. Miners & Historical Way

- 24. Monaghan Way
- 25. Nore Valley Way (see 1a above)
- 26. North Kerry Way
- 27. Offaly Way
- 28. Royal Canal Way
- 29. Sheeps Head Way
- 30. Slieve Bloom Way
- 31. Slieve Felim Way
- 32. Sligo Way
- 33. South Leinster Way (E8)
- 34. Suck Valley Way
- 35. Tain Way
- 36. Tipperary Heritage Way
- 37. Western Way (Galway)
- 38. Western Way (Mayo)
- 39. Westmeath way
- 40. Wicklow Way (E8)

1a : under development
2a : to be re-developed

European Ramblers
E8 Walking Route

To Fishguard & Pembroke
To Charbourg & La Havre

To Liverpool & Douglas & Holyhead
To Holyhead

To Swanes, La Havre/ Charbourg, Roscoff & St.Malo



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

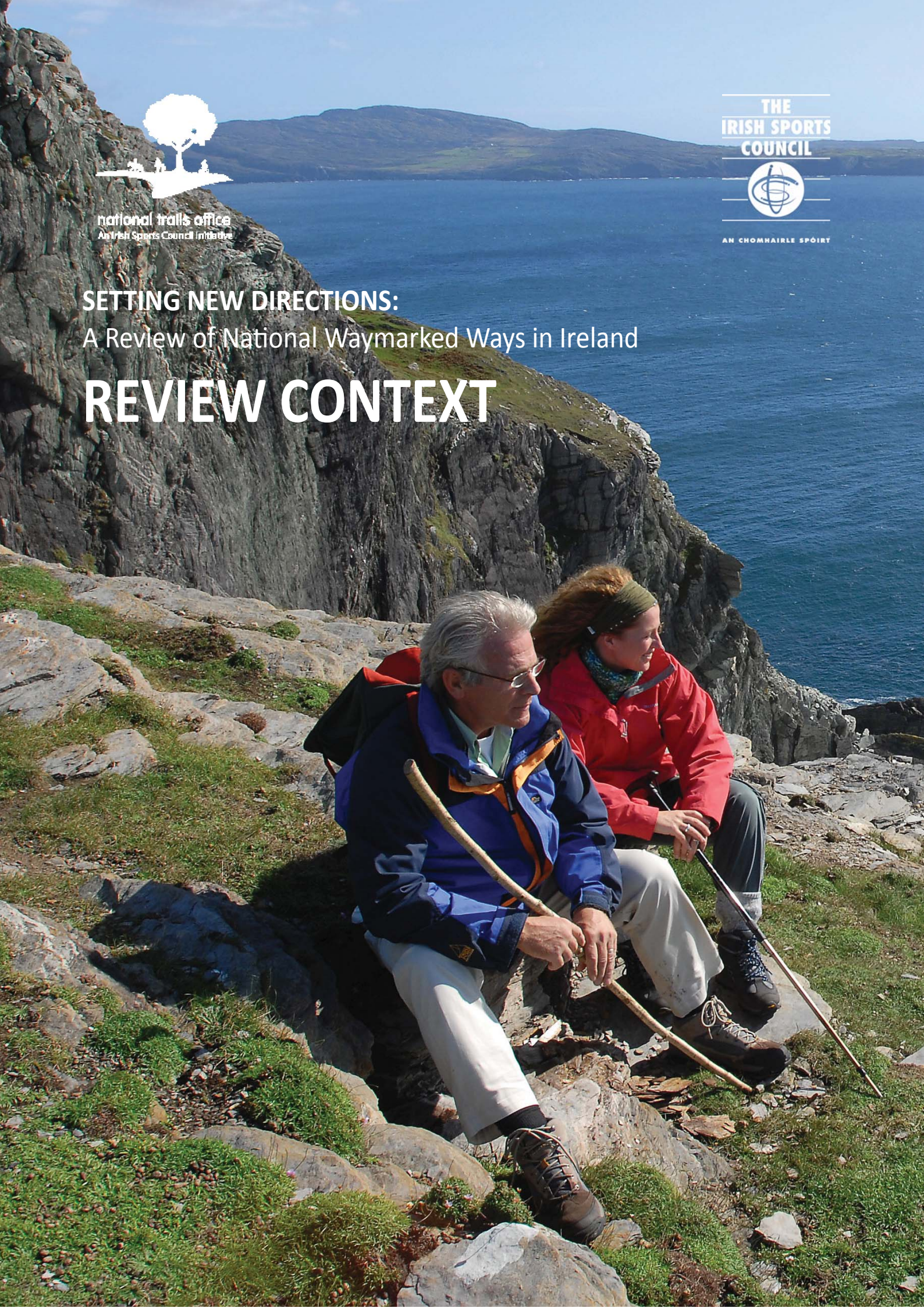
THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL



AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

REVIEW CONTEXT



Review Context

- Research from Fáilte Ireland highlights that walking in Ireland represents the largest opportunity for growing visitor numbers to Ireland. Over half a million (517,000) overseas visitors took part in a walking activity in 2008, spending an estimated €364 million.
- 2008 Visitors Attitudes Survey undertaken by Fáilte Ireland found that walking, (including hiking and cross country), is seen by holidaymakers as a premier product, with one in every four holidaymakers mentioning it as an activity they have taken part in during their holiday. This figure rises to one in every three among Mainland Europeans who display high satisfaction ratings with the quality and price of this activity.
- Based on Harris Research 2008 commissioned by Fáilte Ireland, the USA, Germany, the UK & the Netherlands shows the greatest potential for attracting walking visitors. According to this research there are potentially more than 1 million UK residents who would partake in walking in Ireland in the next three years. This figure is closely followed by 900,000 German visitors, 800,000 visitors from the USA and 700,000 visitors from the Netherlands.
- Walking is an extremely important recreational / sporting activity undertaken by 55% of the adult population of Ireland (< 1.5million).
- After a period of sustained economic growth (2004 – 2008) current economic conditions in Ireland have become challenging and are likely to remain so over the next few years. Investment on recreational trails and long distance walking trails will need to be prioritised on trails most likely to satisfy the demand from walkers, yielding maximum benefit and economic return in the future.
- The National Trails Office has introduced a Management Standard for Recreational Trails in Ireland. This standard is based around specific requirements in respect to access, use of roads, safety issues, information provision, trail surface quality, trail waymarking, signage, trail furnishings and vegetation control on trails. (Ref Appendix 3 – Summary of Standard)
- The National Trails Office in association with a range of Government Departments, State Agencies, organisations and bodies is establishing a new National Trails Register listing all developed trails in Ireland.
- The Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs continues to implement the Walks Scheme (maintenance scheme for walking routes). 1388 landowners / farmers were participating on the scheme as of 31 Dec 2009. This Department also manages a Rural Social Scheme in association with Local Development Companies throughout the country.
- 12 Rural Recreation Officers (RRO's) are employed by Local Development Companies.
- Coillte - the Irish Forestry Board - is the largest single manager of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland. Over 30 National Waymarked Ways pass through forest lands and Coillte takes responsibility for the maintenance and insurance of these trail sections. Coillte also manage and maintain a large number of access trails, shorter looped trails, mountain bike trails, national loop trails and a range of other forest recreation trails, car parks and trailheads.
- Fáilte Ireland is supporting the development of new National Looped Walking trails throughout the country. There are currently approx 170 developed, all of which are short in distance, predominantly located off road and waymarked.
- The Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Agriculture & Food have commenced the implementation of the National Rural Development programme. This programme is being implemented through the County Integrated Development Companies (formerly Leader Companies).
- The Department of Transport are delivering the Government's Smarter Travel strategy, which aims to have over 200,000 additional people walking and cycling to work by 2020. Ireland's first National Cycle Policy Framework has been published and an inter-departmental working group is developing a National Walking Policy.



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL

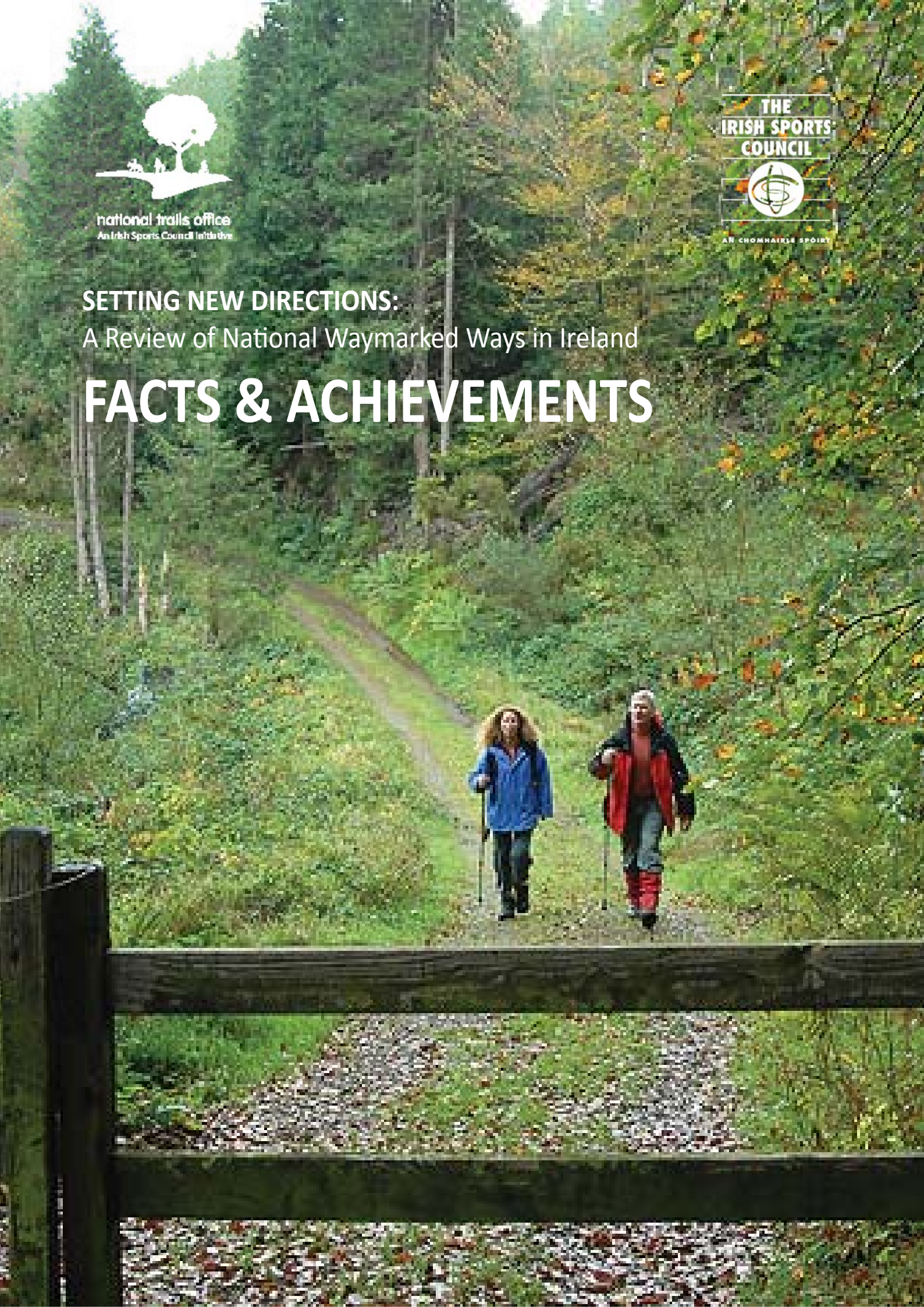


AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:

A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

FACTS & ACHIEVEMENTS



National Waymarked Way Facts & Achievements

- 38 individual Waymarked Ways were developed in 24 counties in the Republic of Ireland during the period 1980 – 2007 extending over 3700km.
- All routes were developed primarily as tourism attractions in scenic rural areas throughout the country. They are comprehensively waymarked with a standard motif of a walking figure and an arrow in bright yellow indicating the way. All routes follow woodland paths, grassy boreens, fields, riverbanks and quiet country roads in the lowlands, and forestry tracks and mountain paths in the uplands.
- National Waymarked Ways have been developed through 3 National Parks in Ireland (Wicklow Mountains, Killarney & Burren). The ongoing support of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government) in respect of these trails is acknowledged.
- 3 Ways are located along Ireland's inland waterways systems (Barrow, Grand & Royal Canal) and are managed by Waterways Ireland.
- The highest concentration of routes is located in the Munster region (14) and Ways have been developed through 6 National Parks in Ireland.
- 5 National Ways make up the Irish section of the European rambler route E8 which extends from Dursey Island in Co. Cork to Turkey.
- All routes are inspected annually by the National Trails Office and are maintained by local management committees, Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and other State Agencies.



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

**THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL**



AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:

A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

REVIEW FINDINGS



Review Findings

General

This section reports general findings from the review:

Trail Usage

While some local studies have been undertaken on individual trails and Fáilte Ireland captures some information on visitor trends annually³, there has been no formal and comprehensive system in place to monitor levels of usage on National Waymarked Ways in Ireland.

- Based on available information, this review estimates that the following routes are currently attracting reasonable levels of usage by multi day walkers⁴; the Wicklow, Sheep's Head, Kerry, Dingle, Beara, Burren and Western Ways (Mayo/Galway). These routes are also being heavily used by day walkers.
- Walking tour operators are mainly using the following routes - Sheep's Head, Kerry, Beara, Dingle, Burren, Western (Galway), Bluestack, Táin and Wicklow Ways.
- Many of the existing Ways have short sections that are used heavily by local people and visitors for day walking and other longer sections that are used infrequently.
- A sizeable number of walking festivals and charity walking events utilise existing National Waymarked Ways.
- The linear nature of most National Waymarked Ways makes them somewhat less attractive to use for day walks. The development of linked, loops and spurs off existing National Waymarked Ways has improved opportunities for usage on many routes.

Conclusions

- **Based on current usage a select number of existing routes show greatest potential for further development and promotion as multi day walks for both domestic and overseas walking enthusiasts.**
- **Significant capacity exists to increase trail user numbers (both day and multi day walkers) on all National Waymarked Ways.**
- **A concentration on promoting of National Waymarked Ways to casual walkers is strongly recommended. High quality, scenic sections on existing National Waymarked Ways should be concentrated on for promotion to casual walkers.**
- **The further development of a number of strategically located short looped walks suitable for day walkers is recommended on many routes.**
- **A trail usage monitoring system needs to be established to gather information on usage.**

Trail Quality

- Annual inspections undertaken by the National Trails Office serve as a good measure of trail quality and provides a helpful guide to trail management committees for undertaking trail maintenance.
- Based on an assessment of 2009 annual inspection reports (as undertaken by the National Trails Office) and some analysis work undertaken as part of this review,
 - o 28 National Waymarked Ways either fully or partially meet the criteria set down in the Management Standards for Recreational Trails (Trail Standard)
 - o Of the remaining ten, nine are likely to or have the potential to either partially or fully comply with the standards. The format and layout of one Way (Slí Chonnamara) is being reviewed.

³ Annual Fáilte Ireland -Visitor Surveys – Fact Sheets Walking

⁴ Multi Day walkers or long distance walkers tend to use more one section of a trail and are often interested in walking an entire trail over a number of days. Multi day walkers are also described as specialist walkers whose primary purpose during a visit to the country would be to walk.



- The following are the main issues that are affecting the quality on existing routes :-
 - o Proportion of trail located on unsuitable roads
 - o Poor waymarking
 - o Erosion of pathways and very wet trail sections
 - o Trail furnishings in poor condition
 - o Poor information provision
- Many routes have benefited in recent years from work undertaken through the Rural Social Scheme, the introduction of the Walks Scheme, support received through recent funding programmes under the NDP and from local authority support.

Conclusions

- **The general standard has been rising slowly in recent years with the introduction of new State schemes. A number of National Waymarked Ways are in reasonably good condition but others have deteriorated in quality and will require meaningful investment to bring them up to standard.**
- **The proportion of unsuitable tarred road used on many routes is high and is a serious issue affecting trail quality.**
- **Trail erosion is an emerging issue affecting a number of trails.**

Trail Maintenance & Management Arrangements

- While some routes have very good management arrangements in place, a high proportion of routes have poorly defined, ad hoc and ineffective management and maintenance structures in place.
- Very few routes have long term management or development plans or a structure in place to prepare and deliver a plan.
- The role played by Local Authorities and Local Development Companies in the maintenance and management of National Waymarked Ways varies widely from county to county.
- Best results are being achieved in terms of trail maintenance and management through a co-operative approach between local development companies, local authorities, local community representatives and landowners.
- Introduction of new Rural Recreation Officers on some routes/ counties is a positive development in improving trail management and coordination.
- The Walks Scheme has been introduced on 14 National Waymarked Ways to date and this scheme will assist the maintenance on routes and improve communications between trail management committees and local landowners. This scheme has improved management arrangements on routes.
- Permissive access arrangements have generally been maintained on most routes but many trails are currently using long road sections because of difficulties in gaining access to private land.
- Many of the individuals and organisations involved with trails require some technical advice, training and support in the management, maintenance and promotion of trails.
- Rural Recreation Officers (RRO's) and County Walking Officers have contributed well to the management of trails in areas were appointed but many counties do not have any employed personnel to coordinate trail management/maintenance activities or assist community groups in trail work.

Conclusions

- **Trail Management & Development Committees must be established on all National Waymarked Ways.**
- **Trail Management Plans are required on all National Waymarked Ways.**
- **Technical advice & training are required to aid local management committees in the preparation of management plans and in undertaking certain trail projects.**
- **The Walks Scheme should be introduced on other routes where possible.**

- The majority of existing National Waymarked Ways while promoted as specialist / long distance walking trails are being used predominantly for shorter day walks.
- Communication links between trail management committees and promotional bodies such as tourism offices, local sport partnership offices, local authorities etc is poor, leading to a situation where promotional bodies are not aware and up to date on National Waymarked Ways in their region.
- The marketing and promotion arrangements on individual routes and collectively as a network have not been fully developed.
- Trail user information is available for the majority of routes but is often not detailed enough and can be difficult to obtain or out of date.
- Trail guidebooks are not available on some trails and may be out of date. Information relating to accommodation, local transport and other local services is only available on a few routes.
- The availability of on-line information on the majority of Ways is reasonable for basic information but poor for detailed information. Only a small number of routes have a dedicated website for their Way providing detailed information.
- Few existing routes have any of the following services; trail guiding service, accommodation booking system, luggage transfer service.

Conclusions

- **A general lack of focus on trail marketing and promotion and poor availability of trail information has restricting the full potential on many National Waymarked Ways from being realised. Much greater promotional efforts are required to raise awareness about trails locally, regionally, Nationally and Internationally.**
- **Roles and responsibilities in respect of the marketing and promotion of all National Waymarked Ways require clarification and coordination at local and national level.**
- **Closer communication links are required between trail management committees and all tourism and local sport/recreation promotion bodies. Individual trail management committees need to be feeding into national and international trail marketing and promotion strategies.**
- **Focus of promotional efforts should move more towards attracting casual / day walkers.**
- **Support services (for walkers) need to be improved on all Ways.**

Funding Arrangements & Support Systems

- Funding arrangements vary on all routes but in most cases, funding streams for maintenance and management are not formalised and vary from year to year.
- Many routes have no consistent access to funding and are operating “on a shoe-string” and this has a significant impact on trail quality
- Some local authorities have a budget line for maintenance.
- Whilst a number of Government Departments and State agencies have an input to walking route development in Ireland, it is unclear as to which Department or agency is primarily responsible for funding the development and maintenance of National Waymarked Ways.
- State schemes such as Rural Social Schemes, Walks Scheme and Community Employment Schemes (Fás) assist with annual maintenance work.
- While the State has supported a good number of Ways in terms of capital funding for upgrade works in recent years, a scheme such as the “Walks Scheme” have aided maintenance arrangements on some trails, a complete and comprehensive system for funding trail maintenance on all National Waymarked Ways has yet to be fully devised.

Conclusions

- **Funding arrangements must be clarified to enable the implementation of the recommendations in this report**
- **A formal trail maintenance funding scheme needs to be established to support annual maintenance work on National Waymarked Ways. This scheme needs to cater for maintenance work on both private and public land used on routes.**
- **The Walks Scheme (Departments of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs) as a current national scheme focused on the maintenance of developed walking trails (on privately owned land), that also provides for materials offers the basis for the developed to a complete national trail maintenance system for National Waymarked Ways and other trails.**





national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

**THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL**



AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:

A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS



General Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the existing 38 trails within the network be retained but sub-divided into three categories.

- **National Long Distance Trails** –a select number of existing multi-day walks that have the potential to reach a standard comparable with other walks of international standing for multi-day walking enthusiasts e.g. the Pennine Way & West Highland Way. These routes will also continue to be promoted for use by casual walkers.
- **National Waymarked Trails** - all other existing National Waymarked Ways some of which may be shortened and/or re-configured to include more looped walks and to reduce road sections. This category of trail should re-focus to cater for casual walkers predominantly.
- **National Waterway Trails** - existing walking trails developed along inland waterway towpaths including the Barrow, Royal & Grand Canal Ways. These trails are primarily managed by Waterways Ireland but other Ways that are predominantly located on river banks can be included in this category.

2. The review finds that the following routes are most suitable for categorisation as National Long Distance Trails and have the greatest potential to satisfy both national standards and international criteria in the coming years: (listed in alphabetical order)

- Beara Way
- Bluestack Way
- Burren Way
- Dingle Way
- East Clare Way
- Kerry Way
- Miner's Way & Historical Trail
- North Kerry Way
- Sheep's Head Way
- Slí an Earagail
- Táin Way
- Western Way (Galway)
- Western Way (Mayo)
- Wicklow Way

The categorisation of these routes as National Long Distance Trails require the following:

- Trails to first become fully compliant with the Management Standard for Recreational Trails in Ireland.
- Trail user support services to be developed on routes as would be expected on a walking route of international standing. The criteria (draft) for international standard long distance walks is outlined in Appendix 3.

INITIALLY PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ENSURING THESE ROUTES ARE ACCREDITED AND MEET ALL OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS. SOME OF THESE ROUTES MAY NEED TO BE FURTHER DEVELOPED TO REDUCE THE PROPORTION OF ROUTE ON ROAD.



Based on current infrastructure, trail quality and tourism potential the following routes have greatest potential to reach International standard in the short term (2 /3 Years)

(Listed in alphabetical order)

- Beara Way
- Dingle Way
- Kerry Way
- Sheep's Head Way
- Wicklow Way

3. The following Ways will continue to be promoted as National Waymarked Trails and in some cases will need to be shortened or re-configured to include a range of quality looped walk options to increase the attractiveness of the route for casual walkers.

(Listed in alphabetical order)

- Avondhu Way
- Ballyhoura Way
- Cavan Way
- Duhallow Way
- Leitrim Way
- Lough Derg Way
- Mid Clare Way
- Monaghan Way
- Offaly Way
- Slieve Bloom Way
- Slieve Felim Way
- Sligo Way
- Slí na Finne
- Slí Cholmcilla
- Slí na Rosann
- Slí Connamara
- South Leinster Way
- Suck Valley Way
- Tipperary Heritage Way
- Westmeath Way

Quality walking sections (and suggested link sections located on road) should be identified on some routes and detailed consideration should also be given to developing looped walks from trail head locations.

(Refer Review Information Note 1 - Appendix 4):

4. A Trail Development Programme for National Waymarked Ways should be established to support review recommendations 1, 2 and 3. The programme should have 3 phases:

- Developing the 5 trails identified as a priority for categorisation as National Long Distance Trails. The programme should address two areas:
 - o Trail quality improvement to ensure they meet all requirements of the Management Standard for Recreational Trails and
 - o Supporting the developing user supporting services (such as accommodation, booking service, luggage transfer and other features which would be expected on trails of international standing.

- Developing the 9 trails with potential to eventually become National Long Distance Trails. The programme should address primarily trail quality improvement at this stage to ensure that these trails meet the requirements of the Management Standards for Recreational Trails.
- Developing the remaining 20 trails recommended for categorisation as National Waymarked Trails. This will entail shortening/re-configuring trails where appropriate as well as improving overall quality to ensure that the requirements of the Management Standard for Recreational Trails are met.

The Trail Development Programme should also make provision for :-

- o The upgrade of trail information boards at start/ finish and trail head locations along every trail.
- o The introduction of Trail Name Discs on all National Waymarked Trails, National Long Distance Trails & National Waterway Trails.

5. The following recommendations are made in respect to Trail Management :-

- Trail management organisation structures should be reviewed and strengthened on all trails. Trail management committees should be established on routes that currently do not have them. **(Ref Information Note 2 - Appendix 4)**
- Trail Maintenance, Management & Development Plans should be developed on all routes. Plans should include details on
 - o Work to be done to address quality issues identified in the 2009 annual inspections.
 - o Plans to address the issue of road sections on existing trails including re- routing off-road , re-configuring routes, shortening or removing road sections, identifying quality walking sections and link sections (on road) and options for developing loop walks.
 - o Support services to be developed.

Trail Maintenance, Management & Development Plans should define the management structure, roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved with the trail. **(REFER TO INFORMATION NOTE 3- Appendix 4)**

- Trail Maintenance Funding arrangements for Committees should be established.
- Programme to encourage more people to become involved with trail management on a voluntary basis at local level should be explored. Particular efforts should be made to improve linkages between trail management committees and local hill walking clubs.

6. The Walks Scheme should be implemented on all National Waymarked Ways as funding permits. (REFER TO INFORMATION NOTE 4 - Appendix 4). Consideration should be given to further refinement and expansion of the scheme as deemed necessary.

7. The following recommendations are made in respect to support systems for National Waymarked Ways

- Trail inspection programme currently operated by the National Trails Office should continue.
- Technical trail advisory service to assist with the planning, development and management of trails must be made available to trail committees.
- Trail education programme should be established to support individuals, organisations and volunteers involved with the maintenance and management of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

- A trail usage monitoring and user feedback programme must be introduced on all trails ideally or at least on a cross selection of trails, as a matter of priority.

8. The following recommendations are made in respect to awareness building and promotion :

- Marketing / promotional strategy for the three new trail categories recommended in the review must be devised to consider the promotion of routes locally, nationally and internationally.
- Programme to increase awareness and usage of National Waymarked Ways and other trails among young people should be explored. Options to link with the Green Schools programme and promote locally through the Local Sports Partnership Network should be explored.
- Guided walks should be organised on a regular basis on all trails to increase awareness among local people, school groups and local tourism business operators.
- Formal communication mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that trail committees are communicating effectively with tourism authorities, tour operators and other stakeholders. Trail Management Committees need to take an active role in the marketing and promotion of their trails.
- Tourist Office staff should be kept up to date on all trails in their area.
- National trail promotion websites including irishtrails.ie, discoverireland.ie, Coillteoutdoors.ie and shannonregiontrails.ie to be coordinated to ensure consistent, up to date information is displayed on all trails.
- Individual trail websites should be developed for each National Waymarked Way e.g. wicklowway.com, kerryway.com.
- It is recommended that the Leave No Trace message be adopted by all National Waymarked Way Committees and be promoted on all trail publications.

9. The following recommendations are made for specific National Waymarked Ways

- Feasibility of establishing and promoting an Irish Coast to Coast walk linking the Wicklow, South Leinster, East Munster, Avondhu, Duhallow, Kerry and Beara Ways should be explored. These Ways combined are already identified by the European Ramblers Association as part of European Long Distance Path E8 which goes 4700km across Europe from Cork to Turkey the Black Sea.
- The Western Way from Galway to North Mayo should be established and promoted as a complete route
- Bealach na Gaeltachta – Slí Dhún Na nGall should be re-presented as four individual walking routes (as opposed to one) and management structure should be developed accordingly.
- The feasibility of linking Slieve League, Slí Colmcille and the Bluestack Way in Co. Donegal with the Ulster Way should be explored with a view to establishing this as the Irish section of the proposed International Appalachian Trail (IAT). Reference website for IAT - <http://www.iatnl.ca>

10. The following work is recommended as a follow up to this review in 2010

- Review is undertaken of all other waymarked walking trails not included in this review but forming part of the national trail network, including St. Kevins Way (Pilgrim Path), Cosan Na Niamh (Pilgrim Path) , Lough Derg Pilgrim Path, Foxford Way, Bangor Trail, Croagh Patrick Heritage Way, Nore River Valley Way, Hymany Way, Multeen Way, Aran Way, Coillte trails and the National Looped Walks network.
- A detailed ten year budget proposal for trail development, maintenance and promotion of National Waymarked Ways and other recreational trails in Ireland should be prepared and presented to the appropriate body for decision. Protocols for funding and benefits likely to accrue to the State (economic, social, health etc) from investment in National Waymarked Ways and other recreational trails in Ireland should also be quantified and included in this budget proposal. This work should be undertaken as a priority following the completion of this review.







national trails office
an Irish Sports Council initiative

THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL



AN CHOIMISE IRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

INDIVIDUAL RECOMMENDATIONS



Individual Trail Recommendations

Trails are listed and numbered alphabetically as on the National Waymarked Way overview map included earlier in this report (page 11). Details listed for each trail is based on best available information at time of review.

1. Ballyhoura Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Ballyhoura Fáilte
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 50% (45km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels : Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic Area
 - o Excellent community support
 - o Good range of walking options developed in area
 - o Tourism infrastructure developing in area
 - o Range of other attractions developing in the area

Recommendations

- New trail maintenance & management plan required for Ballyhoura Way & other walks in region.
- Consideration should be given to establishing quality sections and link sections on existing route especially at Southern and Northern ends
- Improved on-line information required for Ballyhoura Way & other walks in region

2. Barrow Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Waterways Ireland
- Current Condition of Route: Good (not inspected against standard in 2009)
- Proportion of route on road: 9% (9km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Medium / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Adequate
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Trail is generally well maintained
 - o Towpath is generally in good condition
 - o Scenic trail with lots of biodiversity
 - o Quality low level / easy walk suitable for all

Recommendations

- Trail management plan should be developed for the trail
- Improving interpretation required for the trail including new map boards.
- A dedicated guide to walking the Barrow Way should be developed
- Improved on-line information is required for the Barrow Way
- Development of short looped walks should be considered.
- Consideration should be given to the development of sections of the towpath for cycling

3. Beara Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Beara Tourism & Development Association
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable (important maintenance issues to address)
- Proportion of route on road: 46.5% (92km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – High / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic /coastal and upland landscapes
 - o Walks Scheme in place
 - o Excellent community support
 - o Good tourism infrastructure
 - o New trail & tourism development work on Bere Island

Recommendations

- A new trail management plan should be developed by the Committee in conjunction with all supporting agencies.
- Remedial work specified in 2009 inspection report should be completed as a priority
- Consideration should be given to initiating a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard
- Detailed consideration should be given to the advertising and promotion of the Beara Way in the future. Joined up marketing efforts between other trail committees in the South West should be explored.

4. Avondhu Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Avondhu Tourism
- Current Condition of Route: Very Good
- Proportion of route on road: 42% (40km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Medium / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good but requires strengthening
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic and varied landscapes throughout
 - o Well maintained
 - o New looped walks
 - o Good community support

Recommendations

- Trail Management structure should be reviewed
- Trail maintenance and management plan to be developed
- Consideration should be given to whether the route is promoted as the Avondhu Way or Blackwater Way in the future
- Consideration to be given to dividing the trail into quality walk sections and link sections
- Long tarred road sections should be re-routed where possible.
- Updated map guide should be produced
- Consideration should be given to initiating a collaboration project around developing Ireland's –Coast to Coast Walk (E8)

- Detailed consideration should be given to the advertising and promotion of the Avondhu Way in the future. Joined up marketing efforts between other trail management committees/groups in the Golden Vale / Munster region should be explored.

5. Duhallow Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: IRD Duhallow
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 31% (21km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires strengthening
- Strengths / Achievements
 - Scenic and varied landscapes throughout
 - Well maintained
 - New looped walks (in the Duhallow region)
 - Good community support

Recommendations

- Trail Management structure should be reviewed and strengthened as necessary.
- Trail maintenance and management plan to be developed.
- Final section from City should be completed.
- Consideration should be given to whether the trail is promoted as the Duhallow Way or Blackwater Way in the future.
- Consideration to be given to dividing the trail into quality walk sections and link sections
- Long tarred road sections should be re-routed where possible.
- Updated map guide should be produced
- Consideration should be given to initiating a collaboration project around developing Ireland's – Coast to Coast Walk (E8)
- Detailed consideration should be given to the advertising and promotion of the Duhallow Way in the future. Joined up marketing efforts between other trail committees/ groups in the Golden Vale / Munster region should be explored.

6. Bluestack Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Bluestack Way Management Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 32% (20km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - Scenic upland walking trail
 - Excellent community and local support
 - Reasonably well maintained
 - Development of walking hub in Donegal town

Recommendations

- Trail maintenance and management plan to be developed
- Trail to be retained in current format but development of new looped walks off main route should be considered.
- Sections of busy tarred road should be re-routed.
- Consideration should be given to initiating a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard
- Joined up marketing efforts between other trail management committees in Donegal and the North West should be explored.

7. Burren Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Burren Way Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 74% (84km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic / iconic landscape
 - o Burren National Park & Brand
 - o Coastal views
 - o Good tourism infrastructure in place
 - o Scenic villages & towns along trail

Recommendations

- Route has very good potential to be developed as an international standard Multiday walk but requires significant work.
- Consideration be given to initiating a project aimed at bringing the route up to international standard
- Trail maintenance and management plan should be developed
- Proportion of road used on current route to be reduced as a matter of priority
- Formal trail management committee to be established
- Planned re-routes to be put into effect
- Trail support services and facilities to be reviewed
- New website for the Burren Way to be considered

8. Cavan Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Cavan County Council
- Current Condition of Route: Very Good
- Proportion of route on road: 61% (13.5km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Adequate
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic and varied landscape
 - o New map boards and downloadable information on-line
 - o Proximity to Cuilcagh Mountains Geo Park

Recommendations

- Trail to continue to be promoted as a National Waymarked Trail
- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed
- Consideration to be given to reducing the amount of tarred road used on the trail.
- Development of additional loops off main trail to be considered
- Joined up marketing efforts between other trail management committees/ groups in the North West should be explored.

9. Slí Chonamara

- Responsible Body/Committee: Galway County Council, Údarás Na Gaeltachta
- Current Condition of Route: Poor
- Proportion of route on road: 69% (151km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Recently established group welcomed
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic / Iconic Landscape
 - o Connemara brand
 - o Proximity to Galway City, Barna, An Spidéal

Recommendations

- Current route to be reviewed
- Consideration to be given to long term management arrangements for trail
- Forlam trail management Committee to be established (following current review)
- Consideration to given to re-development and promoting Sli Chonemara as a cycling trail
- Development of looped walks and short walks along existing route to be considered
- West Galway trails network should be established to oversee maintenance, management and promotion of all developed trails in the region.

11. Slí Corca Dhuibhne / Dingle Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Dingle Way Committee, MFG Comhar Dhuibhne, Kerry County Council
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable (important maintenance issues to address)
- Proportion of route on road: 47% (76km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – High / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Current Committee to be re-configured
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic and varied landscape offered along trail
 - o Good tourism infrastructure available along trail
 - o Good local authority and community support
- Committed workforce in place
- New looped walks

Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to establishing a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard
- The Dingle Way Committee structure should be reviewed and strengthened
- Irish name should be used on all trail promotional materials

- A number of eroded and very wet trail sections should be upgraded as a matter of priority
- A new Trail Maintenance & Management plan should be developed by the Committee in conjunction with all supporting agencies.
- Necessary maintenance to be carried out to ensure trail is fully accredited
- Number of unsuitable road sections to be re-routed
- Series of looped walks and trail head access points to be developed off and along main trail

12. Bealach Na Gaeltachta / Slí Dhún na nGall – Slí Eargail

- Responsible Body/Committee: Donegal County Council, Udaras Na Gaeltachta
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 63% (48km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires new management structure
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic / Iconic Landscape
 - o Eargail Mountain / An Earagail
 - o Proximity to Glenveagh National Park

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be established locally in conjunction with Donegal County Council and other agencies
- Trail Maintenance and Management plan to be developed
- Tarred road sections to be taken off road where possible.
- Development of short looped walks and improved trail head facilities to be incorporated into plan.
- Consideration be given to initiating a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard

13. Bealach Na Gaeltachta / Slí Dhún na nGall – Slí Colmcilla

- Responsible Body/Committee: Donegal County Council, Udaras Na Gaeltachta
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 63% (41km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires new management structure
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic landscape
 - o Local heritage & archaeological sites

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be established locally in conjunction with Donegal County Council and other agencies
- Trail Maintenance and Management Plan to be developed
- Tarred road sections to be taken off road where possible.
- Development of short looped walks and improved trail head facilities to be incorporated into plan.

14. BealachtNa Gaeltachta / Slí Dhún na nGall – Slí Na Finne

- Responsible Body/Committee: Donegal County Council, Udaras Na Gaeltachta
- Current Condition of Route: Poor
- Proportion of route on road: 56% (28km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires new management structure
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic area
- Gaeltacht region/heritage
- local history

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be established locally in conjunction with Donegal County Council and other agencies
- Trail Maintenance and Management plan to be developed
- Tarred road sections to be taken off road where possible.
- Development of short looped walks and improved trail head facilities to be incorporated into plan.

15. Bealach Na Gaeltachta / Slí Dhún na nGall – Slí Na Rosann

- Responsible Body/Committee: Donegal County Council, Udaras Na Gaeltachta
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 80% (52km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires new management structure
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic landscape
 - o Strong Local heritage
- o Gaeltacht region

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be established locally in conjunction with Donegal County Council and other agencies
- Trail Maintenance and Management plan to be developed
- Tarred road sections to be taken off road where possible.
- Development of short looped walks and improved trail head facilities to be incorporated into plan.

16. East Clare Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: East & Mid Clare Way Ltd / East Clare Way Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 53% (95km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Very Good

- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic Landscape
 - o Strong local interest and community support
- Excellent management structure
 - o Network of looped walks off existing trail
 - o Linkage to Shannon Region trails brand, website etc.
- Committed local management committee

Recommendations

- Trail Committee to prepare a new Trail Maintenance & Management Plan for the trail.
- Careful consideration should be given to the marketing and promotion of the trail
- Proportion of current trail located on road is high and is an issue that needs to be addressed. Section between Killaloe to Tulla (south) requires special attention in this regard
- Further development and enhancement of existing short looped walks and improved trail head facilities to be incorporated into plan.
- Consideration should be given to establishing walking weekend/ week packages on the route
- Joined up marketing efforts between other trail management committees/groups in the Shannon Region to be continued.

17. East Munster Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Tipperary (SR) County Council, Coillte, Waterford Co Co
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 36% (27km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Medium/High
- Management Structure Arrangements: New Trail Management Committee required
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Pleasant and scenic river bank and landscape sections
 - o Route links up a number of villages and towns
 - o Good local authority and Coillte support

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be established
- Trail Maintenance and Management Plan to be developed
- Trail to be retained in current format
- Tared road sections to be re-routed off road where possible
- Consideration to be given to identifying quality walking sections along trail.
- Consideration should be given to supporting a collaboration project around developing Ireland's –Coast to Coast Walk (E8)

18. Grand Canal Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Waterways Ireland
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 26% (30km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Adequate

- Strengths / Achievements
 - Trail is generally well maintained
 - Towpath is generally in good condition
 - Scenic trail with lots of biodiversity

Recommendations

- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed for the route
- Improving interpretation along the trail is required including map boards
- A dedicated guide to walking the Grand Canal Way should be developed
- Improved on-line information is required for the Grand Canal Way
- Consideration should be given to the development of sections of the towpath for cycling
- Consideration should be given to the development of Looped walks along the trail.

19. Kerry Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Kerry Way Committee, Kerry County Council, South Kerry Development Partnership
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable (important maintenance issues to address)
- Proportion of route on road: 36% (77km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – High / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Communication links between partners recommended
- Strengths / Achievements
 - Kerry Way is an established brand
 - Strong heritage theme
 - Scenic and varied landscape along trail
 - Good tourism infrastructure available along trail
- ◦ Good local authority and community support

Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to establishing a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard.
- A new Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be developed by Kerry Way Committee in conjunction with all supporting agencies.
- Maintenance programme to be put into effect to ensure trail is fully accredited
- Number of unsuitable road sections to be re-routed
- Guidebook to be developed for the trail
- Series of looped walks and trail head access points to be developed off and along main trail.

20. Slí Liatroma – The Leitrim Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Leitrim County Council
- Current Condition of Route: Poor (Leitrim Way currently not being promoted)
- Proportion of route on road: 48% (22km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Under Development
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: To be re-established

- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic area/ landscape
 - o Strong local heritage theme
 - o Pleasant walking area

Recommendations

- Current trail should be re-appraised with view to re-routing, shortening and removing long road sections
- Trail Management Committee should be re-established
- Short looped walks and trail head access points should be developed
- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be developed
- Additional interpretation for heritage sites along route recommended
- New mapguide & website should be developed

21. Lough Derg Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Shannon Development , Tipperary (NR) Co Co, Tipperary Integrated Development Company
- Current Condition of Route: Poor (*Limerick /Clare section is good*)
- Proportion of route on road: 55% (37km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic / Iconic Landscape – River Shannon, Lough Derg etc
 - o Links to Limerick City and proximity to Shannon
 - o Link to Shannon region trails brand
 - o New looped walks off main trail

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be formally established
- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be prepared
- Consideration should be given to defining quality walking sections and link road sections along the route
- Development of additional looped walks off main route recommended
- Promotional efforts should concentrate on attracting day walkers in the future

22. Mid Clare Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: East & Mid Clare Way Ltd / Mid Clare Way Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Poor
- Proportion of route on road: 65% (96km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic , rural landscape
 - o Heritage along trail
 - o Scenic villages and towns located along trail
 - o Proximity to Ennis and Shannon
 - o Committed local management committee

Recommendations

- Mid Clare Way Committee to prepare a new Trail Maintenance & Management Plan for the trail.
- Current format of trail to be examined with a view to establishing a series of scenic & historic shorter walks – possible around villages and towns along trail.
- Consideration to be given to identifying quality sections and link sections along existing trail.
- Careful consideration should be given to the marketing and promotion of the trail
- Promotional efforts should concentrate on attracting day walkers in the future

23. Miners Way & Historical Trail

- Responsible Body/Committee: Roscommon Integrated Development Company, Sligo County Council, Roscommon County Council, Leitrim County Council
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 51% (59km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Recently re-established Management Committee welcomed
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic and varied landscapes throughout
 - o Strong heritage & archaeological theme
 - o Lough Key, Arigna, Bricklieve Mts etc
 - o Strong community and local interest

Recommendations

- Miner's Way & Historical Trail Management Committee to be re- activated
- Consideration should be given to establishing a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard
- Miner's Way & Historical Trail Management Committee to prepare a new Trail Maintenance & Management Plan for the trail.
- On-road and very wet sections to be re-assessed
- Range of trail user support services to be introduced including website, up to date literature etc
- Development of looped walks off main trail to be considered
- New website recommended for trail (similar to wicklowway.com)

24. Monaghan Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Monaghan County Council & Monaghan Way Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 57%(37km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Needs to be formalised
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Excellent achievement in getting trail completed
 - o Good trail publication
 - o Good local support
- o Scenic landscapes and local heritage along trail

Recommendations

- Trail Management arrangements need to be reviewed and formalised



- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be prepared
- Quality walking sections and link sections should be identified along trail.
- Options for shorter looped walks off the main trail should be explored
- Consideration should be given to how the trail is marketed and promoted both locally, regionally and nationally.
- Consideration should be given to hosting a number of guided walks on the trail for local people, school groups and tourism business annually to increase awareness about the trail.

26. North Kerry Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: North Kerry Walks Ltd
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 36% (16km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Not inspected against standard in 2009
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Medium / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic coastal walking trail that is well maintained
 - o Excellent community support
 - o Well organised management group
 - o Good tourism infrastructure in region

Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to establishing a project aimed at developing the existing trail to international standard
- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed
- Consideration to be given to reducing the amount of tarred road used on the trail.
- Consideration should be given to the marketing, advertising and promotion of the North Kerry Way (and other trails in North Kerry).

27. Offaly Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Offaly County Council, Bord na Mona, Offaly Integrated Development Company
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 46%(17km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Slieve Bloom Way & Offaly Way Management Committee required
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Trail is generally well maintained by Offaly County Council & Offaly Integrated Development Company
 - o Development of Lough Boora Parkland is very positive
 - o Introduction of Walks Scheme along trail is positive

Recommendations

- New Slieve Bloom Way & Offaly Way Management Committee to be established
- New Trail Maintenance and Management Plan to be developed for Offaly Way
- Consideration to be given to reducing the amount of tarred road used on the trail.
- Interpretation of rich heritage along route should be improved for visitors to the area and trail users.

- Consideration to be given to promoting the trail as a dual walking and cycling route
- Further consideration should be given to extending the route to Clonmacnoise and/or Pollagh or Clara
- Promotional website for Slievebloom & Offaly Way should be established similar to www.wicklowway.com

28. Royal Canal Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Waterways Ireland
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 12% (9km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Trail is generally well maintained
 - o Towpath is generally in good condition
 - o Scenic trail with lots of biodiversity

Recommendations

- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be developed for the route
- Improving interpretation along the trail is required including new map boards.
- A dedicated walking guide for the Grand Canal Way should be developed
- Improved on-line information is required for the Grand Canal Way
- Consideration could be given to the development of sections of the towpath for cycling

29. Sheep's Head Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Sheep's Head Way Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Very Good
- Proportion of route on road: 31% (28km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – High / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic /Coastal Landscape
 - o Walks Scheme in place
 - o Excellent community support
 - o Good tourism infrastructure
- Several looped walks off main trail
- Community committed to the further development of the trail

Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to initiating a project aimed at bringing the trail up to international standard
- A new Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be developed by the Committee in conjunction with all supporting agencies.
- Detailed consideration should be given to the marketing, advertising and promotion of the Sheep's Head peninsula as a walking tourism destination in the future.

30. Slieve Bloom Way



- Responsible Body/Committee: Laois Co Co, Offaly Co Co, Laois Integrated Development Company, Coillte, Slieve Bloom Development Association
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 28% (24km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Slieve Bloom Way & Offaly Way Management Committee required
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Good trail infrastructure in place
 - o Development of trailheads and looped walks in recent years is very positive (16 Looped walks)
 - o Good community, local authority and Coillte support

Recommendations

- New Slieve Bloom Way & Offaly Way Management Committee to be established
- New Trail Maintenance and Management Plan to be developed
- Options for half day and day walking loops to be explored along existing trail
- Consideration to be given to reducing the amount of road used on the trail (tarred & forest)
- Promotional website for Slievebloom Way & Offaly Way (and associated looped walks) should be established similar to www.wicklowway.com
- Joined up marketing initiatives recommended with other Trail Committees in Midland and Shannon region.

31. Slieve Felim Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Shannon Development & Coillte
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 26%(11km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) - Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Unclear
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic area but high proportion of trail located on forest roads
 - o Proximity to Limerick City
 - o Some looped walks off main trail
- Introduction of Walks Scheme

Recommendations

- Trail Management arrangements to be reviewed and strengthened
- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed between agencies
- Road sections including forest road sections to be reviewed

32. Sligo Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Sligo County Council, Sligo Integrated Development Company & Sligo Walks Partnership
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 51% (40km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Medium/High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements

- o Scenery / rural landscapes
- o Lough Talt & Easky Lough, Slish Woods all scenic walking areas
- o Proximity to Sligo town

Recommendations

- Sligo Way & Looped Walks - Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed
- Consideration to be given to reducing the amount of tarred road used on the trail.
- Consideration to be given to further development of looped walks along popular / scenic locations along the trail
- Consideration to be given to promoting the trail as a dual walking and cycling routes.
- A Sligo trails website should be developed promoting the Sligo Way and all other trails in the county similar to www.wicklowway.com

33. South Leinster Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Carlow County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Tipperary (SR) County Council, Carlow Local Sports Partnership, Kilkenny Trails, Coillte
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 55% (58km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Medium/High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good but should be formalised
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic and varied landscape throughout including river bank sections
 - o Some sections of trail currently in good condition, others poor.
 - o Route links a number of scenic villages & towns
 - o Trail provides a strategic link between Wicklow Way and East Munster Way

Recommendations

- Trail Management Committee to be formally established
- New Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed
- Quality walking sections and link section to be highlighted along the trail
- New mapguide to be developed for trail
- Options for development of short scenic looped walks to be explored along the trail.
- Options for reducing long road sections should be explored

34. Suck Valley Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Roscommon Integrated Development Company, Suck Valley Committee, Roscommon County Council
- Current Condition of Route: Poor
- Proportion of route on road: 35% (37km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Non Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Medium/Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires Restructuring
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic lowland and river bank walk
 - o Links a number of villages in the area

Recommendations

- Suck Valley Walking Partnership to be formally established
- New Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be development



- Consideration to be given to re-configuring the existing route into a series of short looped and linear walks.
- Roscommon Integrated Development Company to prepare an action plan for priority maintenance & upgrade works for 2010 in consultation with landowners, local authority and other partner agencies.
- Review options for flooded sections
- Promotional efforts should concentrate on attracting day walkers in the future

35. Táin Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Louth County Council, Coillte & Walks Partnership Group
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 52% (21km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Medium/ Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good but requires strengthening
- Strengths / Achievements:
 - o Scenic upland & coastal region
 - o Excellent start / finish point – Carlingford village
 - o Proximity to Northern Ireland & Dublin
 - o Local Heritage
 - o Reasonably good tourism infrastructure in region

Recommendations

- Trail Management structure should be reviewed
- Trail Maintenance and Management plan to be developed
- Consideration to be given to re-routing tarred road sections where possible.
- Further development of looped walks off main trail to be considered.
- Website should be developed for the trail (similar lto www.wicklowway.com)

36. Tipperary Heritage Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Tipperary Heritage Way Committee, Tipperary (SR) Co Co, South Tipperary Integrated Development Company
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 55% (31km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Medium/Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good but requires strengthening
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic and varied walking trail
 - o Excellent finish at the Rock of Cashel
 - o Route punctuated by a number of scenic villages and towns
 - o Good local authority and community support

Recommendations

- Trail Management structure should be reviewed and new people added
- Trail Maintenance and Management Plan to be developed
- Consideration to be given to dividing the route into quality walk sections and link sections
- Long tarred road sections should be re-routed where possible.
- Website should be developed for the trail

- Detailed consideration to be given to the marketing and promotion of the trail moving forward.

37. Western Way (Galway)

Responsible Body/Committee: Galway County Council & Coillte

- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 54% (29km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Medium / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Requires re-structuring and strengthening with increased community involvement
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic , Iconic and varied landscapes throughout
 - o Proximity to Galway City

Recommendations

- The Western Way has excellent potential to progress to an International standard multi-day walk in the west of Ireland
- Management Committee should be re-established with increased input from Community groups in Oughtarard, Maam Cross and Leenane.
- Western Way Trail Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed
- Collaborative project between Galway and Mayo Co Co on Western Way recommended.
- Development of scenic looped walks off main route at strategic locations recommended.
- New website to be developed for the western Way (Mayo & Galway) similar to www.wicklowway.com

38. Western Way (Mayo)

- Responsible Body/Committee: Mayo County Council, South Mayo Development Company, Mayo North & East Development Company.
- Current Condition of Route: Good
- Proportion of route on road: 48% (60km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Medium / Day Usage (Sections) - Medium
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Scenic & varied landscapes throughout
 - o Trail passes through a number of scenic and pleasant villages and towns
 - o Good management structure now in place
 - o Walking Officer employed by Mayo Co Co
 - o Walks Scheme introduced on trail
 - o Good tourism infrastructure along trail

Recommendations

- The Western Way has excellent potential to progress to an International standard multi-day walk in the west of Ireland.
- Western Way Maintenance & Management Plan to be developed for entire route
- Western Way should be promoted from Co. Galway to Co. Mayo and both counties should work in close partnership in the maintenance, management and promotion of the trail.
- A collaborative project between Galway and Mayo Co Co aimed at bringing the Western Way up to international standard is recommended.
- Development of new loops off main trail recommended.



- New website to be developed for the Western Way
- Work to continue to get route off road , especially at start from Lenane and between Westport and Newport.
- Northern section from Ballycastle to Ballina also to be reviewed.
- Consideration to be given to finishing the trail in Ballina (suggested at Ballina Tourist Office overlooking the River Moy)

39. Westmeath Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Westmeath Way Committee , Westmeath County Council
- Current Condition of Route: Reasonable
- Proportion of route on road: 41% (13.5km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Partially Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – Low / Day Usage (Sections) – Medium/Low
- Management Structure Arrangements: Good
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Varied scenery
 - o Pleasant low land and scenic walk suitable for all ages and abilities
 - o Good Trail Management Committee

Recommendations

- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be developed
- Consideration to be given to reducing the amount of tarred road used on the trail
- Development on a number of looped walks in scenic areas along the trail should be considered
- Promotional efforts should concentrate on attracting day walkers in the future

40. Wicklow Way

- Responsible Body/Committee: Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee
- Current Condition of Route: Very Good
- Proportion of route on road: 30% (38km)
- Status on National Trails Register: Accredited
- Current Usage Levels: Multiday Usage – High / Day Usage (Sections) - High
- Management Structure Arrangements: Adequate
- Strengths / Achievements
 - o Very well established and well used trail
- Varied Scenery
 - o Upgrade programme in 2005, 06 and 07 delivered some positive results
 - o Good trail usage monitoring system in place
 - o Wicklowway.com website is very good

Recommendations

- Consideration be given to initiating a project aimed at developing sections of the trail further and improving trail support services as described in Appendix 3
- Trail Maintenance & Management Plan should be reviewed and updated
- The further upgrade of a number of sections including long forest roads and tarred road section should be considered in the coming years.
- The development of a number of looped walks off the Wicklow Way should be considered.



- Improved parking facilities may need to be considered at various locations along the trail.



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

**THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL**



AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION



Review Implementation

The review sets out a number of recommendations for all agencies and organisations involved with National Waymarked Ways in Ireland. The implementation of recommendations will require continued and increased efforts from all and significant investment.

Research from benchmark countries indicates that a top quality recreational trail system cannot be developed overnight but requires substantive and sustained investment over a number of years.

In New Zealand, trail usage and outdoor adventure sports are a central element of the New Zealand tourism industry which contributes almost 15% of New Zealand's GDP (NZ\$13 bn). New Zealand has developed a world class network of hiking trails and the New Zealand government invests an equivalent to €41.6 ml annual on its trails and recreation infrastructure.

In Scotland, another benchmark country for Ireland, the Scottish Executive provides funding of the order €35ml to local authorities and €25 ml to the Forestry Commission annually, to support the development and promotion of core path networks, recreational and trail development.

While a certain amount of trail development and upgrade work has been funded in Ireland in recent years, mainly through the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and the Dept of Arts, Sports and Tourism (Fáilte Ireland), increased investment is now required from the State if the potential economic and social benefits possible from Ireland's National Waymarked Ways are to be optimized. The scale of investment required can only be accurately quantified by undertaking a more detailed examination of each trail to quantify the type and scale of work required.

The review recommends that a 10 year funding strategy, similar to the approach taken in New Zealand to develop its world class trail system be adopted in Ireland covering the re-development, construction, upgrade, annual maintenance and promotion of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland. Capital funding for new trail construction and upgrade work will be required on sections of many trails and increased funding for trail maintenance will also be required by all agencies responsible for maintenance of trails.



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative



SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS:
A Review of National Waymarked Ways in Ireland

APPENDICES



Appendix 1 - Review Stakeholders

- Avondhu Tourism Association
- Avondhu/Blackwater Development Company
- Ballyhoura Failte Ltd
- Beara Tourism & Development Association
- Bluestack Way Committee
- Burren Way Committee
- Carlow County Council
- Carlow County Development Partnership
- Cavan County Council
- Clare County Council
- Clare Local Development Company
- Coillte
- Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism
- Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
- Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government
- Dingle Way Committee
- Donegal County Council
- Donegal Development Company
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
- East & Mid Clare Way Ltd
- Failte Ireland
- Forum (Connemara, Co. Galway)
- Galway County Council
- Galway Rural Development Company
- IRD Duhallow
- Irish Sports Council
- Kerry County Council
- Kerry Way Committee
- Kilkenny County Council
- Kilkenny Leader Partnership Company
- Kilkenny Trails
- Laois County Council
- Laois Partnership Company
- Leitrim County Council
- Leitrim Development Company Ltd
- Louth County Council
- Mayo County Council
- Mayo North & East Development Company
- Mayo Walking Partnership
- Meath Partnership
- Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teoranta
- MFG Comhar Dhuibhne
- Monaghan County Council
- Monaghan Development Company
- Monaghan Walks Committee
- National Parks & Wildlife Service (Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government)
- North & East Kerry Leader Partnership
- North Kerry Walks
- North Tipperary Development Company
- Offaly County Council
- Offaly Development Company
- Roscommon County Council
- Roscommon Integrated Development Company
- Shannon Development
- Sheep's Head Way Committee
- Slieve Bloom Development Association
- Sligo County Council
- Sligo Leader Partnership Company
- South Kerry Development Partnership
- South Tipperary Integrated Development
- South West Mayo Development
- Suck Valley Development Committee
- Tipperary (NR) County Council
- Tipperary (SR) County Council
- Tipperary Way Management Committee
- Tochar Valley Partnership
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Walking Routes Ireland
- Waterford County Council
- Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd.
- Waterways Ireland
- West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.
- Westmeath County Council
- Westmeath Community Development
- Wicklow County Council
- Wicklow Partnership
- Wicklow Uplands Council
- Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee

Note: Every effort has been made to include a complete list of stakeholders involved with National Waymarked Ways in Ireland. In the event that we have neglected to include an organisation currently involved, we extend our apologies.



Appendix 2 - Summary Of Management Standards For Walking Trails In Ireland

Mandatory Requirements

- Must have permitted access from all landowners on the trail route
- Must have evidence of consultation with the appropriate authority if a trail passes through site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest
- Must not have any hazards with potential to endanger the walker.

Other Requirements

1. Trail Information

Information about the trail should be available to users as follows:

Trail map and trail information: (hard copy or printable from the internet):

- Map showing the route, with sufficient detail such that it can be used for route finding on the trail, including ; start/finish points, all junctions where the user could divert from the route must be clearly represented and any other recognised access points to the trail in addition to the main start finish points should be shown.
- Information on the grade of the trail and a definition of the grades.
- Length of the trail, estimated time to complete and ascent in metres.
- Brief route description.
- Description of waymarking used on the trail.
- Email or phone number for trail management organisation.
- Emergency services contact details.
- Information on whether dogs are permitted on the trail.
- The “Leave No Trace” principles .

Information Board at the trail head which includes:

- Map showing route , start and finish point and a ‘you are here’ pointer
- Information on the grade of the trail and a definition of the grades.
- Length of the trail, estimated time to complete and ascent in metres.
- Brief route description.
- Description of way marking used on the trail.
- Email or phone number for trail management organisation.
- Emergency services contact details.
- Information on whether dogs are permitted on the trail.
- The “Leave No Trace” principles⁵.

2. The Route

The route must:

- Be unobstructed and passable along its entire length
- Have warning signs on the trail for walkers where it crosses National (N) or Regional (R) roads or other busy trafficked roads
- Have warning signs for motorists on the road where it crosses N or R roads or other busy trafficked roads

⁵ While the standard requires the use of the “Leave No Trace” principles on information boards, it is recognised that some older boards may use “countryside code” messages. This will be acceptable in 2009 but should be updated to the “Leave No Trace” principles (endorsed by Comhairle Na Tuaithe) at the earliest possible opportunity.

- Trail should be kept away from unprotected cliff tops, tidal beaches, firing ranges or fields containing a bull.
- Warning signs must be in place warning of any hazards on the route which require users to take specific care e.g. electric fencing.
- Have protective tubing on electric fences which need to be crossed by walkers.

3. Waymarking

The trail must have:

- Signposting to the trailhead from the nearest public road.
- Waymarking at all junctions
- Reassurance waymarking at least every 1km.
- The same design of waymarking and waymarking standard used throughout an entire route.
- Different colours or numbers on markers or arrow plates if multiple trails are in the same area.
- Use the yellow “walking man” symbol and arrow on National Long Distance routes and this symbol is reserved for such routes.
- Waymarking clearly visible to an approaching walker and free from overgrown vegetation.
- Waymarking securely erected or attached, correctly aligned, clean and not faded.
- Temporary diversions on the trail must be clearly waymarked.

4. Trail Surface

The trail surface must:

- Be durable, robust and fit for purpose⁶ e.g. free from severe erosion and drainage problems. It should not be waterlogged, have extended sections which are boggy or have deep mud along the route.

5. Vegetation & Litter

The route must :

- Be unobstructed by vegetation.
- Have vegetation generally under control
- Be monitored for and kept free from litter and fly-tipped waste.

6. Trail Furniture & Service

Trail furniture includes:

- Information Boards
- Seating
- Markers
- Signage
- Stiles
- Gates
- Bridges
- Bog bridges
- Boardwalks
- Steps

Trail furniture must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained such that it is fit for purpose, robust, reliable and safe. Walking surface on stiles, board walks, bridges or steps must have a suitable ‘non-slip’ finish. Suitable off-road car parking space must be available at the trail head.

⁶ “Fit-for-purpose” i.e. If a trail is aimed at inexperienced walkers, children, family groups etc, it should be relatively wide, flat and have a reasonably smooth and compact surface. It can then be considered to be “fit for purpose”. Another trail developed for experienced walkers, perhaps in remote or upland areas, may have a surface which is substantially narrower, steeper in gradient and extremely uneven but also be “fit for purpose” because it is intended for a different type of user. See ‘Trail Classification and Standards’ issued by the National Trails Office for further detail.

Appendix 3 - Criteria For International Standard Long Distance Walks (Draft)

- The trail should offer at least 2 full days of scenic walking.
- The trail satisfies all aspects of the Management Standards for Recreational Trails in Ireland.
- In addition to the information required in the basic standard, detailed information is required on landscape characteristics and heritage sites, providing potential users with a detailed picture of what experience they can expect.
- The proportion of trail located on unsuitable roads is below 10%
- Detailed information both in print and on-line is provided for the trail and supporting services. Multi-lingual publications should also be available.
- The trail offers a variety of suitable accommodation including Hotels, B&B's, Hostels and camping sites along the route. Ideally accommodation providers should be catering for multi day walker needs offering dry / storage room, evening meals, luggage transfer, pick up / drop off service & packed lunches.
- The trail offers options for supply of all basic provisions including meals etc along the route
- The trail offers options for public transport services both to and from the start/ finish
- The trail offers a luggage transfer service along the route
- The trail offers options for qualified guiding services (Walking Group Leader(WGL) , Mountain Leader (ML) or Countryside Guide Award)

Appendix 4 - Review Information Notes

INFORMATION NOTE 1: QUALITY WALKING SECTIONS

The review recommends that the idea of identifying “quality walking sections” and “link sections” on some National Waymarked Ways should be considered. This concept has been introduced on the Ulster Way recently where the route is divided in 17 Quality sections and 10 link sections (Ref. www.ulsterway.com). The link sections are predominantly located on road and are not recommended for walking while the quality walking sections are promoted more widely for usage.

INFORMATION NOTE 2: TRAIL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

- Formal management structures should be put in place as a priority taking responsibility for the planning, management, development, maintenance, marketing and promotion of each trail.
- The management structure should include representatives from the local authority, local integrated development company, community councils and others as appropriate and should also be linked with tourism authorities and other agencies including Coillte, NPWS, Farming representative bodies etc.
- It is recommended that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out roles and responsibilities should be developed and agreed between all partners involved with the management of each National Waymarked Way.

INFORMATION NOTE 3: TRAIL MAINTENANCE & MANAGEMENT PLANS

Trail Maintenance and Management Plans should;

- Define the management structure, roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved with the trail.
- Include a list of all landowners whose land either crosses or adjoins the trail (register of landowners)
- Set out work to be done on the route (or each section of trail) in the coming year including
 - o Priority safety items
 - o Important maintenance tasks
 - o Other tasks
- Include plans to address the issue of road sections on existing trails including re- routing off-road , re-configuring routes, shortening or removing road sections, identifying quality walking sections and link sections (on road)
- Clarify who is undertaking each job
- Quantify all resources needed to complete each task within the plan

Trail Maintenance and Management Plans can also include the following

- Detail on how the trail is being marketed and promoted
- Information on further development works planned for the route including the development of looped walks etc

INFORMATION NOTE 4: WALKS SCHEME

The Walks Scheme is a national trail maintenance scheme that is administered and funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme has been introduced on a cross section of National Waymarked Ways during 2008 and 2009. Under the scheme landowners along a National Waymarked Ways undertake maintenance works on a route. This work is set out in an annual workplan. The scheme is administered locally for the Department by County Integrated Development Companies. For more information about the scheme contact the Rural Recreation Section, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Tel: 071 9186717



Appendix 5 - Review Assessment Criteria

Trail Standard on Overall Route	Criteria	Basis of assessment/Source of Information
1. General trail surface quality	Score based on the proportion of overall trail that has surface quality problems. Target is for entire trail to be robust, durable and fit for purpose.	Assessment based on most recent inspection reports for the route and a knowledge of the route by some members of the review panel.
2. General overall quality (excluding surface)	Score based on overall quality of trail including information at trail head, waymarking, trail furniture, vegetation maintenance etc.	Assessment based on recent inspection reports for the route and a knowledge of the route by some members of the review panel.
3. % of trail off-road & on suitable roads	Score based on proportion of trail off-road or on "suitable" road (see Note 1 below for details)	All roads measured accurately on a GIS map of the route and assessed for suitability.
User Experience - Current		
4. Current usage as a Long Distance Route / entire route	Score based on evident usage as a long distance /multi day walk	Assessment made based on experience of the route from inspectors, members of the panel and Failte Ireland interface with Walking Tour operators.
5. Scenery/Cultural experience	Score based on scenic quality and/or cultural points of interest along the route	Assessment made based on experience of the route from members of the panel and Failte Ireland interface with Walking Tour operators.
6. Availability of accommodation (along entire route)	Score based on availability of Failte Ireland approved accommodation providers along entire route	Assessment made based on experience of the route from inspectors, members of the panel, information in route guidebook, publications and looking at Discover Ireland accommodation finder.
7. Availability of up to date information (Print / Web)	Score based on availability of up to date map -guide, website etc with a map and other details of the route	Assessment made based on evaluation of print information available and Google search for web based information.
8. Accessibility for users (public transport and parking)	Score based on access to the route by public transport and from ports/airports. (See Note 2 for scoring)	Assessment based on availability of public transport bus & rail links, parking at start /finish of the route and proximity to airports. Bus and rail schedules were consulted for information.
Trail Management		
9. Organisation and commitment	Score based on evidence of enthusiasm and effort by management committee to ensure the route is maintained and promoted as a vibrant trail.	Assessment made based on experience of the route from inspectors, NTO and members of the panel. Evidence of continued effort and enthusiasm to maintain the route.
10. Community support	Score based on evidence of support from local community - e.g. accommodation providers, shops, land owners etc.	Assessment made based on experience of the route from NTO and members of the panel.
11. Local Authority support	Score based on evidence of local authority support through funding for and maintenance of the route	Assessment made based on experience of the route from NTO and members of the panel.
Trail Potential		
12. Potential to attract overseas tourists	Score for potential to attract overseas tourists based on the criteria assessed above and tourist potential of the area where the trail is located.	Assessed based on above scores and tourist potential of the area where the trail is located. Inputs from Failte Ireland participating on the panel and feedback from walking tour operators
13. Potential to attract increased domestic & local usage	Score for potential to attract domestic users based on the criteria assessed above and proximity to population centres.	Assessed based on above scores and proximity of population centres which would potentially use the trail.

NOTE 1:

Suitable Road Sections will include:

- Minor roads and boreens
- Roads with very low traffic levels
- Wide verge suitable for walking
- Pleasant walking – e.g. good views etc.
- Roads through towns/villages where there is a foot path

Unsuitable Road Sections will include:

- Main roads (National or Regional roads)
- Other busy roads
- Minor roads or boreens used for long sections of the route, sections where there are high hedges, restricted views etc.

To evaluate each route we have accurately measured the road sections on all routes and identified the sections which are suitable and unsuitable. We have then allocated points for the “ % of trail off-road or on suitable roads ” on the following basis:

- 90% or more off-road/on suitable road = 15 points
- 85% to 89% off-road/on suitable road = 10 points
- 80% to 84% off-road/on suitable road = 5 points
- Less than 80% off-road/on suitable road = 0 points



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

NATIONAL TRAILS OFFICE

Irish Sports Council
Top Floor Block A
West End Office Park
Dublin 15

THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL



AN CHOMHAILE SPÓIRT