



Monaghan County Outdoor Recreation Plan

2025 - 2030



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Sliabh Beagh Way County Monaghan, Courtesy of Fáilte Ireland

Introduction

The need for a Monaghan County Outdoor Recreation Plan

In 2022, a national outdoor recreation strategy 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors 2023-2027' was launched by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The strategy specifically called out the development of County Outdoor Recreation Plans across Ireland:

“At county level, our ambition is to achieve a more planned and coordinated approach between the many stakeholders, with the introduction of a County Outdoor Recreation Committee and the development of an Outdoor Recreation Plan for each county.”

Aside from the national ambition, there is a collective recognition within County Monaghan amongst key stakeholders that the development of a county plan provides an opportunity for a more collaborative approach towards optimising the positive impacts of outdoor recreation.

What is Outdoor Recreation?

Outdoor recreation means activities that take place in the natural environment such as walking, canoeing, mountain biking, orienteering and wild swimming. It does not include activities that take place outdoors on confined courses or pitches (such as golf, football, show jumping) or motorised activities (such as quads/scramblers) except for motorised mobility aids. A full definition and activities list can be found in 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors 2023-2027'

Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

The development of the national strategy and significant financial investment has been in response to an acknowledgement of the many benefits outdoor recreation brings to communities in Ireland, including mental and physical health benefits, as well as economic and social benefits. 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors' outlines evidence of the increased demand for outdoor recreation and the substantial benefits it brings.

- Overseas visitors who participated in outdoor recreation spent €1.7billion in 2019
- Visitors to Coillte forests have nearly doubled between 2018 and 2021
- 97,000 cases of disease were prevented in Ireland due to physical activity participation in 2019 providing a total cost saving of over €405 million.
- Recreational walking is by far the most participated in sport or physical activity in Ireland.

Development of the Plan

The development of this Plan was led by Outscape between October 2024 – March 2025 on behalf of a Project Team of Monaghan county outdoor recreation stakeholders. The process followed the guidance set out in 'Guidelines for Development - County Outdoor Recreation Plans' developed by DRCD (2024). The Project Team included:

- Monaghan Council Tourism and Recreation Forum Sub-Group
- Monaghan County Council
- Monaghan Sports Partnership

- Coillte
- Fáilte Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Monaghan Integrated Development CLG

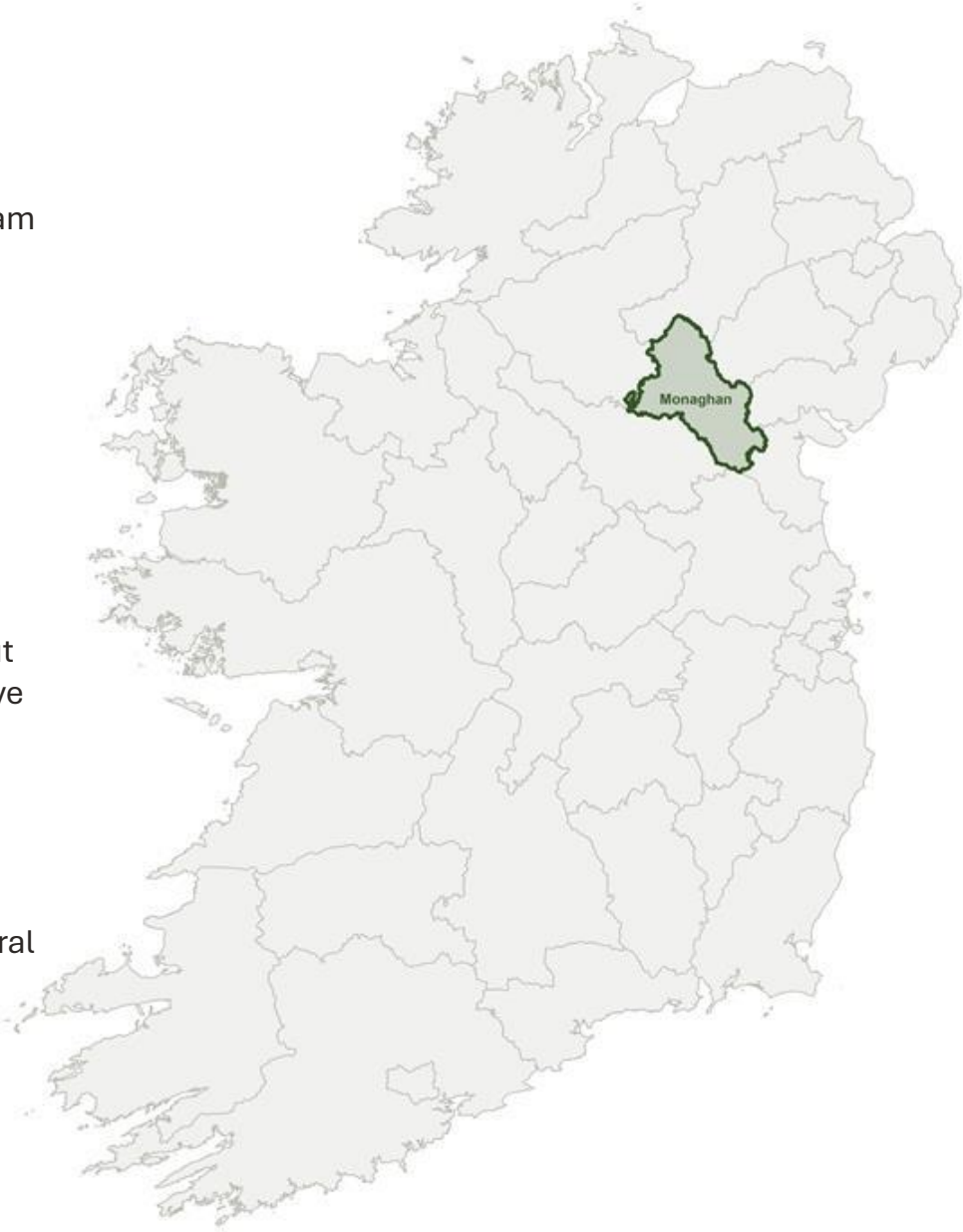
In line with the national guidelines, the Project Team guided the direction of the Plan's development, reaching consensus on strategic priorities and actions following a period of:

- Desk research, GIS mapping, and site visits
- Key stakeholder consultations
- In-person public consultation events
- A public online survey

This document represents a summary of the outputs of the development process and sets out the strategic priorities and actions for the next five years in county Monaghan.

This Plan is subject to SEA/Appropriate Assessment screening.

The plan was 'supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development'.



Strategic context

Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors

The Government of Ireland’s strategy for outdoor recreation, ‘Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors’, is a key deliverable under ‘Our Rural Future’ The Rural Development Policy 2021-2025.

The Strategy aims to strengthen the sustainable development of the sector and drive significant economic and health benefits to communities, while protecting landscapes, habitats and built heritage.

The objectives and actions of the Strategy are fundamental considerations in the development of this County Outdoor Recreation Plan. Several actions have been adopted as a direct response to the Strategy including the establishment of a County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC) and a county-wide Stakeholder Forum. This Plan has also been organised under the six themes as set out in the national strategy.

Other national strategies

Several other national strategies have also informed this Plan, including:

- National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
- Tourism Policy Framework 2025–2030
- Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019–2023
- National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland (2016, reviewed 2020)
- Sport Ireland Policy on Sport and Physical Activity in the Outdoors (2020)
- Sport Ireland Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities 2017
- Coillte Strategic Vision 2022

Regional and local strategies

The development of this Plan has also been shaped by regional and local strategies including:

Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-31 (draft): The following strategic objective is particularly relevant to outdoor recreation, “To protect and nurture the County’s rich natural resources, heritage, tourism assets and amenities along with the environmental quality of the natural and built environment in both the urban and rural areas.”

Fáilte Ireland Monaghan Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) 2022-2026: Ireland’s Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-27 has six strategic development focus areas, several of which relate specifically to outdoor recreation such as developing ‘*Destination Hubs*’, ‘*Linking and Developing the Outdoors*’ and ‘*Developing Monaghan hero sites*’ including Sliabh Beagh, Muckno Estate, Rossmore Forest Park and the Ulster Canal and Greenway.

Monaghan County Council Tourism Strategy 2023-28: The Strategy aims to provide a confident, evidence-based and forward-looking roadmap to guide future tourism development across the county through six development pillars which include:

- Enhanced access and links to the great outdoors of Monaghan.
- Supporting ongoing tourism product development / hero projects.

Monaghan Local Sports Plan: A Local Sports Plan is currently being developed by Monaghan County Council which will supersede the Monaghan Sports Partnership Strategic Plan.

Other plans and strategies

These strategies address themes of rural and economic development, sports participation and environmental issues, as well detail existing masterplans and development proposals:

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regions 2020-2032
- Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027
- Fáilte Ireland Monaghan Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) 2023
- Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan 2023-2025 (draft)
- Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025
- Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 (draft)
- Monaghan Local Economic & Community Plan 2023-2029
- Monaghan County Council Tourism Strategy 2023-2028
- Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan 2020-2025
- Monaghan Walking and Cycling Strategy 2021-2026
- Monaghan Play and Recreation Strategy 2024-2030 (draft)
- Monaghan Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2019-2023
- Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan 2016
- Sliabh Beagh Masterplan 2019

Key trends

A number of national and global trends have also informed the development of this Plan and include:

Increase in demand: A growth in interest and participation in outdoor recreation in Ireland and globally.

Activities: Soft activities, such as walking and cycling, represent the most significant segment of outdoor recreation and consumer demand for soft activities is set to continue.

Rise in new activities such as open water swimming and Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP).

Ageing population: The population in Ireland is getting older and the number of older people taking part in outdoor recreation is expected to increase, along with a growth in multi-generational participation in outdoor recreation.

Closer to home: People are seeking opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation ‘closer to home’.

Sustainability: People are increasingly concerned about the environment and behaving more sustainably.

Wellbeing: The global trend to improve our physical and mental wellbeing is driving a desire to integrate health and wellbeing into leisure and tourism choices.

Consultation

An extensive consultation process with stakeholders and the wider public took place to inform and guide the development of the Plan.

National stakeholder consultation

Relevant national organisations' governing bodies, including sport governing bodies, were informed of the Plan development process and given the opportunity to take part in consultation. One-to-one consultation took place with representatives of the following organisations:

- Irish Creamery Milk Supplies Association
- Leave No Trace Ireland
- Ireland's Association for Adventure Tourism
- Active Disability

Local stakeholder consultation

One-to-one consultation took place with the following organisations, many of whom sat on the Steering Group:

- Monaghan County Council
- Coillte
- Fáilte Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- Monaghan Integrated Development CLG
- Monaghan Sports Partnership
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- An Taisce
- Monaghan Public Participation Network
- Comhairle na nÓg

Public consultation

Three ‘drop in’ public consultation events were held in Monaghan town, Clones and Castleblayney. These events provided members of the public an opportunity to find out more about the Plan process and input their thoughts and ideas into its development.

Representatives from local clubs, activity providers, councillors and the local community were in attendance and highlighted the following points:

- Potential to develop recreation hubs across the county and capitalise on the various assets and facilities the county has to offer.
- Lack of off-road cycling facilities and the potential to develop mountain biking trails and pump tracks aimed at getting people of all ages cycling.
- Lack of awareness regarding which lakes and rivers people are permitted to use for water sports, open water swimming and angling.
- Lack of outdoor recreation provision within the Carrickmacross area. This is the only large town in the county without ‘doorstep’ access to a forest or green space.
- Importance of connecting people to facilities through active travel routes, off-road trails and public transport e.g.. Ulster Canal Greenway as an active travel spine through the county.
- Need for more rigorous water quality testing of bathing waters, publication of this information and advice on how to protect bathing waters.
- Disappointment in the quality of recent works at Hollywood Lake which failed to address some of the key site requirements.

Online survey

An online survey capturing public opinion collected 248 responses over a period of 6 weeks.

75% of those who answered the survey were local residents or landowners with 25% of respondents, visiting the county for outdoor recreation.

Responses were received from a good spread of age groups.

Those who responded were mainly from north Monaghan, potentially due to south Monaghan having fewer settlements and a more dispersed population and a lack of outdoor recreation facilities particularly around Carrickmacross.

The most popular sites for recreation were identified as Rossmore Forest Park, Lough Muckno Leisure Park, local quiet roads, Ulster Canal Greenway and Sliabh Beagh.



Photo from public consultation event in Castleblayney

Walking was noted as the most popular activity amongst the respondents with 77% indicating that they participate whilst angling was the second most popular activity amongst respondents at 34%. Of those participating in angling, 14% are residents and 20% visitors. Notably over half of all visitors coming to County Monaghan visit specifically for angling.

Just over a quarter indicated that they use some of the 130+ lakes across the county for angling, paddlesports and open water swimming.

Respondents indicated that the areas in need of greatest improvement included;

- Quantity/quality of public toilets, accessible toilets, changing facilities and accessibility.
- Public transport provision, directional signage and availability of information online.
- Shops and equipment hire, accommodation and motorhome/camping facilities.

Regarding future priorities, respondents reiterated many of the suggestions identified at the drop-in events and the following additional priorities:

- Improved access to angling sites, sustainability of fish stock and promotion of angling.
- Promotion of existing opportunities and responsible use of the outdoors messaging.
- Development of water trails, restoring Ulster Canal navigation and utilising Clones Marina fully.
- Sensitive development of Dartrey, Annagmakerrig and Castleshane Forests.

Current Situation



Environment

Drumlins, lakes, rivers, forests and estates provide a rich landscape which defines the characteristic of the county’s outdoor recreation offering.

Environmental designations are not widespread throughout Monaghan, with only one designated area along the northwest border, Sliabh Beagh.

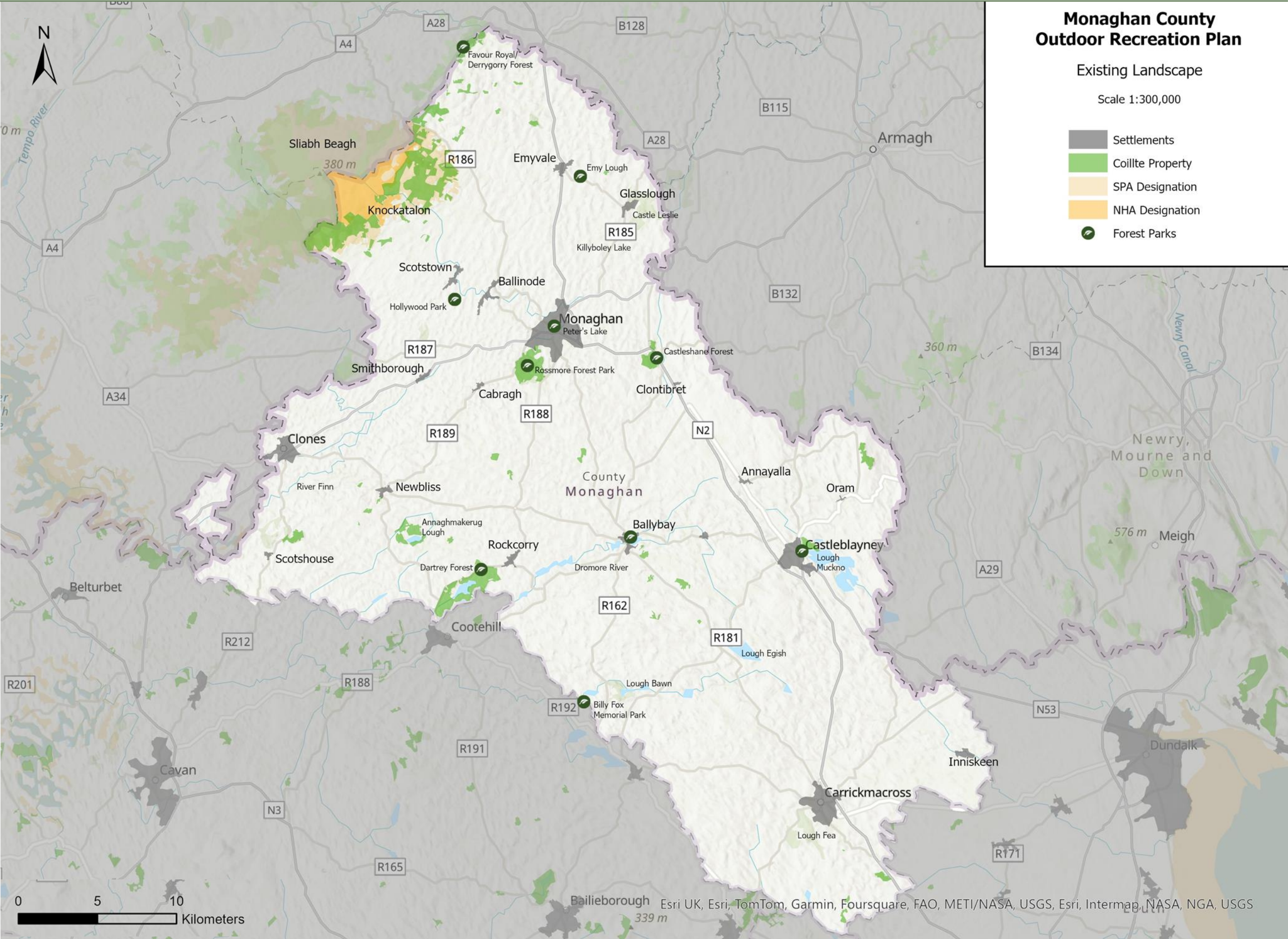
Sliabh Beagh is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for European priority species of birds e.g.. Hen Harrier. Eshbrack Bog within Sliabh Beagh is designated as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA) for national priority habitat and species.

The Sliabh Beagh Eco-Tourism Project completed in 2024 focused on developing the area as a sustainable tourism destination, with environmental protection and enhancement as a key focus of all recommendations.

Recommendations for recreation development included enhancements to the Sliabh Beagh Way to protect the landscape from further erosion and reduce trail braiding, and short new-build sections to link existing trails and create enhanced linkages and looped walking and gravel cycling opportunities.

Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were completed for all new build sections.

Regardless of the size of Monaghan's environmental designations, environmental integrity is considered priority throughout all stages of future outdoor recreation projects together with identifying and implementing, where appropriate, biodiversity enhancements.



Infrastructure and access

Existing offering

Forests and lakes are Monaghan's primary outdoor recreation assets. Walking is the most popular activity followed by watersports and angling which take place in the county's 130+ lakes and rivers.

Walking, the National Trails Register & Walks Scheme: Although there are many waymarked trails across the county, only 5 are included on the Sport Ireland Outdoors National Trails Register (NTR). These include three historic trails within Rossmore Forest Park, the Ulster Canal Greenway around Monaghan town and the recently upgraded Monaghan Way from Iniskeen to Castleblayney.

The Monaghan Way from Iniskeen to Castleblayney is the only trail on the Walks Scheme. The Walks Scheme which enables landowners to receive payments for trail upkeep and repairs is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and administered locally by the Rural Recreation Officer through the Monaghan Integrated Development CLG.

There is an opportunity to enhance existing trails by improving the quality of trail infrastructure, providing visitor information, installing signage and waymarking and ensuring effective management and maintenance in accordance with the Sport Ireland Walking Trails Criteria. Not only would this improve the quality and sustainability of existing trails, but it would also facilitate and encourage wider promotion and participation across the county.

Other Walking Trails: There are several waymarked walking trails within the Sliabh Beagh area including the Sliabh Beagh Way, a long-distance walk between Lisnaskea and Aughnacloy, and the Knockatalon Looped Walks.

Waymarked walking trails also exist within several Coillte sites including Rossmore Forest Park, Derrygorry Forest / Millenium Wood, Black Island within Lough Muckno Leisure Park, Dartrey Forest and Senator Billy Fox Memorial Park.

Similarly, there are waymarked walking trails within Monaghan County Council sites including but not limited to Ballybay Town Park and Peter’s Lake.

The trails at Derrygorry Forest / Millenium Wood, Senator Billy Fox Memorial Park and Hollywood Park were developed and are maintained by the local community. In addition, over a dozen community trails have been developed by communities at local sports grounds across the county.

This demonstrates strong community desire to play an active role in developing and maintaining recreation sites and strong collaboration between landowners, land managers and stakeholders.

Castleshane Forest, owned by Coillte and Annaghmakerrig Forest, owned by the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, currently have no formal recreation provision but each have their own unique character and potential for recreation.

Cycling: Monaghan has a variety of promoted on-road cycling trails including the Ulster Canal Trail, Kingfisher Trail, The Hill Way Trail, Knockatalon Loops and Sliabh Beagh Cross Border Trails.

However, there is extremely limited off-road cycling provision within the county aside from the family cycle trail in Rossmore Forest Park and the Ulster Canal Greenway, a shared multi-use path.

Plans to enhance cross-border links and develop a variety of trails suitable for walking and gravel cycling within the Sliabh Beagh area form part of the Sliabh Beagh Eco-Tourism Project.

Watersports: Monaghan’s 130+ lakes and several rivers provide a significant opportunity for watersports. However, it is not widely known which locations are permitted for such activities.

There are several lakes and rivers known to be used for canoeing and kayaking including Lough Muckno, Dromore River, River Finn and River Blackwater. Several projects are underway which will significantly enhance the opportunities for watersport participation including;

- The Dromore River Blueway: Currently being developed by Monaghan County Council to create a 12km paddling trail from Ballybay to Lisnalong.
- The Ulster Canal from Clones to Castle Saunderson: Currently being restored by Waterways Ireland. Phase 2 completed in 2024 restored 1km of canal between Clones and Clonfad. Phase 3 will restore 10km of canal between Clonfad and Castle Saunderson and develop an adjoining walking and cycling trail over the next 5-10 years.

Angling: County Monaghan is known for its abundance of lakes suitable for a variety of different types of coarse angling including Pike, Carp, Tench, Bream and Rudd.

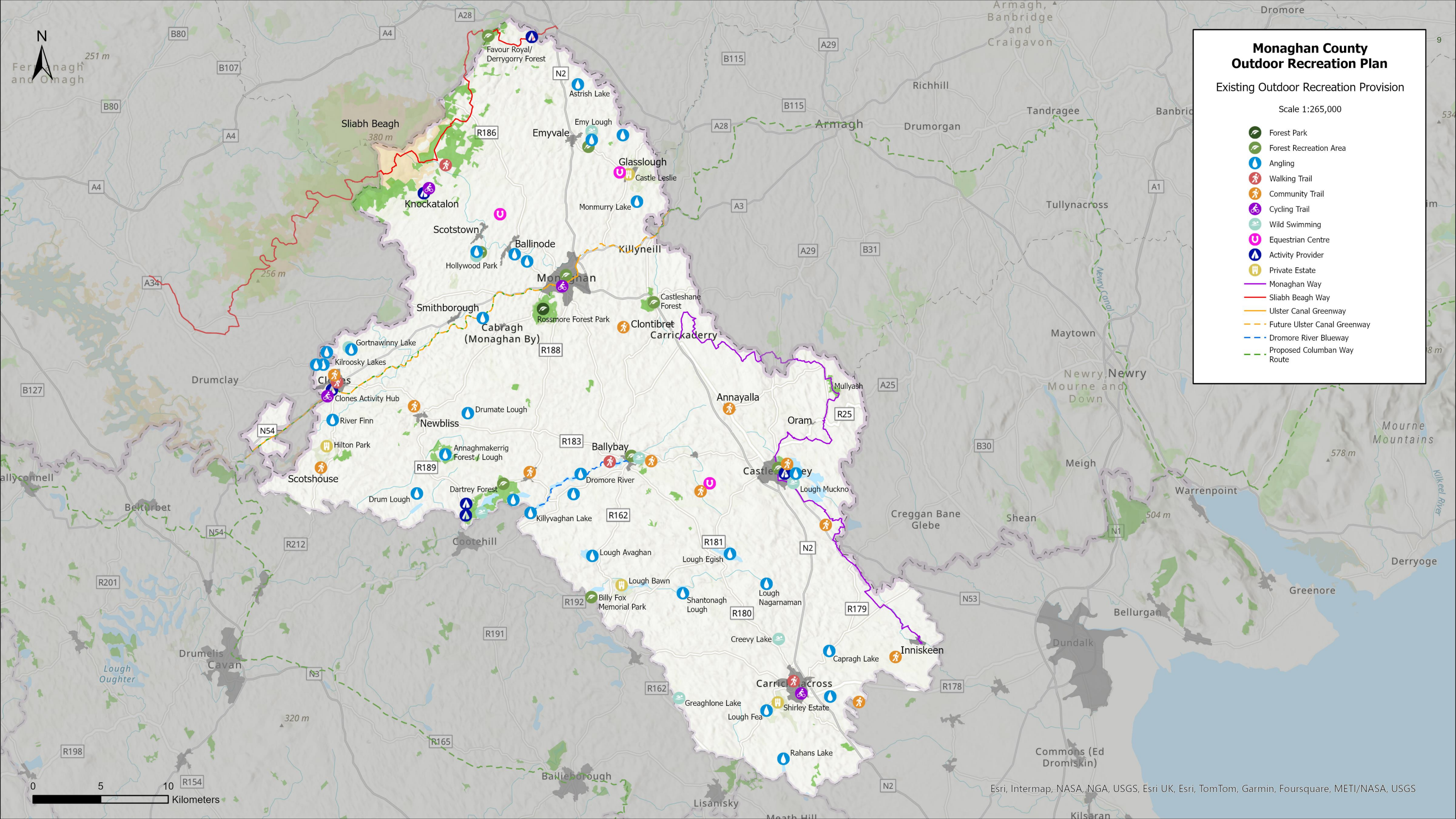
The county has previously hosted prestigious competitions and festivals including the FIPSeD Club World Champions in 2023 at Lough Muckno, renowned as one of Europe’s premier coarse angling fisheries.

There is significant potential to develop the angling product across the county and promote more widely to the international market.

Swimming: There are several lakes known to be used for open water swimming by the local community. Although these are not ‘designated bathing waters’, Monaghan County Council test the following locations monthly for water quality between June and September:

- Creevy Lake
- Emy Lough
- Gortnawinny Lake
- Greaghlone Lake
- Halton’s River (Dromore Lake System)
- Hollywood Lake
- Lough Major
- Lough Muckno including Black Island Point and Lough Muckno Water Sports Area

Water quality results are published on the Monaghan County Council website.



Monaghan County Outdoor Recreation Plan

Existing Outdoor Recreation Provision

Scale 1:265,000

- Forest Park
- Forest Recreation Area
- Angling
- Walking Trail
- Community Trail
- Cycling Trail
- Wild Swimming
- Equestrian Centre
- Activity Provider
- Private Estate
- Monaghan Way
- Sliabh Beagh Way
- Ulster Canal Greenway
- Future Ulster Canal Greenway
- Dromore River Blueway
- Proposed Columban Way Route

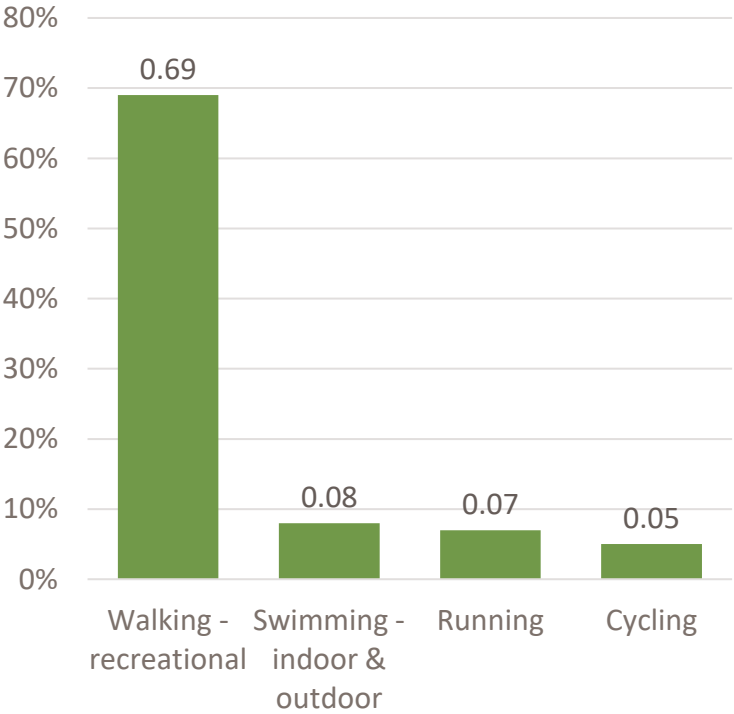
Opportunity and awareness

Opportunity

Whilst there is no specific activity data available for County Monaghan from the Irish Sports Monitor and limited visitor counter data, anecdotal evidence supported by the online survey indicates that walking is the dominant outdoor activity, followed by angling, running, hiking, cycling, paddlesports and open water swimming.

These activities are supported and promoted by the associated clubs and commercial activity providers as well as the programmes and events led by Monaghan Sports Partnership in conjunction with National Governing Bodies.

Participation in outdoor recreation activities and sport in Ireland in 2023



Source: Irish Sports Monitor, 2023

There are a variety of walking, running, cycling, angling and water sports groups and clubs across the county as well as a range of activity providers including horse riding centres and outdoor activity and adventure centres.

Tanagh Outdoor Education & Training Centre provides water and land-based adventure activities for everyone from schools, youth groups and corporate days out to outdoor activity instructor training and other leadership and skills courses.

One of the biggest barriers facing private activity providers across Ireland at present is securing affordable insurance. This has resulted in activity providers across the country having no choice but to cease trading which is negatively impacting outdoor recreation opportunities.

Awareness

Monaghan's outdoor recreation offering is promoted primarily through the Monaghan Tourism website and by Fáilte Ireland as part of Ireland's Ancient East activity tourism proposition.

The GoMonaghan website promotes sustainable travel and active travel opportunities, as well as walking and cycling trails.

The Sport Ireland 'Get Ireland Active' interactive map details clubs, trails and activity locations across Ireland with the focus on helping people find the right activity, in the right place at the right time and at the right level to meet their needs.

Promotion of Monaghan's outdoor recreation assets and opportunities to date has largely been focused on the key activity tourism sites and as a result many local people are unaware of other equally valuable but lesser-known local recreational sites.

This was evidenced through the online survey where most respondents indicated that they visit Rossmore Forest Park, Lough Muckno Leisure Park, Ulster Canal Greenway and Sliabh Beagh area for outdoor recreation. These key sites were followed by local quiet roads, the abundance of lakes and several community developed facilities.

Walking: Although walking has been identified as the most popular activity, there are only five trails on Sport Ireland Outdoors National Trails Register and consequently 'Get Ireland Active' map. Registering trails on the Sport Ireland Register is encouraged as it ensures the mechanisms are in place to secure consistent quality through inspection, maintenance, promotion and insurance.

With so few trails registered or promoted outside the key sites, many people are unaware of the full extent of the walking opportunities that exist across the county.

The online survey confirmed this with almost all respondents agreeing that improving promotion of existing opportunities should be a priority going forward.



Angling: Angling was identified through the online questionnaire as the second most popular outdoor activity with over half of visitors to county Monaghan travelling specifically to participate in angling. Consultation did however indicate that there is significant untapped potential and an opportunity to grow both participation and angling tourism.

Paddlesports: Consultation identified a lack of awareness of which locations are safe and can be accessed for paddlesports across the county. There is significant potential to tap into the potential of the abundance of lakes and rivers for paddlesports.

The survey indicated an interest in water trails and the development of the Dromore River Blueway, whilst also identifying a need for more information and equipment hire to facilitate these activities.

Open Water Swimming: The popularity of open water swimming is on the rise with many getting involved in swimming or dipping over the last few years during the COVID-19 pandemic. Water quality however is ever decreasing, which poses a significant problem for the participation in all water-based activities.

The online survey also identified a lack of awareness that Monaghan County Council currently test ten 'non-designated bathing waters' for water quality monthly throughout the summer period.

Other awareness topics: Notably, 'responsible use' of the outdoors, education and messaging was identified through the survey as being the highest priority going forward.

Standout assets

There are several standout landscapes and natural assets which to date have been the focus of County Monaghan's activity tourism offering. These sites provide a variety of recreation opportunities for both visitors to the County and local communities.

Lough Muckno: Lough Muckno is an Angling Centre of Excellence and renowned as one of Europe's premier coarse angling fisheries. Lough Muckno Leisure Park is also home to a variety of trails, play-park and Castleblayney Outdoor Adventure Centre.

Sliabh Beagh: Sliabh Beagh is a beautiful remote unspoilt and designated upland landscape, home to the county's high point and 'three county hollow'. It provides a series of waymarked walks and cycles within the area including, the Sliabh Beagh Way.

Rossmore Forest Park: One of Coillte's high value recreation areas, with the most recorded annual visitors 2021-2024. Visitors come from across the county and all over Ireland to experience the various trails, play-park and giant sculpture trail. Rossmore Forest Park is also within walking distance of the Ulster Canal Greenway and Monaghan town.

Clones Marina / Ulster Canal: Waterways Ireland is currently restoring the Ulster Canal from Clones to Castle Saunderson. Phase 2 was completed in 2024 restoring 1km of canal and creating an accessible trail between Clones and Clonfad as well as developing a marina, car park and service block in Clones.



Lough Muckno, County Monaghan, Courtesy of Monaghan Tourism



Sliabh Beagh, County Monaghan, Courtesy of Monaghan Tourism



Rossmore Forest Park, County Monaghan, Courtesy of Monaghan Tourism



Ulster Canal, County Monaghan, Courtesy of Niall Carson PA Images

Stakeholders

Monaghan has an engaged and motivated group of stakeholders and community groups who play an active role in the development, management, promotion and activation of outdoor recreation sites.

However, there is a collective recognition that the development of this Plan provides an opportunity for a more collaborative approach towards optimising the positive impacts of outdoor recreation.

County Monaghan does not currently have a County Outdoor Recreation Officer to lead on the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation. In the absence of a dedicated staff resource, the development of this Plan has been led by the Monaghan Tourism Unit.

A sub-group of the recently formed Tourism & Recreation Forum was established to bring together key statutory stakeholders and develop this Plan.

This stakeholder map outlines the primary stakeholders involved in outdoor recreation in Monaghan and their roles and responsibilities.

Users	
Communities	• Wide range of residents from local communities and visitors
Groups/Clubs	• Variety of groups and clubs across various activities • Variety of events, festivals and competition e.g.. World Club Feeder Championships 2023 at Lough Muckno
Tourists	• Domestic visitors • International visitors

Tourism/Promotion Organisations	
Fáilte Ireland	• Ireland’s Ancient East
MCC	• Monaghan Tourism website • GoMonaghan website
Sport Ireland	• National Trails Register • ‘Get Ireland Active’ National Database

Environment	
NPWS	• No District Conservation Officer or Ranger in post

Development, Management & Maintenance Organisations	
MCC	• Sub-group of the Tourism & Recreation Forum • Municipal Districts (MDs), Tourism, Environment etc. • ORIS applications
Monaghan RRO	• Administer Walks Scheme • ORIS applications for community owned/managed trails
Community groups	• Development of 12+ walks • Maintain several sites including Hollywood and Emy Lake
TII/Council	• Ulster Canal Greenway
Coillte	• Develop, manage and maintain recreation sites
Fáilte Ireland	• Development of recreation sites
Inland Fisheries	• Conservation of fish stock
Waterways Ireland	• Ulster Canal • Clones Marina

Participation Organisations	
Monaghan Sports Partnership	• Driving participation
Activity Providers	• 11 promoted

Landowners	
Coillte	• 9 designated recreation areas • Rossmore Forest Park – One of Coillte’s high value recreation areas, with the most recorded annual visitors 2021-2024
Private landowners	• 1 walking trail on Walks Scheme (Monaghan Way) • Dromore River Blueway • Castle Leslie Estate • Lough Bawn Estate • Over 75+ angling locations
Waterways Ireland	• Ulster Canal • Clones Marina
MCC	• Peter’s Lake • Ballybay Town Park etc.
An Taisce	• Eshbrack Bog
Inland Fisheries Ireland	• Majority of angling stands

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges

The primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of outdoor recreation in County Monaghan were identified with the Steering Group and through the consultation process.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Highly motivated stakeholders involved in outdoor recreation	Only 5 existing walks on the Sport Ireland Register	Significant activity tourism development opportunities at Lough Muckno, Rossmore Forest Park, Sliabh Beagh, Convent Lands and Clones Marina/Ulster Canal including the Ulster Canal Greenway	Funding to secure dedicated staff resource to drive outdoor recreation and coordinate/oversee implementation of the CORP
Sub-group of the Council's Tourism and Recreation Forum already in place bringing together key stakeholders	Limited off-road cycling opportunities		Funding to deliver on ongoing management and maintenance of existing recreational sites
Several stand out assets which are the focus of County Monaghan's activity offering	Limited data on number/profile of those using outdoor facilities	Development of the Dromore River Blueway	Funding for capital works associated with projects identified as opportunities
Excellent variety of recreation sites and trails which are free to access and geographically spread across the county	No interactive overview map detailing all opportunities on the Monaghan Tourism website		Obtaining planning permission for new outdoor recreation developments
Monaghan Tourism website provides good information on outdoor recreation opportunities	No dedicated staff resource to lead outdoor recreation development, management and promotion	Development of quality recreation hubs with a focus on the local community at Dartrey Forest, Castleshane Forest and Annaghmakerrig Forest	Obtaining affordable insurance for private sector activity providers
Participation opportunities increased through a variety of informal groups, formal clubs, events/festivals and activity providers	No dedicated staff resource in the form of a county Outdoor Recreation Officer to co-ordinate the CORC and drive forward the implementation of the CORP		
MSP delivers comprehensive participation programme to underrepresented groups	No county-wide Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum	Capitalise on the county’s existing angling product and promote to the international market	
	Quality of some recreation sites below users' expectations		
	Physical accessibility of some recreation sites limited		

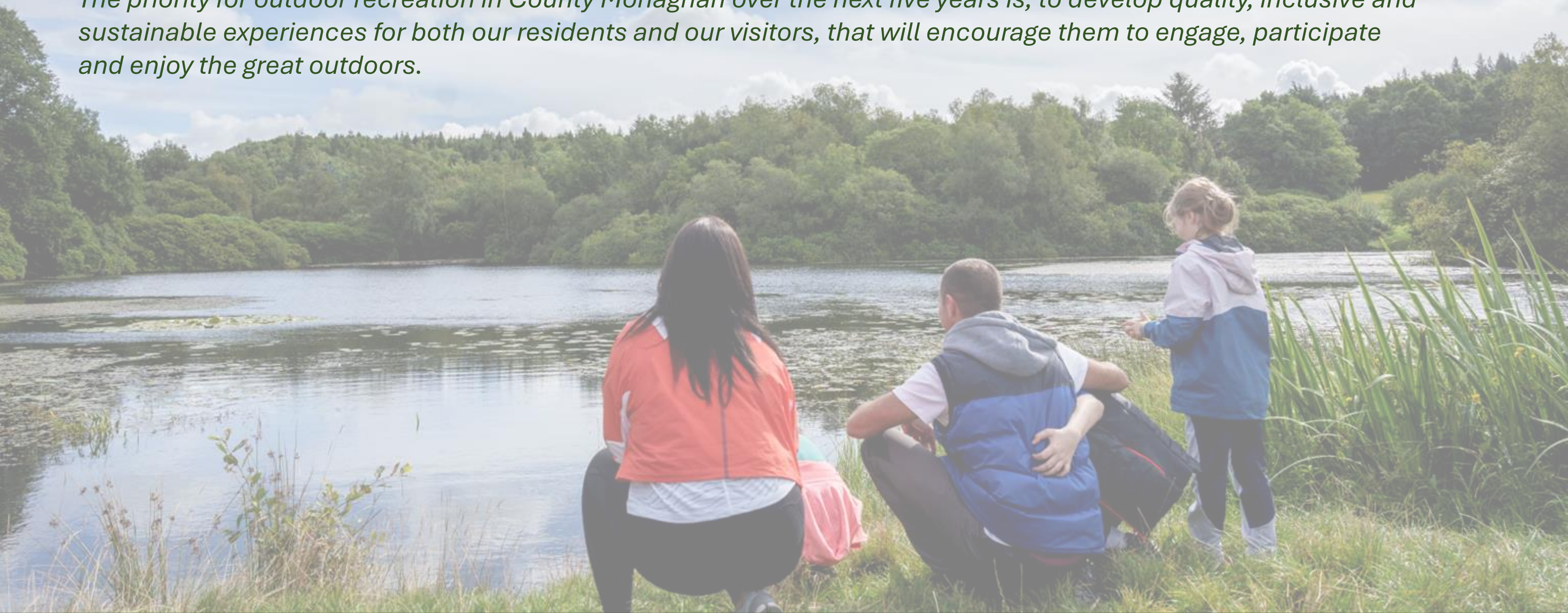
Strategic priorities and action plans



County Monaghan, a world of activities for all

Statement of strategic priorities:

The priority for outdoor recreation in County Monaghan over the next five years is, to develop quality, inclusive and sustainable experiences for both our residents and our visitors, that will encourage them to engage, participate and enjoy the great outdoors.



Leadership and collaboration

Why is this important?

Across Monaghan there are numerous organisations involved on a day-to-day basis in the planning, development, management, maintenance and promotion of outdoor recreation.

These include public and private landowners who own or manage land on which outdoor recreation takes place. Public landowners include Monaghan County Council, Coillte, Waterways Ireland and Inland Fisheries Ireland. In addition, Monaghan Sports Partnership and several private sector businesses are involved directly in facilitating participation in outdoor recreation activities, whilst Fáilte Ireland is involved in promoting the area as part of its 'Ireland's Ancient East' proposition.

With so many organisations involved, it is essential that everyone works together collaboratively to learn from each other, prevent duplication of effort, and maximise scarce resources. This will ensure that those using the outdoors will be rewarded with the best outdoor recreation experience possible.

County Monaghan already has an engaged and motivated group of stakeholders and community groups represented through the Council's Tourism and Recreation Forum Sub-Group, who play an active role in the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation sites.

However, to sustainably grow the outdoor recreation offering and continue to develop quality experiences additional resource and strengthening of relationships is vital.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to ensure that those involved directly or indirectly in outdoor recreation work together in a supportive and collaborative way to provide a seamless approach across the county to outdoor recreation.

As set out in the national strategy 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors' each county in Ireland is required to set up a

- County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORA)
- County-wide Stakeholder Forum

The CORC will ensure co-operation and collaborative working between the key stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in outdoor recreation planning, development, management, promotion, education, training and participation whilst the Stakeholder Forum will provide a mechanism to allow wider stakeholder representation in decision-making.

In the absence of a dedicated County Outdoor Recreation Officer to coordinate and act as Secretariat to the CORC and Stakeholder Forum, in the short-term, this responsibility will be spread among relevant council staff, with oversight from the Tourism Unit.

In addition to help us reach our outputs for the period of this Plan, a full-time Rural Recreation Officer (RRO) to help develop, manage and maintain existing and future outdoor recreation facilities and develop Walks Scheme opportunities will be appointed imminently.

To create a more coordinated, cohesive approach across Monaghan to ensure best use of our resources

Leadership and collaboration

Objective: To create a more coordinated, cohesive approach across Monaghan to ensure best use of our resources				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
1.1	Secure the funding to appoint a County Outdoor Recreation Officer (CORO) to lead and coordinate the County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC) and Stakeholder Forum and drive forward the implementation of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP). In the absence of a dedicated post in the short term, this responsibility will of necessity be spread among relevant council staff, with oversight from the Tourism Unit.	Short-term	Monaghan County Council (MCC)	Tourism and Recreation Forum Sub-Group
1.2	Expand the membership of the current CORP's Steering Group i.e. sub-group of the Council's Tourism and Recreation Forum, to deliver the role of the County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC) and ensure a coordinated approach to the management and development of outdoor recreation going forward.	Short-term	MCC – Tourism, Community Development	Tourism and Recreation Forum Sub-Group
1.3	Establish a Monaghan Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum to allow wider stakeholder representation in decision-making	Short-term	MCC – Tourism, Community Development	CORC
1.4	Appoint a full time Rural Recreation Officer (RRO) to manage the Walks Scheme and develop future walking opportunities.	Short-term	Monaghan Integrated Development Company MCC – Tourism, Community Development	CORC
1.5	Develop a facilities database which feeds the proposed digital interactive map resource (see 4.1) and includes detailed information on all outdoor recreation sites across the county including; land ownership, infrastructure, visitor services, organisation responsible for the on-going management and maintenance etc. Review and update annually as a minimum to ensure information is complete and accurate.	Medium-term	MCC – Tourism	CORC
1.6	Maximise knowledge of and access to all possible funding opportunities.	Medium-term	Monaghan Integrated Development Company MCC – Tourism, Community Development	CORC
1.7	Undertake a mid-term review of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan to assess whether actions require modification, given the dynamic nature of outdoor recreation.	Medium-term	MCC – Tourism	CORC

Environment

Why is this important?

Enjoying time in our natural landscapes and connecting with nature is a core motivator for outdoor recreation participation. The provision of outdoor recreation and the social and economic benefits which it brings fundamentally relies on a healthy and sustainable natural environment.

It is therefore imperative that the environment is at the heart of any recreation development.

Monaghan has an extensive and diverse resource base comprising forests, woodlands, upland blanket bog, rivers, and lakes all of which lend themselves to the provision of a wide range of outdoor recreation activities for both the local community and the increasing number of visitors.

All stakeholders have a shared responsibility to protect Monaghan’s diverse resource base. This extends to a legal obligation to protect the natural environment within designated areas such as Sliabh Beagh Special Protection Area (SPA) and Eshbrack Bog Natural Heritage Area (NHA).

Sliabh Beagh SPA has conservation objectives that require the protection of priority species under the EU Birds Directive including the Hen Harrier. Whilst Eshbrack Bog NHA is designated as a protected conservation area for wildlife within Ireland.

Conserving, protecting and managing Monaghan's outdoor environment for future generations, whilst encouraging an appreciation and enjoyment of its resources is key to this Plan.

What is our ambition?

To ensure the integrity of Monaghan's environment and heritage is not compromised moving forward, environment and biodiversity considerations will be woven into the fabric of all future recreation development.

All recreation development should seek to complement, enhance and connect people to natural landscapes, having a positive effect on habitats and species, as well as local communities and businesses.

To achieve sustainable recreation development, it is important that public transport and active travel opportunities are developed to connect local people and visitors to recreation sites. This will not only reduce the carbon footprint of recreational users but provide greater connectivity between people and places and encourage healthier communities.

Developing Sliabh Beagh as an Eco-Tourism Destination provides an opportunity to develop a sustainable trail network and attractions that allow visitors to spend time engaging with and appreciating this unique natural environment and the protected habitats and species which thrive in it.



To protect
Monaghan’s
environment
and heritage
through better
planning and
development
of outdoor
recreation

Sliabh Beagh, County Monaghan, Courtesy of Monaghan Tourism

Environment

Objective: To protect Monaghan’s environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation, in keeping with best practice management of landscape and habitats.				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
2.1	Deliver on the environmental recommendations within the Sliabh Beagh Ecotourism Feasibility Study Report (2024) which included upgrades to existing trails to manage erosion as well as biodiversity enhancements on new and existing trails such as restoration of upland blanket bog through peat dams, red squirrel boxes etc.	Medium-term	MCC – Tourism and Biodiversity RRO	Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC), Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (FODC), Coillte, An Taisce, Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI), Fáilte Ireland, Local Community Groups
2.2	Incorporate sustainability, environmental education and biodiversity enhancements into all future recreation projects where possible e.g.. planting native trees, interpretation on flora and fauna, installation of bird boxes etc.	On-going	MCC – Biodiversity, Environment RRO	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
2.3	Identify gaps in the public transport provision to enhance connectivity and accessibility to key outdoor recreation sites and ensure public transport information is provided when new sites are being developed and promoted.	Medium-term	MCC – MDs, Roads	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Transport for Ireland (TFI)
2.4	Continue to carry out water quality testing of ‘non-designated bathing waters’ and disseminate the results along with education and responsible use messaging through the appropriate channels. Scope the potential to develop one key site as a ‘designated bathing water’.	Medium-term	MCC – Environment	Uisce Éireann and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Access and infrastructure

Why is this important?

Monaghan's diverse landscapes and waterscapes currently provide a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities including a variety of signature sites, recreational hubs, recreation trails, community hubs and community trails which are free to access and geographically spread across the county. Access is provided by both public and private landowners.

Over the last decade however trends in outdoor recreation have changed significantly including:

- growth in participation, including increased numbers of older people taking part and growth in multi-generational participation.
- people wishing to participate in a range of outdoor recreation activities e.g.. walking, cycling, adventure play etc.
- people seeking opportunities ‘closer to home’ to participate with friends and family
- notable rise in new activities such as open water swimming.

Understanding and providing for these trends in consumer behaviour is key to ensuring that future outdoor recreation development and visitor servicing across the county is targeted appropriately.

In addition, as public land is limited across the county strengthening relationships with private landowners going forward is essential especially for the Monaghan Way, the county’s only trail on the Walks Scheme.

Currently communities play an active role in developing and maintaining recreation sites across the county e.g., Senator Billy Fox Memorial Park, Hollywood Park and Emyvale Lough. Given the on-going challenge of having no staff resource dedicated within the Council to outdoor recreation, continuing to build capacity within communities to undertake these roles in the future will be key to delivering the actions within this Plan.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to deliver high quality, accessible, enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences across the county, supported by visitor servicing facilities where appropriate, for both local people and visitors.

We hope to do this by:

- continuing to support the development of the current visitor experience at Rossmore Forest Park and expanding the outdoor recreation opportunities at Lough Muckno Leisure Park, the Convent Lands in Monaghan.
- increasing the number of recreational hubs with a focus on the local community at Dartrey Forest, Castleshane.
- scoping, planning and developing a variety of water-based facilities e.g.. canoe trails, open water swimming sites, angling sites.
- designing and developing opportunities for family off-road cycling.

- ensuring ‘accessibility’ is at the forefront of all future development especially for those with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.
- working with private landowners to secure and increase access agreements.
- addressing regional gaps in recreation infrastructure and opportunities e.g. in and around Carickmacross.
- ensuring management and maintenance is prioritised and built into future development.
- Continuing to actively support local communities in developing, managing and maintaining green and blue space in their localities.



To protect and improve access to Monaghan’s outdoors, for the benefit of all

Rossmore Forest Park, Courtesy of Monaghan Tourism

Access and infrastructure

Objective: To protect and improve access to Monaghan’s outdoors, for the benefit of all.				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
3.1	Establish Sliabh Beagh as an eco-tourism destination by delivering the outdoor recreation recommendations included within the Sliabh Beagh Ecotourism Feasibility Study Report (2024).	Medium/long-term	MCC – Tourism, Biodiversity	MUDC, FODC, Coillte, An Taisce, FSNI, Fáilte Ireland, local community groups
3.2	Continue to support the development of the visitor experience at Rossmore Forest Park.	Medium/long-term	MCC – Tourism, MD Coillte	Friends of Rossmore, local community groups, IFI
3.3	Implement the relevant outdoor recreation recommendations within the Lough Muckno Masterplan currently under preparation (2025-2026).	Medium/long-term	MCC – Planning, Tourism	IFI, Coillte, Fáilte Ireland, local community groups
3.4	Develop the Convent Lands in Monaghan town as a recreational hub.	Medium/long-term	MCC – Town Regeneration, Planning, Tourism, MD	Local community groups, schools
3.5	Review existing outdoor recreation provision and carry out an Analysis and Opportunities Study for Hollywood Park, looking at the site holistically with a focus on delivering quality recreational facilities, accessibility and connections into local communities and settlements.	Medium-term	MCC – MD	Hollywood Development Association
3.6	Support the on-going development of the Ulster Canal navigation and towpath between Clones and Castle Saunderson to provide water recreation opportunities and a safe and accessible off-road path suitable for walkers, cyclists and those with limited mobility, visual impairment etc.	Long-term	Waterways Ireland	MCC and Cavan County Council (CCC), FODC
3.7	Support the on-going development of the Ulster Canal Greenway from Clones to the county Armagh border and through this process identify the potential to develop links between communities and green or blue spaces.	Long-term	MCC – Tourism, Roads	TII
3.8	Pilot the Rothar Road or ‘quiet road’ between Ballinode and Scotstown to provide safe walking and cycling provision and if deemed successful, replicate the concept across the county to connect communities to green or blues spaces where appropriate.	Medium-term	MCC – MD, Roads	Private landowners
3.9	Encourage and support communities to identify, develop, manage and maintain outdoor recreation facilities in their locality, focusing on those with poor access to off-road walking opportunities.	Medium/long-term	MCC RRO	Community Development Associations and private landowners
3.10	Agree land transfer and deliver on the recommendations within the Annaghmakerrig Masterplan to develop parking, trail around lake perimeter and angling stands.	Medium / long-term	MCC in partnership, Coillte and Tyrone Guthrie Centre	Community Development Associations

Access and infrastructure (continued)

Objective: To protect and improve access to Monaghan’s outdoors, for the benefit of all				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
3.11	Complete the development of Gallows Hill Greenspace Masterplan, Creevy Lough Recreational Masterplan, and the Convent Lands Landscape Concept Masterplan and subsequently, subject to securing necessary funding, implement the interventions identified in these Plans.	Medium / long-term	MCC and RRO	Community Development Associations and private landowners
3.12	Identify opportunities for developing a ‘family cycling trail’ within Dartrey Forest which utilises the existing forest roads and complements the existing recreation provision.	Medium / long-term	MCC in partnership with Coillte	Community Development Associations, Cootehill Area Development Association, Tanagh Outdoor Education Centre
3.13	Develop an Analysis and Opportunities Plan for Castleshane Forest which considers parking, trails, signage, interpretation, waymarking and trail animation and implement the recommendations of this Plan.	Medium / long-term	MCC in partnership with Coillte	Community Development Associations
3.14	Develop a concept design for a 'blue grade flow mountain bike trail and pump track’ within Mullaghmart Forest outside Monaghan town which supports off-road skill progression and introduces people of all ages and abilities to mountain biking.	Medium / long-term	MCC in partnership with Coillte	Cycling Ireland/Ulster
3.15	Carry out a Scoping Study to explore taking the Monaghan Way from Castleblayney to Mullyash off-road and developing local looped walks.	Medium / long-term	MCC – MD RRO	Community Development Associations and private landowners
3.16	Secure planning permission for the development/enhancement of the necessary access/egress points required to develop the Dromore River Blueway. Once established, promote and activate through MSP programmes, activity providers, equipment hire etc. and consider linkages with existing and newly developed trails in the vicinity.	Medium / long-term	MCC – Tourism, MD	Private landowners, activity providers, the local community, Monaghan Sports Partnership (MSP)
3.17	Develop an Analysis and Opportunities Plan for key water recreation sites including ‘non-designated bathing waters’, rivers and lakes used for outdoor swimming paddlesports, and ‘species specific’ premier coarse fisheries. Deliver on the recommendations within this Plan to maximise the potential for water recreation across the county for both locals and visitors.	Medium / long-term	MCC Swim Ireland Canoeing Ireland IFI	Community Development Associations and private landowners
3.18	Ensure future outdoor recreation projects, where possible, meet accessibility standards for all, giving due consideration to national guidance documents.	On-going	MCC	Coillte, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Waterways Ireland

Awareness

Why is this important?

Providing information on 'where to go' and 'what to do' is essential in encouraging use of Monaghan's outdoors by both residents and visitors.

Information needs to be accurate, current, accessible and preferably provided in one place to make it easy for the user.

Currently Monaghan's outdoor recreation offering is well promoted through the Monaghan Tourism website, 'More to Monaghan', by Fáilte Ireland, as part of Ireland's Ancient East activity tourism proposition and through a range of unofficial channels e.g.. Strava, Komoot, social influencers etc.

An over-concentration on promoting Monaghan's four signature activity tourism sites however is currently to the detriment of many other lesser-known excellent local recreational sites. In addition, given that only five trails are on Sport Ireland Outdoors National Trails Register and consequently 'Get Ireland Active' map, local people are unaware of the full extent of the opportunities that exist.

Marketing and promotion should not only encourage awareness of where and how to participate in activities, but how to behave responsibly in the outdoors.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to create a coordinated and consistent approach to marketing and promoting all the recreation opportunities that Monaghan has to offer to both locals and visitors and to ensure all who participate in outdoor recreation across the county do so in a responsible way.

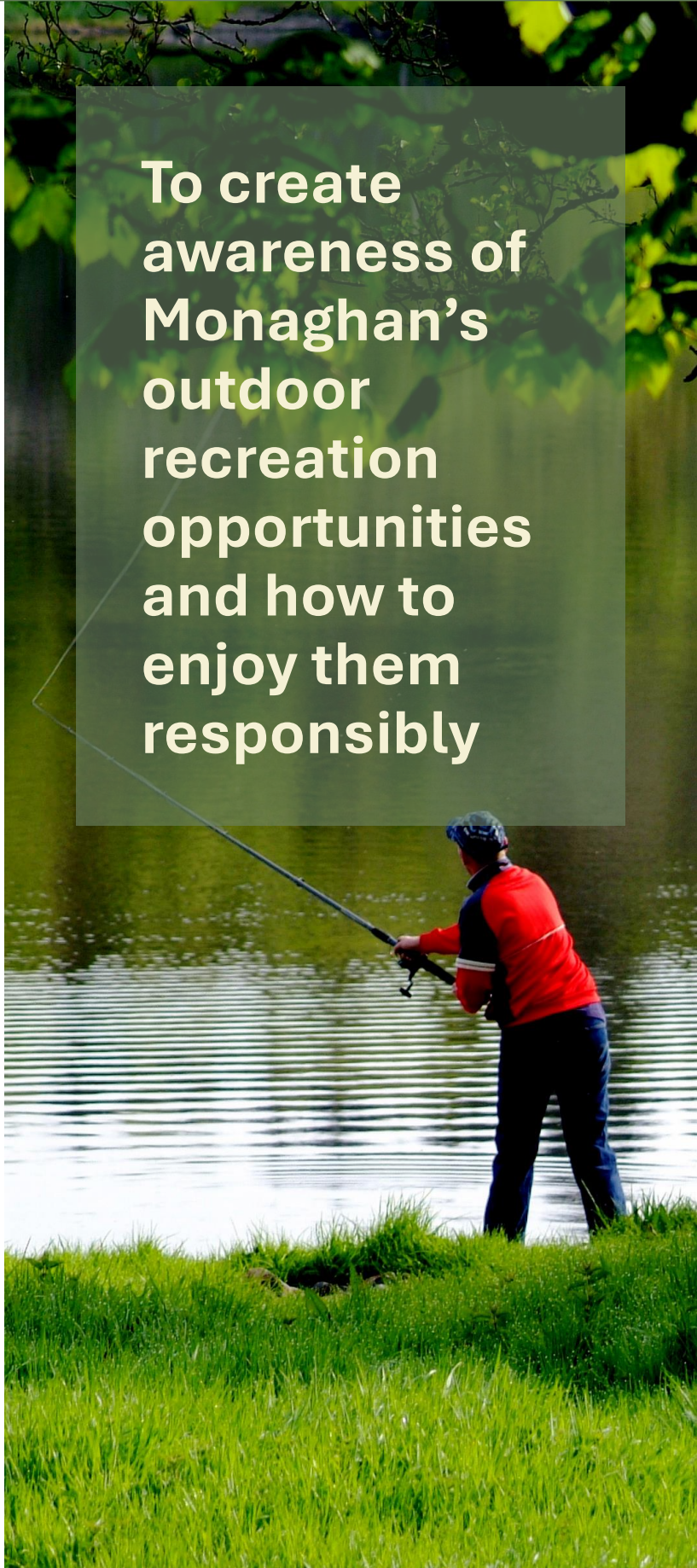
The Monaghan Tourism website will be updated to provide a more visual and interactive visitor platform, with one central digital resource that details all recreation opportunities and inspires both visitors and the local community to believe that there truly is 'More to Monaghan'.

This digital resource should feed into the 'Get Ireland Active' map to ensure that all opportunities are consistently promoted across all platforms.

Increased promotion and marketing of all outdoor recreation activities will take place through a range of appropriate channels including targeted social media campaigns.

We will work to ensure that all walking, cycling and water trails across the county meet accreditation standards to allow inclusion in the Sport Ireland Outdoors National Trails Register. This will not only provide promotion and exposure but ensure safe, consistent and quality trail experiences.

Support the roll out of the national 'Responsible Use of the Outdoors' campaign at a local level in partnership with Leave No Trace Ireland.

A photograph of a person fishing in a lake. The person is wearing a red jacket and dark trousers, standing on a grassy bank. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery. A semi-transparent dark green box with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

To create awareness of Monaghan's outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly

Awareness

Objective: To create awareness of Monaghan’s outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
4.1	Develop an interactive digital map detailing all recreation sites and trails across the county and embed within the Monaghan Tourism website to make it easier for locals and visitors to orientate themselves and support the continued development of the Get Ireland Active national digital database as an action in the National Sports Policy.	Short-term	MCC – Tourism	RRO
4.2	Increase the promotion and marketing of all outdoor recreation opportunities to both locals and visitors on appropriate platforms including targeted social media campaigns.	On-going	MCC – Tourism	Coillte, An Taisce, Community Development Associations
4.3	Seek Sport Ireland accreditation for all walking, cycling and water trails to allow inclusion and promotion on the Sport Ireland National Trails Register and Get Ireland Active Database.	Medium /long-term	MCC – Tourism RRO	Sport Ireland, Trail Management Organisations (TMOs)
4.4	Support the roll out of the national ‘Responsible Use of the Outdoors’ campaign at a local level and integrate national messaging into all relevant communication.	Medium / long-term	MCC LNT Ireland RRO	Coillte, An Taisce, NPWS, IFI, MSP

Opportunities

Why is this important?

Spending time in the outdoors and participating in outdoor activities brings a multitude of benefits to individuals and society. By providing opportunities for people to get active outdoors:

- their physical health improves as they become more physically active
- their mental health improves as time spent outdoors, increases the levels of happiness and life satisfaction
- their social well-being improves as they gain opportunities for social interaction reducing feelings of loneliness, isolation and improving overall quality of life
- the environment improves as more people accessing and connecting with their environment ultimately results in greater awareness and care for it
- the economy benefits as increased participation provides direct economic benefit to the wider economy through activity tourism and wider savings to the health service.

It is acknowledged however that there is unequal access to the outdoors across society with multiple social and economic barriers preventing people engaging in outdoor recreation. In particular there is under-representation from women and girls, older adults, young people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, unemployed and those from areas of high social need.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to ensure that as many local people as possible across Monaghan have the opportunity to enjoy its outdoor spaces and avail of the many benefits from doing so. We want to encourage and increase participation from those local groups that are currently under-represented.

In addition to providing opportunities for local people, we want to welcome visitors to County Monaghan's outdoor spaces and grow the tourism offering.

We will achieve this by:

- delivering outdoor recreation participation programmes to those of all ages and abilities and increasing participation in water-based activities.
- making it easier for people to know where they can go, what they can do and how they can do it when they get there.
- build capacity with town teams, businesses, activity providers, clubs and the community to develop visitor services and experiences.

To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors across Monaghan, especially young people and under-represented groups

Opportunities

Objective: To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors across Monaghan, especially young people and under-represented groups				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
5.1	Through leadership and skills-based education and training in walking, cycling, outdoor swimming and orienteering etc. increase the capacity within communities to deliver and participate in outdoor recreation.	Medium/long-term	MSP	Outdoor National Governing Bodies as appropriate
5.2	Facilitate community participation in outdoor recreation for all including under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older adults, unemployed, women and girls and young people through the delivery of local programming and national initiatives such as ‘HER Outdoors’ etc.	Medium/long-term	MSP	Outdoor National Governing Bodies as appropriate, IFI
5.3	Engage young children in nature through natural play and adventure and support national initiatives such ‘National Play Day’.	Medium/long-term	MSP	Monaghan County Childcare Committee, Monaghan National Childhood Network
5.4	Support national participation programmes and initiatives such as the Women in Sport programme, Urban Outdoor Adventure Initiative, and the Get Ireland Walking, Get Ireland Cycling, Get Ireland Running and Get Ireland Swimming Initiatives and, subject to funding, give due consideration to the recruitment of Activation / Development Officers associated with these strategies.	Medium/long-term	MSP	Mountaineering Ireland, Get Ireland Walking, Cycling Ireland / Ulster, Swim Ireland
5.5	Subject to funding for cross-border “Walking for All” project, recruit a WFA officer and roll out the 3-year programme.	Medium/long-term	MSP	Sport Ireland, Outscape, Mountaineering Ireland, Get Ireland Walking
5.6	Support and facilitate initiatives that focus on improved mental health and wellbeing as a result of physical activity in 'green' spaces and outdoor areas e.g. Woodlands for Health and other natured based programmes.	Medium/long-term	MSP	Mental Health Ireland, HSE Mental Health Services, Social Prescribing Services
5.7	Support town teams, businesses and the community to develop outdoor recreation opportunities and supporting visitor services e.g. community trails, equipment hire, accommodation, motorhome/camping facilities etc.	Medium/long-term	MCC	Local Enterprise Office, Fáilte Ireland, Community Development Associations, Tourism Providers

Expertise

Why is this important?

Over the past number of years, there has been a significant increase in government support for outdoor recreation, including the availability of significant funding for capital projects through DRCD's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. This is expected to continue, as set out in the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy. Concurrently, the number of organisations involved in developing, maintaining and promoting outdoor recreation from statutory organisations and community groups has also grown.

To date however, there has been limited investment in capacity building to support those involved. This has resulted in varying levels of awareness and practice of:

- holistic site development through master planning.
- trail design and construction standards.
- accessibility considerations in relation to information and infrastructure.
- effective management and maintenance.

This has resulted in a small number of poor practice examples in trail development and management across Monaghan.

Knowing the numbers participating in an outdoor recreation site is important to both justify previous capital expenditure and evidence future investment. At present there are only three visitor counters across Monaghan, making it difficult to evidence success and justify future investment.

What is our ambition?

The development of this Plan presents an opportunity to improve skills and knowledge in planning, developing and maintaining trails and outdoor recreation facilities, so that poor practice can be improved and avoided in the future.

Actions will be taken to ensure land managers, trail management organisations and those responsible for developing trails and outdoor recreation facilities are equipped to operate with sufficient knowledge, skills and expertise. This will include training and support from statutory organisations and relevant professional bodies.

To help us understand more fully the number of people using our sites which will in turn help us prioritise sites for future development and maintenance, we will include visitor monitoring as part of all future outdoor recreation development across the county.

To improve the knowledge, skills, and expertise of Monaghan's stakeholders and partners



Hope Castle, County Monaghan, Courtesy of Monaghan Tourism

Expertise

Objective: To improve the knowledge, skills and expertise of Monaghan’s stakeholders and partners.				
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead Delivery Organisation	Stakeholders
6.1	Include visitor monitoring as part of all future outdoor recreation development to understand usage, help target promotion and support funding of development and maintenance costs and share this information with the County Outdoor Recreation Committee.	On-going	MCC – Tourism	Coillte, Community Development Associations, RRO
6.2	Follow national guidelines and best practice relating to outdoor recreation planning, development, management and maintenance and increase the skills, knowledge and expertise of those delivering outdoor recreation projects through participation in a range of events led by Sport Ireland.	Medium/long-term	MCC – Community Development RRO	Coillte, Community Development Associations

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