

Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan

DRAFT 2025 - 2030



We are delighted to present this Draft Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Plan for public consultation.

This is an excerpt of the full Plan. It contains the draft statement of priorities, ambition and action plan to improve outdoor recreation in County Wicklow over the next 5 years.

We would love to hear what you think, please send your comments and feedback by email to fiona@out-scape.com.

The consultation will close on 30 May 2025 at 5pm. We appreciate your time in contributing to this process and value your input.

Thank you.

Please note:

- The Plan has been prepared by Outscape on behalf of Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership and Wicklow County Council.
- The development of the Plan was managed by a steering group of representatives from Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership, Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Partnership, Coillte, NPWS and the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum.
- The Plan was supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and has been produced in compliance with the 'Guidelines for the Development of County Outdoor Recreation Plans'.
- The Plan is the output of extensive consultation with stakeholders at a national, county and local community level.
- This is a DRAFT, your feedback will be considered before the Plan is finalised and launched.

Contents

Introduction	3
Strategic context	4
Consultation summary	5
Current situation	6
Strategic objectives and action plan	13
Abbreviations	29



Blessington eGreenway, courtesy Fáilte Ireland
Front cover - Walking, Djouce Mountain, courtesy Fáilte Ireland

Strategic objectives and action plan



Mountain biking at Ballinastoe Trail Centre, courtesy Tom Scott

Wicklow, a world of activities for all

Strategic priorities statement:

The priority for outdoor recreation in County Wicklow over the next five years is to adequately resource the management and maintenance of existing infrastructure, sustainably enhance and diversify opportunities and heighten awareness to facilitate life-long benefits to all, while protecting the natural environment



Strategic objectives

Leadership

To maintain a co-ordinated, cohesive approach across Wicklow to ensure best use of our resources

Environment and heritage

To protect Wicklow's environment and heritage through better planning, development and management of outdoor recreation

Awareness

To increase awareness of Wicklow's outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly

Opportunities

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

Access

To protect, diversify and enhance access to Wicklow's outdoors, for the benefit of all

Expertise

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

Leadership

Why is this important?

Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors, Ireland’s National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, calls out the need for a joined-up and cohesive approach to outdoor recreation at a County level through the introduction of:

- A County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC)
- A County Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum, feeding into the decisions of the CORC

Leading the way, Wicklow has already established these governance structures and collaborative partnerships. In 2013, we published the first County outdoor recreation strategy in Ireland and established the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee (WORC). In 2023, we set up our Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum.

Governance is working well in Wicklow as demonstrated by the rate of outdoor recreation development in recent years. On average, €1million per year has been granted to projects in Wicklow between 2021 and 2023 by DRCD’s Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) .

Our success is attributable to the multi-agency collaboration and individual relationships built up over many years. In particular, the County Wicklow Partnership (CWP) stands out as a key driver and delivery agent of outdoor recreation working at all levels with state bodies, NGO’s, landowners, clubs and local communities. The County Wicklow

Partnership is well positioned as an independent and neutral broker for outdoor recreation and should retain this role going forward.

To continue this success, the stakeholders developing and managing outdoor recreation (Wicklow County Council, Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership, NPWS, Coillte and CWP) need more capacity and financial support.

Our landscapes, particularly the Wicklow Mountains, shoulder the majority of the outdoor recreation demand from Dublin (residents and tourists) and other neighbouring counties.

Our organisations, teams and partnerships that develop, manage and promote outdoor recreation need greater recognition, capacity and resourcing to not just maintain the current position, but to sustainably improve the outdoor recreation services we deliver primarily for the benefit of our environment and local communities and secondly for out-of-County visitors and recreation users.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition for the next 5 years is that the governance and delivery mechanisms for outdoor recreation thrive and continue to be successful and effective. To do this requires:

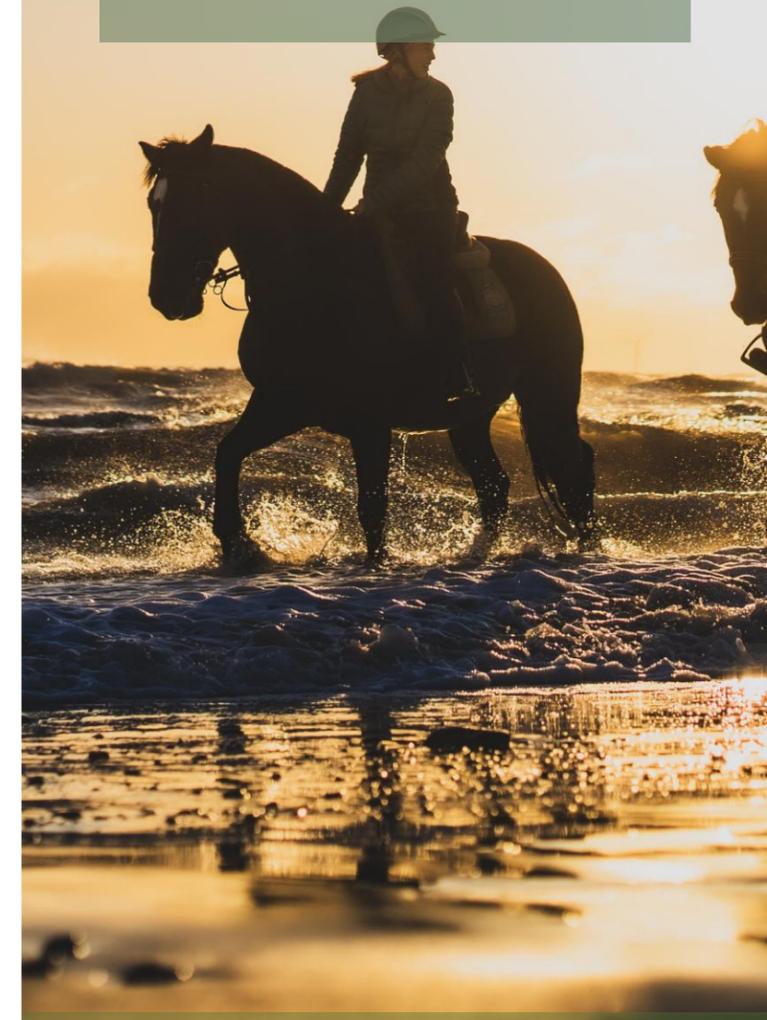
- Greater recognition of the people and partnerships that deliver and manage outdoor recreation.
- An increase in the capacity and resources dedicated to outdoor recreation.

Key to delivering this Plan will be regularising and increasing the capacity of the existing roles and teams who deliver, manage and maintain outdoor recreation day-to-day, such as the County Wicklow Partnership and the Wicklow Trail Maintenance Team.

We will advocate for more administrative support for outdoor recreation within Wicklow County Council and a County Outdoor Recreation Officer in Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership to ‘activate the capital’ infrastructure and co-ordinate and drive the implementation of this Plan.

It is also our ambition to improve the efficacy of Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee with the aim of being more action-focused and to grow and strengthen our Stakeholder Forum to ensure as wide a range of interests are represented as possible.

To maintain a co-ordinated, cohesive approach across Wicklow to ensure best use of our resources



Brittas Bay, courtesy Celtic Routes

Leadership actions

	Action	Lead delivery organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
1.1	Put in place an appropriate resourcing structure within County Wicklow Partnership (e.g. regularisation of posts and increasing staff) to sustain and secure the enhancement and management of outdoor recreation over the next 5 years	CWP, WCC	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRCD • WORC
1.2	Secure funding to appoint a County Outdoor Recreation Officer (ORO) to lead and co-ordinate the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee (WORC) and Stakeholder Forum and drive forward the implementation of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP)	WSRP	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRCD • Sport Ireland
1.3	Review the staffing structure within Wicklow County Council with a view to enhancing the admin support provided to outdoor recreation	WCC	2025	
1.4	Review the structure of WORC with the intention of improving its efficacy and to be more action-focused	WORC	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Forum
1.5	Grow the Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum to ensure as wide a range of interests are represented as possible	WORC	2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Forum
1.6	Increase the capacity and support the work of the Wicklow Trail Maintenance Team	CWP	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC • Coillte • NPWS
1.7	Advocate for an increase in NPWS's recreation maintenance resource	NPWS	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC
1.8	Advocate for the creation of a Parks Dept in Wicklow County Council	WCC	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC
1.9	Prepare a plan and undertake a review every 2 years to evaluate progress and impact of this Plan's delivery	WORC	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Forum

Environment and heritage

Why is this important?

Wicklow’s rich environment features nationally important landscapes and diverse habitats comprising mountain peaks and valleys, forests, woodlands, rivers, lakes and coastline, all of which provide popular destinations for a wide range of outdoor recreation activities for residents and out-of-County visitors.

Enjoying time in these natural landscapes and connecting with nature is a core motivator for outdoor recreation participation. Therefore, quality outdoor recreation relies on a healthy and sustainable natural environment.

However, many habitats are finite assets and are vulnerable to disturbance and destruction caused by outdoor recreation, for example as a result of poor planning, irresponsible use, social media, low awareness and/or inappropriate/ineffective visitor management.

The Upland Path Condition Survey (2022) and the Glendalough & Wicklow Mountains Visitor Experience & Management Plan (2023) both demonstrate the negative impact that intense recreation has had on our environment and local communities. Both recommend interventions relating to visitor management and improving the experience with the goal of protecting and preventing further damage to our unique natural and built heritage. Examples include decommissioning some uplands paths in favour of habitat restoration, and the Wicklow Mountains Trails Dispersal Strategy.

Now is the time for Wicklow to be proactive in visitor

management and implement sustainable approaches in the planning, design and development of infrastructure that:

- Protects and enhances our natural and built heritage environment.
- Benefits local communities, and
- Caters for the needs and preferences of visitors/recreation users.

A proactive approach will require better understanding of user behaviour and recreation impact, generated through research and surveys, empowering decision makers with evidence, knowledge and confidence (see Expertise).

All stakeholders in the County have a shared responsibility to protect the natural environment, including those habitats and species designated and protected by legislation, which include Wicklow Mountains National Park, many Natura 2000 sites, six Nature Reserves and 35 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs).

It is imperative that the environment is the central consideration of all outdoor recreation planning and development in the future and delivering the actions of this Plan.

It is also important that people are aware of and appreciate the value and fragility of our environment and biodiversity and understand the impact they can have on it (intentionally and unintentionally) through outdoor recreation. By educating and raising awareness of responsible use, we are creating the opportunity to influence people’s choices and behaviour (see Awareness section).

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to protect the County’s special environment and heritage through better planning, development and management of outdoor recreation.

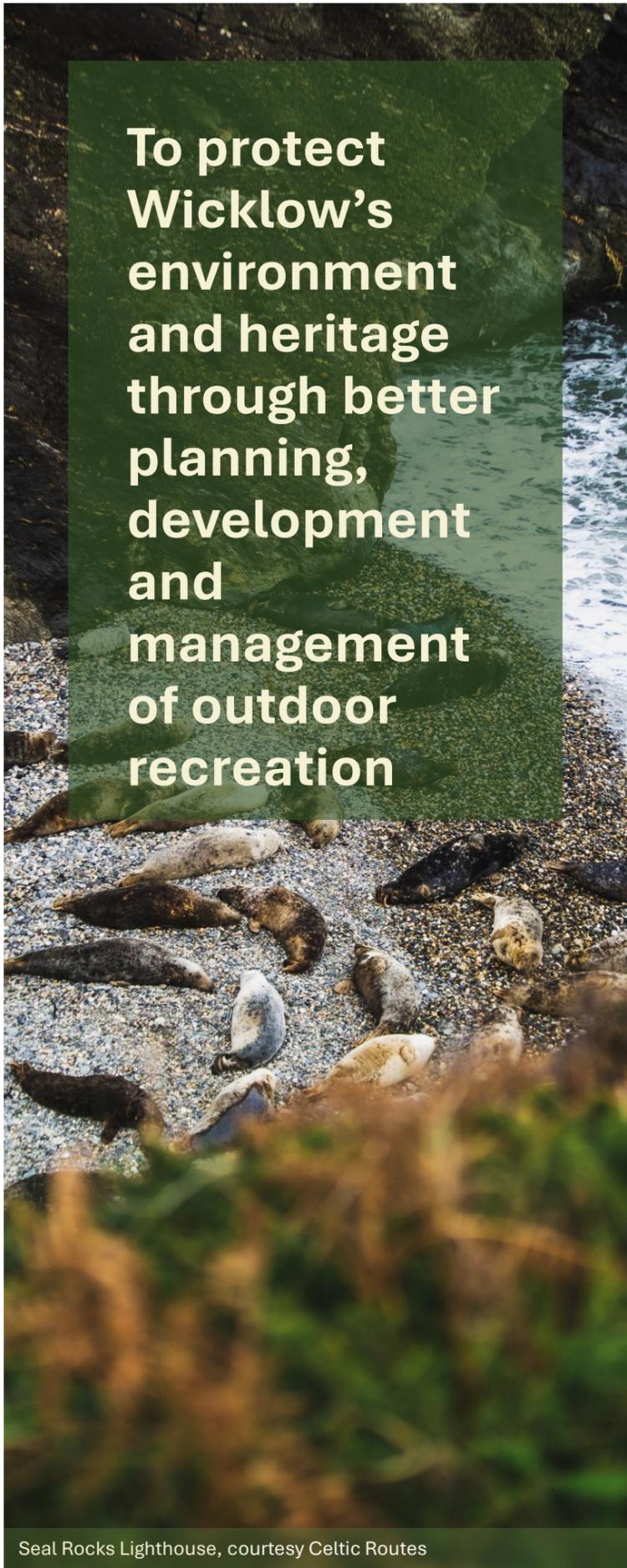
Decisions will be taken to ensure the integrity of Wicklow’s environment and heritage will be complemented - not compromised – by outdoor recreation.

We will do this by:

- Utilising, or contributing to the delivery of, existing plans such as the Upland Path Condition Survey and Wicklow Mountains Trails Dispersal Strategy.
- Prioritising the maintenance and enhancement of existing access and infrastructure before developing new, including upland path and trail maintenance.
- Leading by example in responsible recreation and implementing ‘environment first’ visitor management approaches at key sites suffering from ‘over-recreation’.
- Awareness-raising and education on responsible use of the outdoors.

Key to achieving this ambition will be:

- Continued collaboration with NPWS, the County Biodiversity Officer and Heritage Officer.
- Increasing the number of outdoor recreation staff in County Wicklow Partnership and Wicklow County Council.
- Securing additional financial resource which may involve self-funding initiatives, for example through event participation fees.



**To protect
Wicklow’s
environment
and heritage
through better
planning,
development
and
management
of outdoor
recreation**

Environment and heritage actions

	Action	Lead delivery organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
2.1	Review existing baseline studies (e.g. 2022 Upland Path Condition Survey) and feasibility studies to inform the work plans and prioritisation of upland path and trail repairs and interventions	WORC	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Stakeholder Forum • Landowners and managers • Recreation users
2.2	Support or implement, as required and relevant, the delivery of the outdoor recreation recommendations arising from the Glendalough Visitor Experience and Management Plan, in particular the Wicklow Mountains National Park Dispersal Strategy	WORC, Glendalough Partnership	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEMP Delivery Team • WCC • Fáilte Ireland • Stakeholder Forum
2.3	At key recreation sites, commission recreation plans/feasibility studies to inform decision making relating to the environment, recreation and visitor management	WCC	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Biodiversity and Heritage Officers • Landowners • Local communities
2.4	Set up a central event calendar for the Wicklow Mountains and explore the viability of a ‘participant pay back’ system with event organisers	CWP	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Stakeholder Forum • NGB’s
2.5	Promote responsible recreation through biodiversity focussed and Wicklow specific ‘Sharing Natures Space’ code and awareness campaign	WCC	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS education staff • Biodiversity Officer • Heritage Officer

Awareness

Why is this important?

Wicklow is rich with opportunities for people to enjoy outdoor recreation. One of the barriers to people visiting and enjoying the outdoors is a lack of awareness of the opportunities available to them, at the local community level and among visitors to the County.

This lack of awareness contributes to people repeatedly returning to the same venues and trails for lack of knowledge of similar authentic but alternative experiences.

The recently launched Wicklow Trails.ie is an example of how we are beginning to address this awareness gap.

At a national and local level, another key awareness gap in Wicklow relates to how people can safely, responsibly and sustainably enjoy the outdoors – an aggravating factor in relations between recreational users, landowners/managers and local communities.

To protect our current access and to improve it in the future, responsible use needs to be prioritised in our communications, framed and supported by national guidance and policy. It also needs to be introduced to people at a young age through education centres and schools.

Awareness and knowledge is fundamental to empowering people to take responsibility for their own safety and feeling confident to step into Wicklow's outdoors.

What is our ambition?

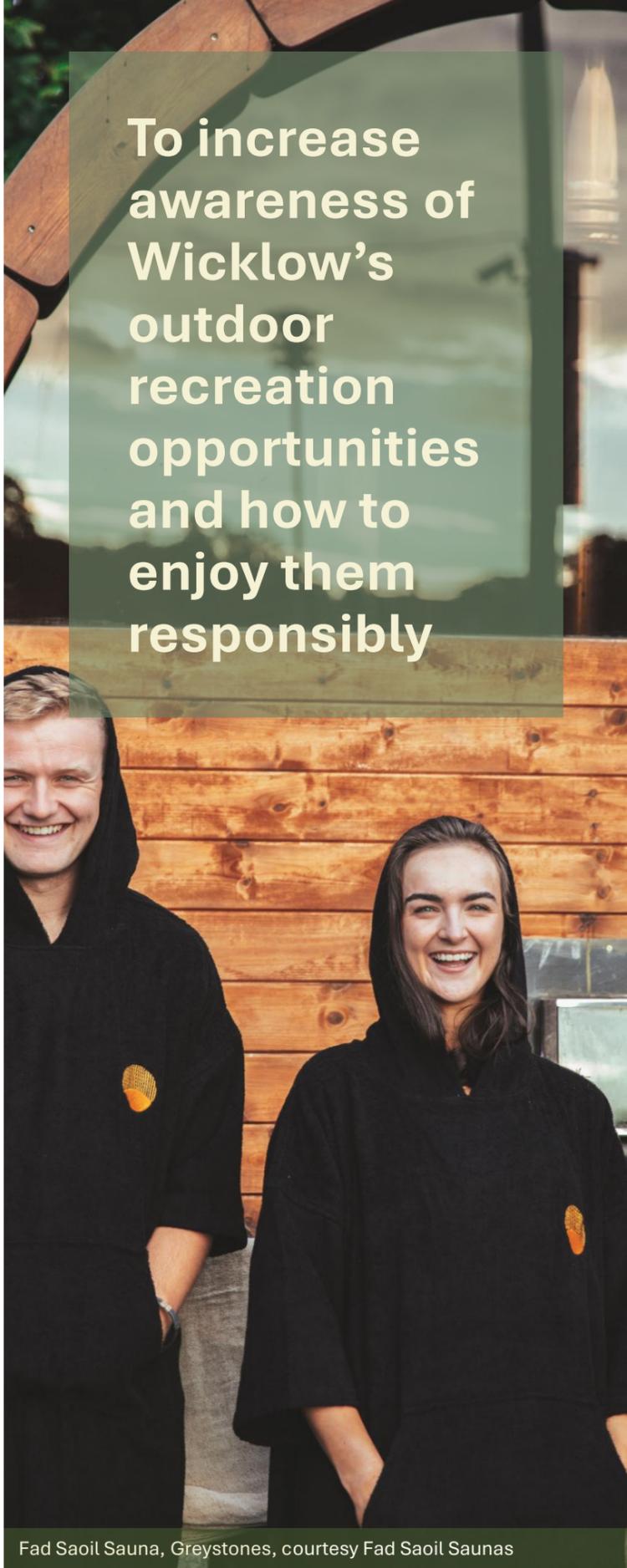
Lack of awareness should not be a barrier to safe, responsible, and sustainable engagement with the outdoors for residents or visitors in Wicklow.

Our ambition is to increase awareness of Wicklow's outdoor recreation opportunities and influence people, through education, promotion and information to behave responsibly when enjoying the outdoors.

We will work to achieve this by:

- Developing and strengthening the Wicklow Outdoors brand as the main voice for outdoor recreation in Wicklow.
- Creating a one-stop-shop for all outdoor recreation opportunities provided in an intuitive, engaging and user-friendly way.
- Promote alternative places to enjoy, e.g. the coast.
- Working in partnership and combining resources with relevant stakeholders who share the same challenges – many voices, one message will have a stronger impact.
- Working with schools, activity centres and providers to educate young people to the impact we can have on our landscape and mitigating that impact through responsible use and enjoyment.

Active support from government departments, agencies and other stakeholders will be critical to this ambition, to ensure clear, consistent messaging on responsible enjoyment in the outdoors.



To increase awareness of Wicklow's outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly

Awareness actions

	Action	Lead delivery organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
3.1	Strengthen the ‘Wicklow Outdoors’ brand and use this as a central point of information for all outdoor recreation in the County	WCC, CWP	2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • WCC Tourism Team
3.2	In line with the national plan, prepare and deliver a ‘Promotions and Communications Plan’ to identify and fill gaps in awareness relating to outdoor recreation opportunities (places and programmes) and responsible enjoyment	WCC	2026 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Stakeholder Forum • LNT • Sport Ireland
3.3	Pilot and review the success of an opportunistic engagement scheme aimed at educating and raising awareness of safe, responsible and sustainable enjoyment of the outdoors	WORC	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity Officer • Heritage Officer • Stakeholder Forum • Landowners • General public and recreation users
3.4	Following the publication of national ‘responsible use of the outdoors’ guidelines and in conjunction with the Leave No Trace principles, roll out a local campaign targeting the key issues and challenges specific to Wicklow	WCC, LNT	2026 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS education staff and rangers • WORC • Stakeholder Forum
3.5	Profile and promote information relating to outdoor recreation grants, funding and other support mechanisms for activity providers, clubs and local communities	WSRP, WCC	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRCD • Sport Ireland • Stakeholder Forum • PPN • NGB’s • Clubs • Activity providers
3.6	Support and utilise Getirelandactive.ie and Wicklowtrails.ie to raise awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities in Wicklow	WCC, WSRP	2025 onwards	

Opportunities

Why is this important?

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

- Physical health improves as people become more physically active.
- Mental health improves as time spent outdoors, increases the levels of happiness and life satisfaction.
- Social well-being improves as people gain opportunities for social interaction reducing feelings of loneliness, isolation and improving overall quality of life.

As with many communities across Ireland, Wicklow's population is a diverse community including those from deprived communities, socially and rurally isolated communities, new communities including refugees and asylum seekers, an ageing population, young people and disabled people, all of whom for a variety of reasons can experience difficulties accessing outdoor recreation opportunities.

In Wicklow, we want to remove the barriers and provide the infrastructure and opportunities, so that everyone has equity of access to the outdoors and reap the benefits of outdoor recreation.

We are already working towards this, with a range of participation programmes and initiatives (national and local) aimed at these groups that focus on cycling, walking and sea swimming. This includes – HER Outdoors, Woodlands for Health, Bike Week

and the Wicklow Travellers Urban Outdoor Programme which was awarded 'Most Inclusive Project' at the LAMA National Awards*.

But there is still more to be done.

We recognise that there are still many opportunities to work with our partners to provide the infrastructure, programmes and equipment that initiates, facilitates and sustains a life-long habit of enjoying outdoor recreation and its benefits from a young age, regardless of circumstance and background.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors across Wicklow, especially young people and people with disabilities.

It is also our ambition to create the environment and opportunities that facilitate from a young age, the life-long habit of enjoying outdoor recreation and reaping the benefits, especially for Wicklow residents.

This will be achieved through:

- Developing accessible infrastructure and places (see Access action 5.2).
- Designing and running a greater number and variety of outdoor recreation participation programmes targeted at minority groups.
- Increasing awareness of accessible opportunities to everyone (see Awareness section).

- Providing equipment to sustain independent participation.
- Supporting clubs, groups and activity providers to sustain and grow their activities and membership.

The success of this will depend on two things:

1. Employing a County Outdoor Recreation Officer to 'activate the capital' and champion outdoor recreation within the local authority (see Leadership section).
2. Collaborating with other stakeholders, such as our Disability Officer, CYPSC Youth Rep and Age Friendly Officer, to ensure more outdoor places are more accessible to more people and that we are collectively working towards having an equitable array of fully inclusive experiences, where nobody is left behind.



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

*Local Authority Members Associations, All Ireland Community and Council Awards, February 2025

Opportunities actions

	Action	Lead Delivery Organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
4.1	Increase the overall number and diversify the choice of outdoor recreation activities within existing local participation programmes	WSRP	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • PPN • NGB's • Clubs and providers
4.2	Deliver more outdoor recreation programmes to under-represented groups in both urban and rural settings	WSRP	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Disability Officer • Age Friendly Officer • CYPSC Youth Rep • PPN • NGB's • Clubs
4.3	Deliver one public engagement large scale outdoor-recreation event/festival with taster sessions targeting under-represented groups	WSRP	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • WCC • WCC Tourism Team • Clubs and providers
4.4	Assess the need and viability for equipment hubs across the County, e.g. adaptive bikes, beach wheelchairs, all terrain trampers	WCC, CWP	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSRP • Active Disability Ireland • Disability Officer • NGB's • Swim Ireland • Cycling Ireland • Clubs and providers
4.5	Support the growth and development of local clubs and recreation groups to expand their services and reach	WSRP	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGB's • Clubs
4.6	Collaborate with stakeholders and partners to incorporate outdoor recreation events into national themed weeks, e.g. National Heritage Week, National Biodiversity Week, Social Inclusion Week?	WCC	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Biodiversity, Heritage and Disability Officers • NPWS • WSRP

Access

Why is this important?

Wicklow's natural landscapes play host to a diverse array of land, water and air-based activities, on both private and state-owned land. Sustainable and responsible access for outdoor recreation requires landowner agreements and typically some level of physical infrastructure to sustain that access. In Wicklow this access is potentially at risk if irresponsible use and unsustainable pressure on the environment, local communities and landowners is not actively addressed and managed.

Local communities and visitors are well served with access to trails and outdoor recreation sites, in the uplands, lowlands and along the coastline, but awareness of these opportunities, in particular alternatives to the high-profile sites and trails, and local knowledge of access to local greenspace is low. This applies to both online information and signage on the ground.

Whilst our priority will continue to be the maintenance of existing trails and infrastructure there is a strong appetite to develop better provision for horse riding, off-road cycling and coastal and water activities, in particular sea swimming.

There is also a gap in provision for families and children which is a missed opportunity to encourage healthy lifestyles and initiate lifelong participation in outdoor recreation from a young age, by offering more multi-use sites and trails (like Vartry/Roundwood), animation and nature-based learning through play and outdoor education infrastructure.

The needs of Wicklow reflect national trends over the last ten years:

- Walking is the dominant outdoor recreation activity.
- Participation has increased: this includes participation among older people, and a growth in multi-generational participation.
- Diversification of activity: while walking dominates, people are seeking greater adventure through activities such as upland hiking, open water swimming, stand-up-paddleboarding and off-road cycling.
- People are seeking opportunities 'closer to home' to participate with friends and family.
- People are seeking 'Instagram' moments by participating in experiences that will portray a sense of adventure.

Understanding the current needs and trends in consumer behaviour is key to ensuring that future outdoor recreation development and visitor servicing across the County is targeted appropriately and sustainably.

Overall, we recognise that there are missed opportunities to make our outdoor recreation infrastructure accessible and there is a reliance on clubs, charitable organisations and activity providers to facilitate access to the outdoors amongst people with disabilities.

What is our ambition?

Our ambition is to protect and improve access to Wicklow's outdoors, for the benefit of all.

We will achieve this by continuing to work in partnership and through existing delivery mechanisms but with more financial support and staff resource to guarantee the quality of our outdoor recreation experiences.

We aim to:

- Prioritise maintenance and enhancement of existing assets and resources to meet needs and preferences of recreation users, e.g. Wicklow Way.
- Improve the accessibility of Wicklow's outdoor infrastructure for all to enjoy and aspire to develop one accessible woodland, upland and coastal site in the County.
- Diversify our outdoor recreation offering beyond walking, mountain biking and road cycling.
- Improve access and infrastructure for horse riding, off-road cycling and water-based activities.
- Provide more family focused experiences, including play and nature-based learning.

Where opportunities arise in West Wicklow we will endeavour to prioritise these to ensure that there is an equity of access across the County, and at all times we will work in partnership with relevant departments and officers to remove the barriers to Wicklow achieving/maximising its full outdoor recreation potential, for example, toilet provision, public transport and parking provision, accommodation and planning (process and policy).



To protect,
diversify and
enhance
access to
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outdoors, for
the benefit of
all

Access actions

	Action	Lead delivery organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
5.1	Undertake a 'Rejuvenating the Wicklow Way' masterplan to identify opportunities to enhance and modernise the trail experience	CWP	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wicklow Way Partnership WORC Stakeholder Forum
5.2	Undertake an accessibility audit of outdoor recreation sites and trails with the aim of developing at least one flagship accessible woodland, mountain and coastal site/experience in the County	WCC, CWP	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WORC Stakeholder Forum Disability Officer and Age-Friendly Officer Active Disability Ireland
5.3	Undertake a Community Trail Plan for West Wicklow	WCC	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WORC PPN Local communities
5.4	Undertake an audit to identify off-road family cycling venues and routes	CWP, WCC	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCC Coillte and other landowners
5.5	Improve equestrian provision across the County	CWP	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WORC Coillte Horse Sport Ireland Equestrian clubs and providers Landowners
5.6	Enhance the provision and quality of coastal and water-based recreation, including designated sea swimming venues	WCC, CWP	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WORC Stakeholder Forum NGB's Clubs and providers Local communities

Access actions continued

	Action	Lead delivery organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
5.7	Develop more family-friendly, multi-use sites like Vartry/Roundwood that offer outdoor recreation, nature connectedness and outdoor learning/education through multi-use trails, play and animation (i.e. interpretation) in one location	CWP, WCC	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Stakeholder Forum • Private and public landowners
5.8	Improve the provision, quality and consistency of outdoor recreation signage across the County (road signage to sites/trails and within sites/on trails, for navigation and visitor information purposes)	WCC	2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC • Stakeholder Forum
5.9	Enhance the overall quality of outdoor recreation infrastructure, implementing the national guidance and standards at a local level	CWP, WCC	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC
5.10	Pilot a scheme for outdoor toilets	CWP, WCC	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC
5.11	Support and implement the delivery of the outdoor recreation recommendations arising from the Glendalough Visitor Experience and Management Plan, in particular the Wicklow Mountains National Park Dispersal Strategy	WORC, Glendalough Partnership	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC • Fáilte Ireland • Stakeholder Forum

Expertise

Why is this important?

Over the last decade, there has been significant growth in the outdoor recreation sector in Ireland, both in the numbers of people visiting the outdoors and the level of funding from central government.

The national outdoor recreation strategy recognises that support for practitioners has not kept pace with this growth and there is a clear need to improve the knowledge, skills and expertise of stakeholders and partners across the sector.

By providing this support the aim is to achieve and maintain consistently high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities and infrastructure, and to fulfil all legal obligations. In Wicklow, this is particularly important for sites designated for nature conservation to ensure these are protected, preserved and managed sustainably for recreation.

In Wicklow, there are many experienced and engaged stakeholders involved in programme delivery and planning, development, management and maintenance of outdoor recreation. However, at some key sites in the uplands, maintenance and visitor management is struggling to keep pace with demand and trends, which can sometimes be driven by social media.

More and better understanding of the patterns and impacts of recreation is needed to inform decisions relating to visitor management and ensure future outdoor recreation development is driven by data, evidence and established, proven good practice.

In line with the national ambition for a skilled sector, there is an appetite amongst stakeholders in Wicklow for more information, research and insights to empower decision-makers with the knowledge and understanding to make informed, evidence-based decisions relating to future development and management.

There is also a desire for more expertise working in specialised areas such as upland trail building to ensure the protection of recreation routes and natural assets in the Wicklow Mountains for many years to come.

What is our ambition?

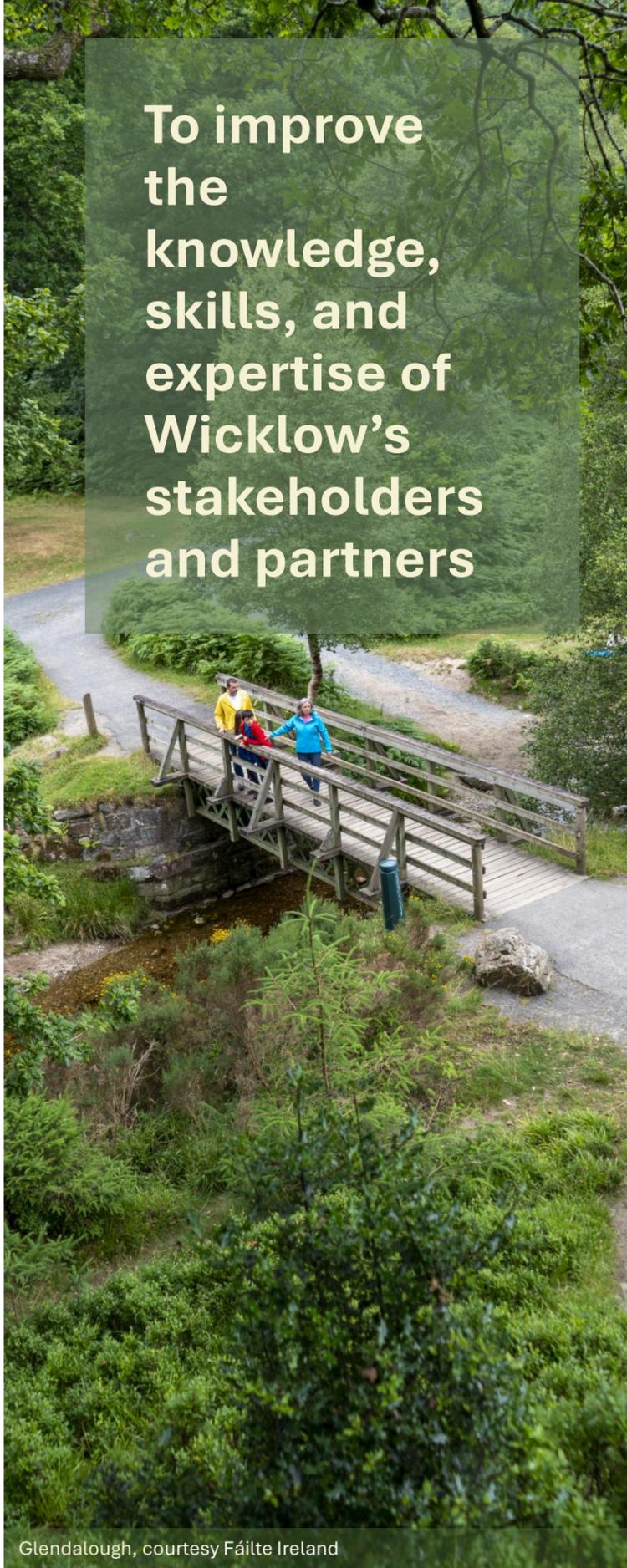
Our ambition is to equip those working in the outdoor recreation sector in Wicklow with the knowledge, skills and information to improve the delivery and management of outdoor recreation over the next five years.

We will:

- Seek funding for more research and insights.
- Gather quantitative and qualitative data to inform future development and management.
- Undertake environmental monitoring to assess the impact of outdoor recreation on sensitive sites.
- Grow and strengthen our local upland trail building and trail maintenance.

To achieve this, we will embrace and deliver opportunities for learning and development aligned with guidance, standards, and consistent approaches set out at the national level (for example, upland access guidance). We will also explore local opportunities for learning and development that may arise out of local plans and strategies (for example, Biodiversity Action Plan).

Critical to achieving our ambition will be continued collaboration with others, the provision of training events at a national level, undertaking fieldwork to witness best practice in action and networking with other practitioners internal and external to the County.



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

Expertise actions

	Action	Lead delivery organisation	Timescale	Stakeholders
6.1	Co-ordinate collection and analysis of data from the various visitor counters monitoring usage at outdoor recreation sites across the County	WORC	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC • NPWS • Coillte • WUC • OPW
6.2	Carry out a research and knowledge gap analysis exercise and based on the outcome, undertake research to inform future decision making relating to development and visitor management in Wicklow	WORC	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Forum
6.3	Introduce ongoing environmental monitoring approaches at selected sites to build up an evidence base that informs sustainable visitor management approaches	CWP, NPWS	2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORC
6.4	Roll out at a local level, relevant national training programmes and guidance to stakeholders to strengthen the skills and knowledge base of the local outdoor recreation sector	WSRP, WORC	2026 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Forum • Activity providers • NGB's • Trail Management Organisations (TMO's) • Environmental NGO's • Clubs and communities

Abbreviations

CORC	County Outdoor Recreation Committee
CORP	County Outdoor Recreation Plan
CWP	County Wicklow Partnership
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committee
DRCD	Department for Rural and Community Development
GIS	Geographic Information System
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland
LNT	Leave No Trace
NGBs	National Governing Bodies
NGO	National Government Organisation
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OPW	Office of Public Works
ORIS	Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
ORO	Outdoor Recreation Officer
PPN	Public Participation Network
RRO	Rural Recreation Officer
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
VEMP	Visitor Experience and Management Plan
WCC	Wicklow County Council
WORC	Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee
WSRP	Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership



Hillwalking in Wicklow Mountains, courtesy Mountaineering Ireland