
Our Great Outdoors

The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan For Northern Ireland



Department of
Culture, Arts
and Leisure
www.dcalni.gov.uk

sport
Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland
Environment
Agency
www.doeni.gov.uk/niea



northernireland
tourist board

“A culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland.”



Contents

Ministerial Forewords	01
Introduction and Vision	04
Why have an Outdoor Recreation Action Plan?	05
Background	08
The Process of Developing the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan	09
The Consultation Process	11
Key Themes	14
Actions	
Theme 1: Structures and Partnerships	15
Theme 2: Legislation, Policy and Responsibility	21
Theme 3: Making the Outdoors More Accessible	23
Theme 4: Investment of Time, Energy and Resources	28
Theme 5: Communication, Marketing and Promotion	32
Theme 6: Research and Monitoring	35
Resourcing the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan	37
Appendix 1 - Steering Group Members	39
Appendix 2 - Organisations which Provided Input into the Consultation Process	40
Appendix 3 - Current and Potential Local Outdoor Recreation Forums	43
Appendix 4 - Glossary of Acronyms	44



Ministerial Forewords

I welcome this Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for the North of Ireland which has the potential to provide many and varied opportunities for people to participate in sport and recreation in the natural environment. Being outside and active in areas of green space has been shown to provide great benefits to individuals' health and mental wellbeing. In a time when people are under greater pressures and stresses from their everyday lives it is essential that they have opportunities to get out and relax, reinvigorate and re-energise.

This Action Plan highlights the importance of making the outdoors accessible to everyone and the opportunities that there are to participate, not only in rural areas but also in the urban fringes. This Action Plan shows how it can help deliver the targets within 'Sport Matters' to increase levels of participation.

I am encouraged by the commitment in this Action Plan to put in place effective grant application and funding opportunities to reach all sectors. This will provide a tremendous opportunity to deliver on issues associated with social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion.

We now need to build on the all-Ireland opportunities that exist.

This Action Plan is the result of a joint approach between a range of Government Departments and Agencies which highlights the cross-cutting nature of outdoor recreation. Partnership working ensures efficiencies and more

effective delivery that can meet a range of needs, and is therefore to be welcomed.

I endorse this Action Plan and encourage all to work in partnership for its successful delivery.

Fáiltím roimh an Phlean Gníomhaíochta seo maidir le Caitheamh Aimsire Lasmuigh do Thuaisceart Éireann; tá d'acmhainn aige roinnt mhaith deiseanna éagsúla a chur ar fáil do dhaoine le páirt a ghlacadh i spórt agus áineas i dtimpeallacht nádúrtha. Is léir go dtéann sé go mór chun tairbhe do dhaoine bheith amuigh agus gníomhach i spásanna glasa go háirithe i dtaca lena sláinte agus meabhairshláinte.

Tá níos mó brú agus strus ar dhaoine sa lá atá inniu ann, agus is den riachtanas deiseanna a bheith acu dul amach agus a scíth a ligean, athbheocht agus fuinneamh úr a chur iontu féin.

Leagann an Plean Gníomhaíochta seo béim ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le hé a dhéanamh chomh furasta agus is féidir do dhaoine dul amach faoin aer agus páirt a ghlacadh sna deiseanna atá ann, ní hamháin i gceantair thuaithe ach sna bruachbhailte uirbeacha fosta. Léiríonn an Plean an dóigh ar féidir na spriocanna a bhaint amach laistigh de "Is Mór Againne Spórt" le cur leis na leibhéil rannpháirtíochta.

Cúis spreagtha dom an gealltanas atá sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta seo i dtaca le deiseanna éifeachtacha a chur ar fáil do gach earnáil le hiarratas a dhéanamh ar dheontais agus ar mhaoiniú. Cuirfidh sé seo deis ar dóigh ar fáil dúinn torthaí

maithe a bhaint amach i dtaca le saincheisteanna a bhaineann le heisiamh sóisialta, díothacht tuaithe agus uirbeach agus comhtháthú an phobail.

Caithfidh muid tógáil ar na deiseanna uile-Éireann atá ann faoi láthair.

Tá an Plean Gníomhaíochta mar thoradh ar chomhchur chuige idir réimse Ranna agus Gníomhaireachtaí rialtais. Léiríonn sé sin cé chomh leathan agus atá caitheamh aimsire lasmuigh mar ábhar. Nuair a oibríonn muid i gcomhpháirtíocht lena chéile cinntíonn sé go mbíonn éifeachtúlachtaí agus seachadadh níos éifeachtaí ann. Is féidir linn freastal ar réimse riachtanas ar an dóigh sin. Ba chóir dúinn fáilte a chur roimh an chomhoibriú mar sin.

Tacaím leis an Phlean Gníomhaíochta seo agus impím ar gach duine obair as lámh a chéile lena chinntiú go n-éireoidh linn é a chur i bhfeidhm.



Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Carál Ní Chuilín CTR
An tAire Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta

Northern Ireland's rich natural environment, landscapes and built heritage provide a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy when being outdoors.

From the geology of our mountain peaks, the red squirrels in our woodlands and marine life in our rock pools, the outstanding landscapes in our countryside, to the roots of our ancestors in our built heritage, there is much to explore, to find and to cherish.

To conserve natural and built heritage and the wonderful landscapes within Northern Ireland it is important for each of us to feel a sense of ownership and connection with them. This Plan articulates a vision to provide improved recreational opportunities for engagement with our environment and to make the most of our wonderful assets in ways that are sustainable and responsible.

This Plan will also help our economy to grow sustainably by ensuring that recreation and conservation work hand in hand and by encouraging heritage led development. The opportunity for outdoor recreation is one of the ecosystem services that our environment provides to each of us.

Being outdoors and active is beneficial for our health and engagement with green spaces has been shown to have very positive impacts for our mental and physical well-being.

The Department of the Environment (DOE) wants to see more of the natural and built heritage available for the public to enjoy and for more people from all backgrounds to access the outdoors and take part in recreational activities. To help achieve this we will encourage access to and understanding of our environment, and will work with our partners to actively involve communities and businesses in protecting our natural and historic places for the enjoyment and benefit of everyone.

It gives me great pleasure to support and commend this Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.

Explore... Enjoy... Cherish.



Mark H Durkan MLA
Minister of the Environment

Activity and eco-tourism are growing in Northern Ireland and the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan recognises this and highlights the need for further development to continue to grow this important sector.

New developments that get people outdoors and active, but those that also create opportunities for improved visitor services, short breaks, meals, and hospitality are important for growing this element of the economy.

Research by Sheffield Hallam University has highlighted that outdoor recreation is worth over £132million of consumer spending and that there are over 3,500 people employed across Northern Ireland in the outdoor recreation sector. Continuing to support and grow this segment of the economy is important for Northern Ireland. In order to grow it there needs to be the appropriate facilities and opportunities for participation aligned with good information on how to become engaged.

This Action Plan highlights the importance of developing key hubs for recreation that provide a multi-sport and activity approach to opportunities for a range of ages and abilities. Such facilities can encourage people to enjoy a full day out or to make a short break of it thereby enhancing the opportunities for secondary spending in the locality.



Arlene Foster MLA
Minister of Enterprise,
Trade and Investment



Introduction

Northern Ireland has a combination of extremely varied land and seascapes that have beautiful scenery within a very small geographical area. Mountains, moorlands, winding river valleys, green rolling countryside, extensive inland waterways, a spectacular coastline, woodlands, and forests all make up the Northern Ireland environment. However, not all of our natural environments are rural; the towns and cities in Northern Ireland tend to be relatively small and there is often local access to hills, forests and parks that can make the outdoors a place that everyone in society can use.

Our outdoor environment therefore provides a resource that has tremendous potential for supporting the delivery of long-term social and economic transformation. The promotion of equality and the need to tackle poverty and social exclusion are fundamental aspects of this Action Plan. Access to green space and opportunities for enjoying the outdoors must be improved for all sections of the community, especially those that live in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas or who do not have access to services.

This Action Plan highlights that promoting healthy and active lifestyles for local people from any background or identity can effectively deliver on these priorities. Access to green space has been recognised across the world to be very important for people's health and especially mental wellbeing. Helping people to be active outdoors in groups or as individuals has proven potential to deliver on the issues associated with social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion.

Our natural environment combined with the facilities and new developments (such as the world class mountain bike trails developed in the Mourne) has the ability to attract visitors, promote economic equality and development through activity tourism, and create employment opportunities in various related sectors.

However, for our natural environment to continue to do this the landscapes and ecosystems within them must be protected and looked after so that such usage can be enjoyed by future generations for years to come. Ensuring that any developments are sustainable and sensitive to the environment is a critical element of this Action Plan.

This new seven-year Action Plan to 2020 to continue to develop outdoor recreation was coordinated by a Steering Group comprising a range of Government organisations, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) (formerly the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN)) and land owning representatives. This coordinated approach demonstrates a strong commitment to realise the value of the outdoors.

It provides key recommendations for actions and challenges that need to be addressed to make Northern Ireland a place where outdoor recreation can deliver:

- Healthy active lifestyles for local people from all communities;
- Economic growth through encouraging visitors to come and enjoy the outdoors; and
- Protection of landscapes and ecosystems for future generations.

The development of this Action Plan is a result of an extensive examination of the issues and a wide consultation with interested groups and individuals who contributed to the process in a range of meetings and written responses. A list of those organisations that responded to the consultation can be found in Appendix 2.

The Vision

The vision for the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan is:

“a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland”

To achieve this vision the aim is for Northern Ireland to be a place where:

- There are increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone in a broad range of outdoor recreation activities;
- There are accompanying benefits to local communities, especially those who are socially excluded in terms of health, social inclusion, cohesion, equality, and economic development; and
- People enjoy the outdoors and show a high degree of responsibility for themselves, towards others and towards the environment they are using, and play their part in maintaining, supporting and enhancing our environment and heritage.

Why have an Outdoor Recreation Action Plan?

A love for the natural environment, its special landscapes, secret places, fantastic coastlines, and the wildlife that inhabits these areas is a strong part of the fabric and culture of many people in Northern Ireland. However, the opportunities to benefit from the resources that are offered by the natural environment are not necessarily accessible to all in equal measure. Despite our fantastic natural resources, Northern Ireland has relatively limited infrastructure to make this resource accessible and the legislative framework that provides for opportunities for outdoor recreation has been revised and superseded in most other European countries including Great Britain, but this has not yet happened in Northern Ireland.

It is necessary for the Government, businesses and voluntary organisations to work together to achieve greater accessibility to the outdoors in a sustainable and responsible manner in order to realise its full potential. The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan will be the key driver to make this happen.

Outdoor recreation for relaxation and enjoyment brings a range of significant benefits to society, communities and to individuals and also for the protection of the environment.

These benefits include:

Health and wellbeing, social inclusion and cohesion, as well as enjoyment for everyone

An accessible environment is an important resource for local people to enhance their quality of life by enjoying the outdoors. There is clear evidence highlighting the very strong connection between health and green spaces, including research undertaken by the Countryside Recreation Network in 2005¹. ORNI research in 2008 and 2010 into trends in outdoor sports², walking, cycling, and horse riding³ has also shown that there has been a significant growth in demand for outdoor recreation activities, especially those that are undertaken independently, rather than through an organised club or body.

The costs associated with using the outdoors can be relatively low and it is a resource that can often be free to the end user and so is available to all sections of society and not just to those with the financial means to participate. Many outdoor recreation activities develop opportunities for people to work together in a non-competitive and non-threatening way thereby supporting community cohesion and development.

Economic equality, benefit and sustainability.

The spectacular landscapes, seascapes and heritage of Northern Ireland are a vital tourism product. There has been a very significant growth in the adventure and activity tourism sector – with only a handful of commercial providers in 1998 and

now well in excess of 100 businesses operating across Northern Ireland. The growing number of retailers and outlet stores selling outdoor equipment also reflects the growth in this sector. There is increasing recognition in other parts of the UK and Europe of the economic benefits that outdoor recreation can bring. Studies in Wales⁴ and Scotland⁵ have demonstrated the wider economic value of the sector for not only activity providers but also accommodation providers, cafés, restaurants, pubs and bars. Emerging research from the Sports Institute Research Centre in Sheffield Hallam University has highlighted that outdoor recreation provides over 3500 full-time equivalent jobs across Northern Ireland.

Education about the environment, self and others

There is a long history of the Education and Library Boards providing high quality educational courses for their own schools and youth groups through the use of the outdoors. In recent years this has been matched by a significant growth in the number of pupils opting to do outdoor activities as part of the GCSE PE curriculum. Outdoor environments have also been extensively used for team development in the corporate sector. The development and value of volunteering is now a strong feature of the work undertaken by organisations such as the National Trust, ORNI and Mourne Heritage Trust bringing with it a wide range of benefits to the individuals and organisations involved.

Connection with and protection of the environment and heritage

Outdoor enthusiasts feel a strong connection with wild landscapes and coastlines and it is in the interests of the users themselves, land managers and those who organise activities to work in partnership with conservation bodies to ensure that these areas are protected and their special qualities maintained. Engaging people and especially young people with the natural environment is crucial so that they feel a strong sense of ownership of the environment and a desire to look after “their patch” is engendered. Exclusion from nature leads to a lack of care and so it is essential that people are given opportunities to experience nature and to develop a love for it.

Outdoor recreation therefore has a very broad range of benefits and spans many social, economic and environmental fields, as Diagram 1 (page 10) highlights. The importance of joint working between the organisations that recognise these benefits of outdoor recreation is critical, and the inter-relationships between users, agencies, land owners/managers and providers is fundamental for success in the delivery of this Plan.

Case Study 1: Developments of a young rock climber from Ballywalter, Co. Down

Thirteen year old Carson has been climbing since he was nine years old. He started in a small climbing wall based at the Ganaway Activity Centre on the Ards peninsula on a school’s programme, supported by the Youth Development Officer from Mountaineering Ireland, the National Governing Body for Climbing and Mountaineering. The programme is funded by Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI).

Carson already has some very significant accomplishments for someone his age, including participating at competitions on a regional, national and European level, and participating in training camps and trips in France and Spain.

He has already experienced some of the wonderful rock climbing Ireland has to offer, with two separate trips to Glendalough, Co. Wicklow and The Burren, Co. Clare. He has succeeded climbing the first ascent of a new rock route in the Mournes; this is often the peak of a rock climbing career but Carson has already achieved it at the age of 13.

Carson, along with his climbing peers involved in the Mountaineering Ireland Youth Development Programme, have become a real inspiration, not only to some of the younger climbers in the programme, but also to the coaches, leaders and other experienced rock climbers.

Grassroots programmes which connect schools, clubs and facilities through partnership working have provided not only tremendous opportunities for Carson but inspired others to progress as well.



Carson climbing in Co. Clare

¹ A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing. Countryside Recreation Network 2005 ISBN 1 84387 137 8

² Trends in Outdoor Recreation (1995-2008) www.outdoorrecreationni.com/publications/research-reports/

³ Trends in Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding in Northern Ireland (1995-2010) www.outdoorrecreationni.com/publications/research-reports/

⁴ The Economic Impact of Walking and Hill Walking in Wales – Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cardiff University

⁵ Assessing the Economic Impacts of Nature based Tourism in Scotland – a report commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage

The Breadth of Outdoor Recreation



Background

Northern Ireland's first Countryside Recreation Strategy was developed by the Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of Environment (now the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)) and the Sports Council of Northern Ireland (now Sport NI) in 1998.

The vision of the Strategy was "to develop and sustain a vibrant countryside recreation culture in which responsible and well informed people enjoy high quality, sustainable and appropriate activities in an accessible, well managed yet challenging environment; where landowners and managers are welcoming and there are accompanying benefits to local communities both in social and economic terms."

There were three principles underpinning this vision:

1. Mutual respect between all interested parties;
2. Sustainable access; and
3. Quality of the experience

One of the main outcomes from the Strategy was the creation of a network of key stakeholders through CAAN and an associated company limited by guarantee which was to deliver the products and the infrastructure required for the implementation of the Strategy.

In 2010 CAAN rebranded as ORNI and over the past 13 years it has been extremely successful in developing outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland. Through its work the prominence of outdoor

recreation has significantly increased but it has been recognised that more continues to need to be done. ORNI is not just recognised for the quality and quantity of work that has been undertaken within Northern Ireland, but is increasingly highlighted within the UK and abroad as an exemplar organisation that has driven significant developments in outdoor recreation.

The scale of these developments is exemplified by just some of the more significant ones highlighted below:

- ORNI has secured over £8 million in additional funding over the past 10 years for outdoor recreation projects and development;
- ORNI has completed over 40 significant development projects including the first canoe trails in the UK, eco-trails, horse riding trails, way-marked ways, and cycle and mountain bike trails;
- ORNI has undertaken 27 significant pieces of research into the benefits, management and strategy for outdoor recreation either by activity or location;
- Training has been provided to over 3000 participants;
- Seven new websites to provide key information have been created; and
- Over £30million worth of PR through articles, TV and radio on outdoor recreation has been achieved.

The work done by ORNI was instrumental in the success of the 1998 Strategy and sets the standard for achievement through this Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.

In March 2009, Sport NI and the NIEA commissioned an independent review of this Strategy. The review concluded that the majority of the overall 'agendas' and actions set out in the Countryside Recreation Strategy and subsequent Operational Plans for CAAN had been achieved and indeed exceeded. It concluded that, given changing priorities and responsibilities, there now needed to be an agreed wider framework for action linking public health, personal wellbeing and economic agendas, tied-in with the role for Local Government with the anticipated reform of that sector.

The key recommendation emanating from that review was that Government should prepare a new Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Process of Developing the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan

Following discussions between Government Departments it was agreed that the logical way forward would be to develop an Outdoor Recreation Action Plan that feeds into Sport Matters: the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-19. Targets for increased participation, sustainable access and improved infrastructure have already provided the focus for a wide range of bodies to work together. Sport Matters has been adopted by the Executive and is a cross-departmental Strategy with the necessary governance and monitoring arrangements already established.

Associating the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan with Sport Matters offers the potential to deliver on a range of other Government strategies and policies including:

- Our Passion, Our Place, NIEA Strategic Priorities 2012-2022;
- A Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020;
- A Fitter Future for All – Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022;
- Shaping our Future, The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025;

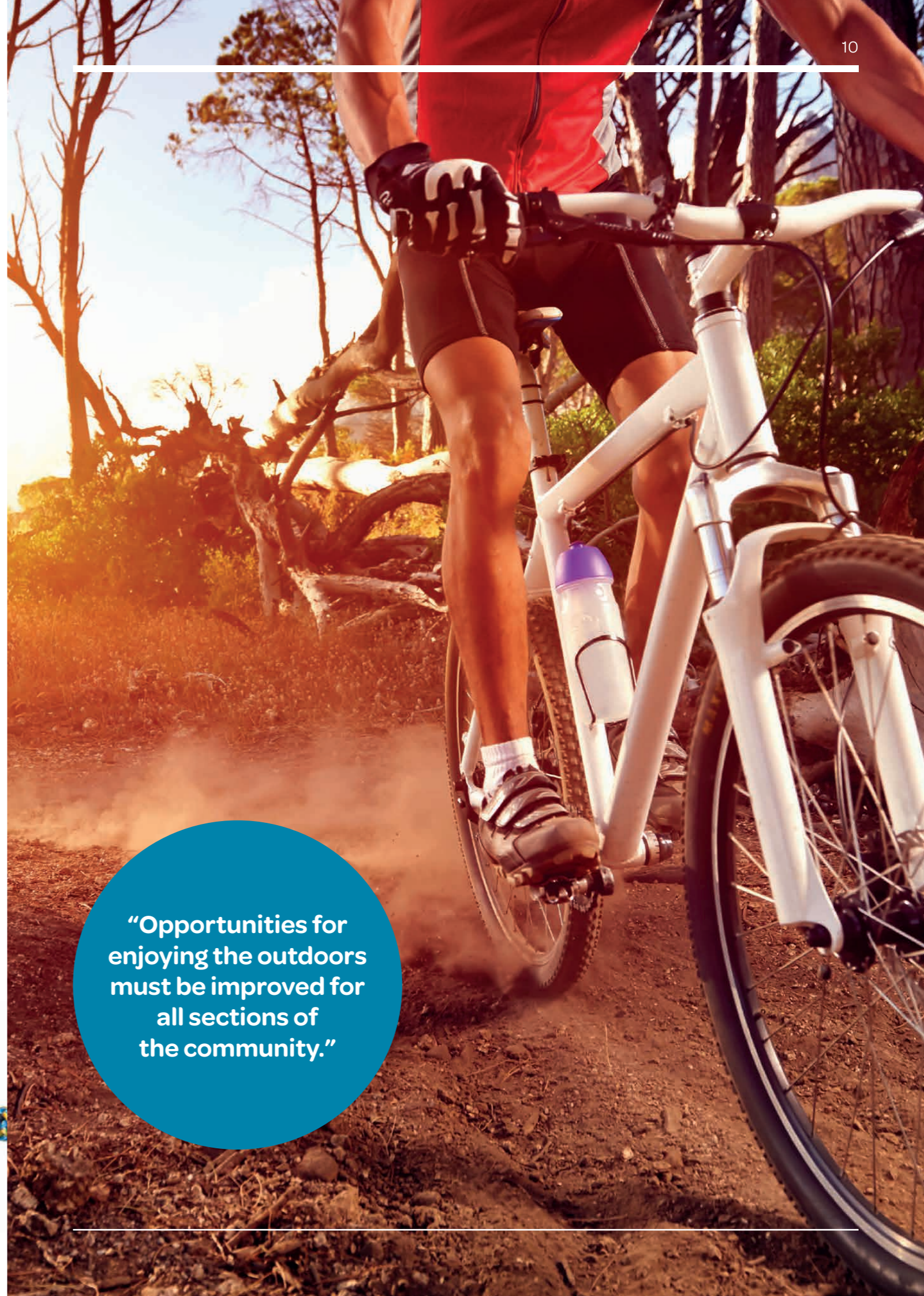
- Everyone's Involved, The Sustainable Development Strategy;
- The Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013;
- Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future – A Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2012;
- The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy – People and Place;
- The Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-20; and
- The Rural White Paper Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2012.

Early in the discussions amongst the stakeholders it was agreed that this Action Plan had to be backed up by clear targets and actions to be undertaken.

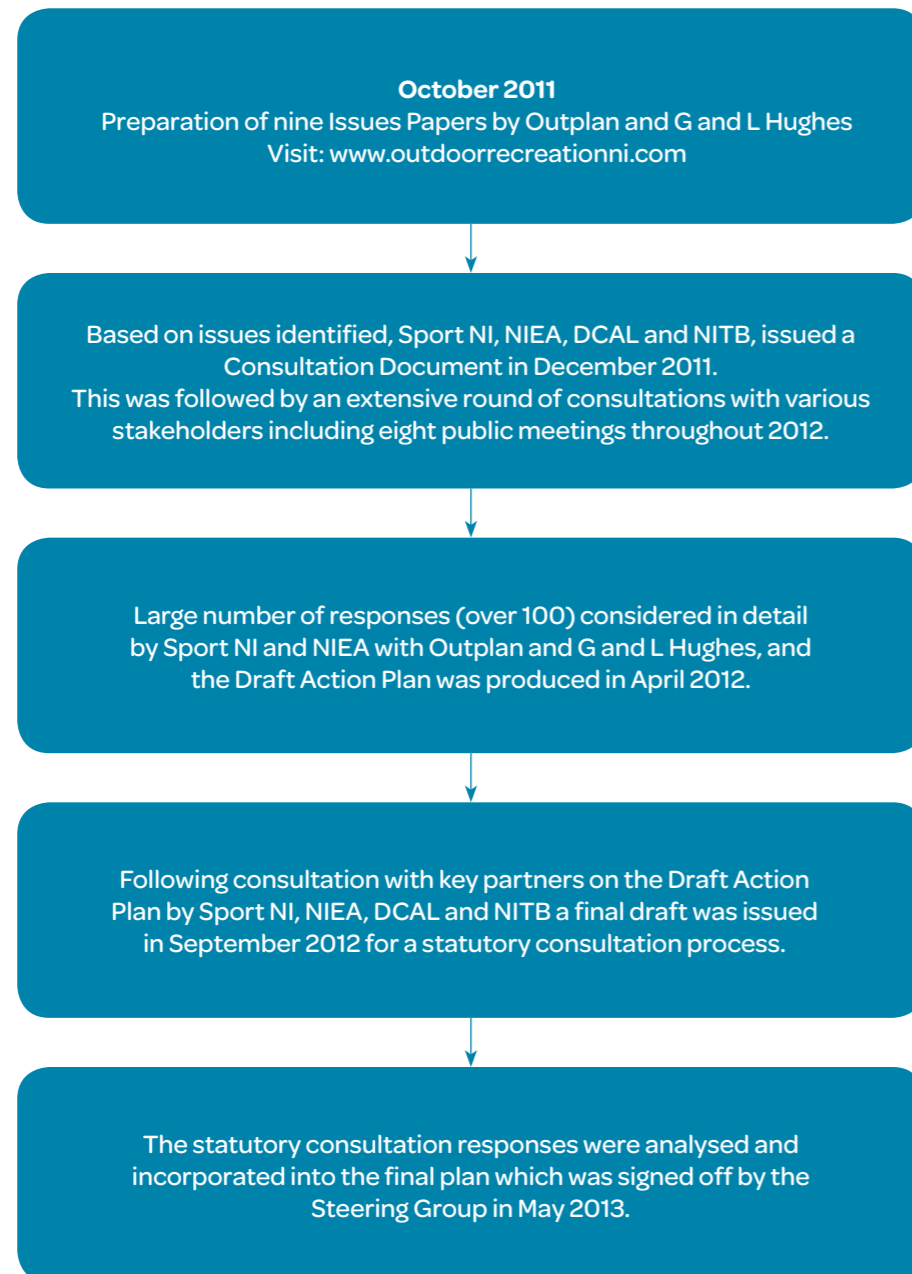
The development of this Action Plan was commissioned by Sport NI and NIEA with support from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Inland Waterways Branch. ORNI was also critically involved throughout the process.



“Opportunities for enjoying the outdoors must be improved for all sections of the community.”



Consultation Process



Sport NI, in partnership with NIEA, DCAL and NITB, commissioned a contractor to prepare a series of nine papers to identify the primary issues surrounding outdoor recreation. The topics identified were:

1. Healthy Lifestyles;
2. Widening Participation;
3. Environmental Awareness, Engagement and Sustainability (supporting conservation through outdoor recreation), Incorporating Education;
4. Governance and Partnership Working (integrated outdoor recreation management), Incorporating Access;
5. Promotion and Raising Awareness;
6. Volunteering and Community Engagement/Participation;
7. Activity Tourism and Entrepreneurship (rural and economic development);
8. Facilities; and
9. Monitoring and Evaluation.

These Issues Papers provide valuable background information, identifying more than 189 issues that could be addressed to develop outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland. The papers are available online at www.outdoorrecreationni.com

A number of key and recurring themes emerged from the Issues Papers.

- A need to create the appropriate structures for the implementation of a plan and the importance of partnerships and structures for developing, managing and advocating a coordinated approach to outdoor recreation;
- A need for a review and development of legislation, policy and responsibilities;
- The provision of facilities and infrastructure that meets the needs of those who wish to take part to ensure that current and future participation is sustainable;
- The critical issue of investment; whether that is time, energy or resources;
- The importance of communication, marketing and promotion; and
- The importance of research, monitoring and evaluation to provide a strong evidence base to provide the rationale for the development and management of activities and facilities.

Following the preparation of the Issues Papers the Steering Group developed a wide ranging consultation programme to examine the key themes and issues to ensure that the development of outdoor recreation

meets the needs of land owners, users, statutory authorities, governing bodies, and activity providers. The consultation took a number of forms:

- Web-based survey for individuals and/or organisations;
- Meetings with Focus Groups such as Countryside Officers, activity providers, governing bodies, etc.; and
- A series of regional open meetings for interested parties to hear first-hand about the proposed Action Plan and feed in their views on the emerging issues.

The consultation exercise generated widespread support for the preparation of this Action Plan and the key recommendations and actions to move forward are based on the extensive responses provided. The detailed examination of the responses received has led to 33 key recommendations being identified that, if implemented, will help to address the opportunities, benefits, barriers, and issues and enable the realisation of the vision.

“Outdoor recreation for relaxation and enjoyment brings a range of significant benefits to society.”

Key Themes

The main themes to emerge from the Issues Papers and confirmed by the consultation process are outlined below and the actions in this Action Plan highlight which theme and issues they will address:

Theme 1: Structures and Partnerships

The opportunity to have a clear voice for the importance of outdoor recreation at both a local and national level was articulated on numerous occasions throughout the consultation. The consultation events highlighted the value people have placed on being able to come together and discuss issues.

There is a great range of organisations and agencies that have an interest in outdoor recreation and consequently there is a risk of independent working, duplication of effort and neglecting of actions as a consequence of a lack of a joined up approach. While there are some very good examples of coordination, there are further opportunities to create stronger mechanisms to help achieve the vision and a more joined up approach.

Theme 2: Legislation, Policy and Responsibilities

The issue of the differences in and inadequacy of access legislation in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK and Europe was very extensively highlighted in both the Issues Papers and through the vast majority of the responses to the consultation. This is clearly the biggest issue that recreational users feel that they face in Northern Ireland. The consultation also brought up a very high level of response on the importance of policy on access to public land and how various public bodies deal with liability issues. The complex arrangements and responsibilities for policy and provision of outdoor recreation were also highlighted across a number of the Issues Papers.

Theme 3: Making the Outdoors More Accessible

The growth in demand for outdoor recreation which is being experienced has to be managed. There is a need to ensure that the full potential of taking part can be realised in a way that does not compromise the habitats and ecosystems on which the experience relies. Given the current access legislation in Northern Ireland and the lack of rights of way and path networks, not all communities have easy access to the natural environment for recreation. It is essential that creating opportunities for outdoor recreation is focused on areas of high social need and where access to services is limited.

Theme 4: Investment of Time, Energy and Resources

As public funding is likely to continue to decline in future years, the importance of innovation, sustainability, volunteering, and buy-in from users and private sector businesses will become increasingly important. It is also critical that any resource investment is used to best effect to develop needed facilities, infrastructure and opportunities.

Theme 5: Communication, Marketing and Promotion

With good evidence of the growth in interest and participation in outdoor recreation there is a need to ensure that participants and visitors know where they can go, how to behave responsibly and what opportunities exist.

Theme 6: Research and Monitoring

Although not a “hot topic” as part of the consultation, it is clear from the Issues Papers that Northern Ireland lags behind the rest of the UK and other parts of Europe in having a needs and evidence base to underpin investment decisions in outdoor recreation. With scarce resources it is necessary to answer the question “what works and why?”

Theme 1: Structures and Partnerships

This key series of actions relates to the creation or continued use of a number of committee and networking structures. These will allow for the proper consideration of and action on matters highlighted both in the Issues Papers and affirmed through the consultation process. The table below and on the following pages highlight the relationships between these structures.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead Body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 1A			
Create a 'Strategic Outdoor Recreation Group' to ensure overall delivery of the Plan.	<p>The Strategic Outdoor Recreation Group will report to the Sport Matters Implementation Groups for Places and Participation, thereby ensuring accountability for the delivery of the actions.</p> <p>The Group will enable and support development of sustainable outdoor recreation where practicable and appropriate and will also have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the key actions are delivered within anticipated timeframes by the relevant lead body; Address any strategic issues identified by Departments, Local Authorities or other national organisations; and Address relevant matters raised by the proposed National Outdoor Recreation Forum (referred to below). <p>This Group will comprise Agencies, Government Departments and Local Authorities with responsibility for outdoor recreation and must have an acknowledged role in agreeing a joined-up approach to policy on access, inputting to/advising on proposed legislation, requesting consideration of legislative changes especially in the area of access and liability, and in considering the appropriate role for and ongoing responsibilities of Local Authorities post the review of public administration.</p> <p>The Group may form specific and time-limited Working Groups as required. Early consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border access issues and an all-Ireland approach to development of activities where appropriate; Ways to focus opportunities on areas of highest need; Ways to work with the health sector; and Potential to improve the economy. <p>A clear "Terms of Reference" for the role and membership of the Group will be drawn up and agreed.</p> <p>The necessary administrative support mechanisms will be provided via the lead body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) DCAL Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Department for Education (DE) Department for Social Development (DSD) DOE Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) Loughs Agency NIEA NITB NI Water Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) ORNI Public Health Agency (PHA) Sport NI Waterways Ireland 	By 2014 to create a Strategic Group to facilitate the monitoring and implementation of this Action Plan.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead Body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 1B			
Establish a 'National Outdoor Recreation Forum' to address strategic issues, solutions and actions.	<p>This Forum will sit outside Government and will provide a clear and joined up voice for dealing with issues that cannot be resolved at a local level.</p> <p>Membership will be comprised from representatives of the Local Outdoor Recreation Forums (1C) and national representative organisations including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) for Outdoor Sports; Landscape management bodies; Education centres and organisations including the education for Sustainable Development Forum; The Activity Tourism Forum; Landowner representatives i.e. Ulster Farmers Union and the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association; The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme; Sustrans; National Trust; Rural Community Network; and Local Authorities Countryside Officers. <p>A clear "Terms of Reference" for the role and membership of the Forum will be drawn up and agreed.</p> <p>A Secretariat and professional advisory service for the Forum could be provided by ORNI and supported by Sport NI.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Chair The National Forum to be supported by Sport NI ORNI Secretariat 	By 2014 to create a National Forum that can provide a unified voice and address strategic issues for the development of outdoor recreation.
Action Number: 1C			
Create a network of 'Local Outdoor Recreation Forums'.	<p>These will identify local issues, potential solutions and actions. Unresolved or 'common' issues should be referred to the National Forum.</p> <p>The involvement of Local Authority representatives (Access Officers, Biodiversity Officers and/or Sports Development Officers as required) is seen to be important for these Forums to be effective.</p> <p>Forum membership is likely to be comprised of activity tourism providers, education staff, outdoor sports clubs representatives and users, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or land management bodies and land owners as required.</p> <p>As many of the key areas that outdoor recreation takes place in are geographically very different in their size, type of landscape and community make up, it is recognised that a "one size fits all approach" to the operation of the Local Forums would be inappropriate. Therefore each Forum may choose to operate in a slightly different manner to others.</p> <p>However, appropriate "Terms of Reference" for the role and membership of each Forum will be drawn up and agreed locally.</p> <p>Appendix 3 lists the current Forums.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairs selected locally Secretariat 'in house' or from Local Authorities Supported by Sport NI/NIEA 	By 2015 to have a minimum of seven local outdoor recreation Forums established and operational to deal with local issues.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead Body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 1D			
Provide an annual Outdoor Recreation Network Meeting for all interested parties.	<p>Currently ORNI hosts two full network meetings per annum that provide an opportunity to communicate all the various developments and issues to interested parties.</p> <p>With the development of the Local and National Forums the two full network meetings could be reduced to an annual conference type network meeting that could provide the opportunity for the National Forum to report on its work, for ORNI to report on significant developments throughout the year and to showcase what is happening in other parts of the UK and Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI 	<p>To continue to hold an annual open network meeting to facilitate good communication across the sector.</p>
Action Number: 1E			
Develop, support and enable private sector partnerships.	<p>Given the growth of the activity tourism operators in Northern Ireland over the period from 2000-2012, aligned with the growth in the number of retail outlets focusing on outdoor equipment, there is an opportunity to examine greater synergy between the needs of users and the outdoor industry as a whole.</p> <p>The Activity Tourism Forum is a good example of a private sector partnership working for mutual benefits in outdoor recreation. Creating links between this sector and the retailers, hospitality providers and the users has the potential to strengthen opportunities for economic development through outdoor recreation.</p> <p>NGBs have highlighted a desire to be incorporated into such partnerships to help promote connections to clubs and to help support maintenance of standards and good practice within provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) • NITB • Tourism Ireland • Activity Tourism Forum • Local Tourism Representatives • ORNI (Secretariat) • NGBs 	<p>By 2016 to have at least 2 private sector partnerships in place including the existing Activity Tourism Forum.</p>



Case Study 2: The Development of the Mourne Outdoor Recreation Forum

On 2 July 2009, a number of partners who have an interest in outdoor recreation solely met in Newcastle with the Mourne Heritage Trust (MHT) to seek to develop better working relationships between the Trust, the councils and the enthusiasts and providers of outdoor recreation in the Mourne. This led to the establishment, in November of that year, of a new Outdoor Recreation Forum for the area. The focus of the Forum was to ensure that there is a suitable flow of information between the users, activity providers, the statutory agencies and Mourne Heritage Trust.

Over the past four years the Forum has met twice per year to look at the key issues with respect to outdoor recreation in the area. This has led to a number of pieces of work being developed; not least of which was the strategic path review undertaken by Trails Wales on behalf of MHT which was funded by NIEA and Sport NI in 2012. The path review has highlighted the trails and paths both in the uplands and lower reaches of the Mourne in terms of:

- Current route condition;
- Current and anticipated future recreation demand;
- Environmental and aesthetic impact;
- Access demands; and
- Visitor services.

The Forum has dealt with a range of local issues including best practice for upland path works, access issues, the management and impact of events, wild camping issues, the 2012 wildfires, and associated issues. Whilst there is not always agreement at the Forum meetings, they are well attended and supported by the local providers and users and have ensured that there is better communication between local clubs, activity providers and agencies.



Upland Path Works on Binnian Mountain

Case Study 3: The Development of the Activity Tourism Forum

The Activity Tourism Forum (ATF) was formed in Northern Ireland in May 2006. The catalyst for the formation was the NITB Strategic Framework for Action 2004-2007 which identified activity tourism as one of its 'Winning Themes' to generate competitive advantage in Northern Ireland.

ORNI was contracted by NITB to assist in the delivery of the 'Activity Tourism - Winning Theme'. Following consultation with a range of private sector activity providers it was agreed that the ATF should be established with meetings held twice a year.

The ATF was established to create stronger links between activity tourism providers and NITB marketing and market development activities to:

- Allow NITB to understand any gaps in commercial skills and facilitate training; and
- To promote the sharing of information and best practice within the industry.

ORNI continue to act as Secretariat for the ATF which now consistently attracts between 30-40 private sector businesses and is chaired by a private sector activity provider rotating every two years. The ATF also has an annually elected working group that decides the agenda of the ATF meetings and also provides detailed input to NITB and ORNI on areas such as marketing campaigns, training programmes, etc.

The ATF faced initial challenges such as unwillingness of private sector activity providers to work collaboratively with 'rival' businesses. Private sector operators could also become frustrated with the speed of operation of public sector bodies.

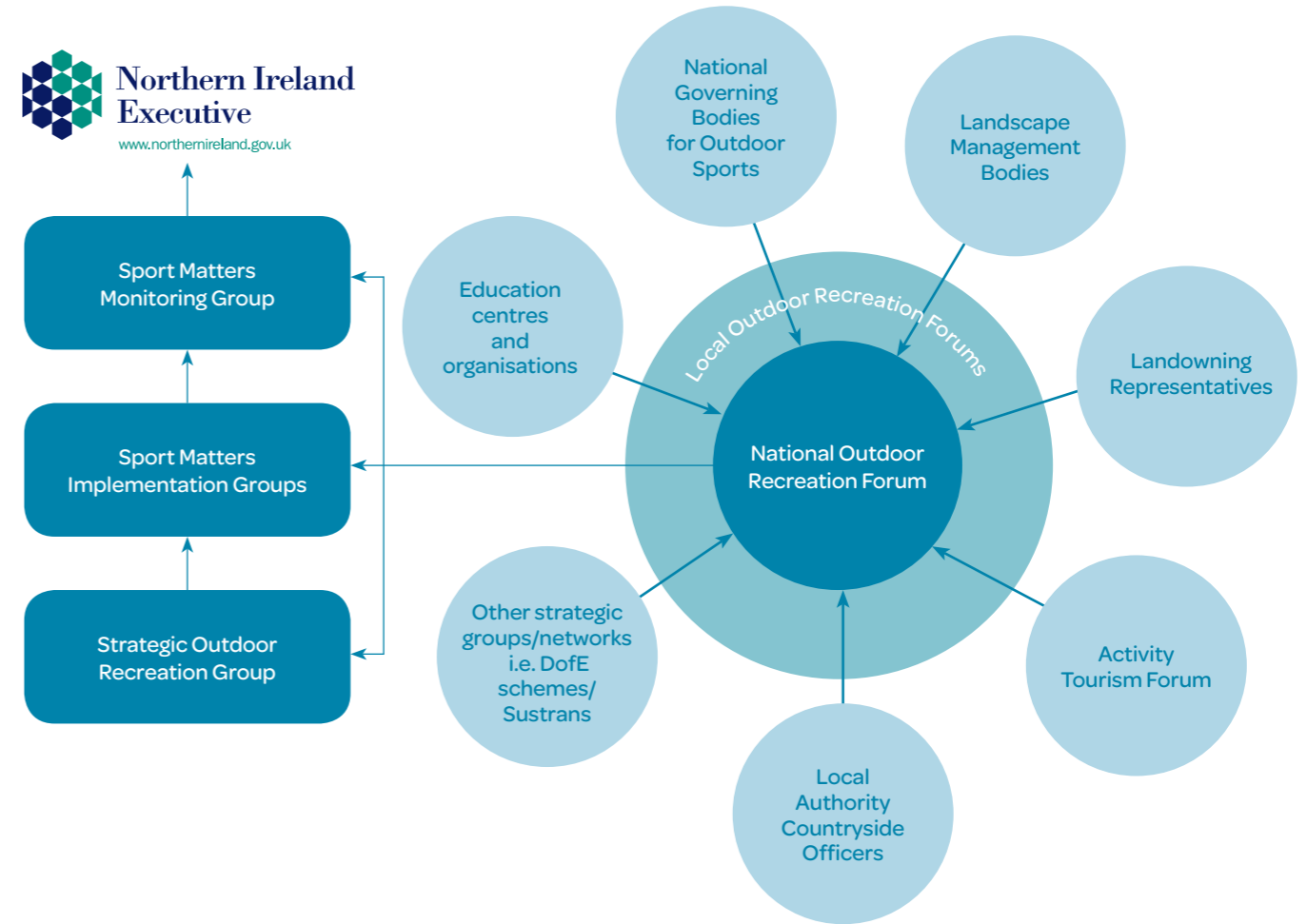
Whilst these issues still exist they have been significantly reduced following production of tangible outputs including:

- Best practice learning journeys to Lake District, North Wales and Killarney;
- Best practice seminars; and
- Marketing campaigns such as Northern Ireland Adventureland Weekend and incorporation of the Adventuremark accreditation scheme.

Moving forward it is important that the ATF continues to adapt to changing trends not only within the activity sector but also within the wider tourism industry.



Activity Tourism Forum Members at Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails



The Reporting and Monitoring Structures for the Plan

This Action Plan was developed under the auspices of Sport Matters. The Strategic Group will be required to report to the Sport Matters Implementation Groups on the work being undertaken in the Plan. However, through the consultation

there was a clear call for a more effective joint voice for outdoor recreation. The National Forum will be made up of non-governmental organisations and will have the freedom to be an advocate for outdoor recreation and can have

direct access to Government. The National Forum will also hold the Strategic Group to account for the actions within this Plan being delivered.

Theme 2: Legislation, Policy and Responsibility

The areas of policy and legislation featured heavily in the Issues Papers prepared for this Action Plan and also had the highest response rate of any topic in terms of the consultation document. It is clear that a broad body of opinion thinks that changes are fundamentally necessary for progress to be made. The actions that follow are intended to address such matters but will require determination and political support at a national level.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 2A			
To develop policies and to support appropriate legislative priorities, changes and developments to optimise the benefits and opportunities for outdoor recreation.	<p>The Strategic Group (as in 1A) will not only concern itself with the implementation of the plan but will also actively seek to develop joined up policy amongst statutory bodies that support outdoor recreation.</p> <p>Greater clarity is required on what each public body is responsible for and how these responsibilities are implemented.</p> <p>The Strategic Group needs to lead the thinking and guide the policy makers on the post review of public administration responsibilities.</p> <p>A range of legislative developments need to have further consideration including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory access to all appropriate public land; Developments of public rights of way and permissive paths; Statutory arrangements for access and management of outdoor recreation within protected landscapes, especially the AONB's; Planning policy - with respect to the role of both Area Plans and the associated Planning Application process; Access to Inland waterways; and Coastal access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Group 	<p>By 2015 to have provided clear information on responsibilities of each department, agency and local authorities.</p> <p>By 2018 to have reviewed existing, and initiated the development and consolidation of appropriate outdoor recreation legislation with a particular emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The roles and responsibilities of Government Departments, Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), Local Authorities and individuals; Access to public land; and Rights of way, permissive paths and the development of core path networks and outdoor recreation hubs.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 2B			
To provide clear information on the social, health, economic and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation, in an agreed and coordinated manner.	<p>Working Groups comprising of relevant Officers would prepare papers for the Strategic Group and commission joint research to develop the evidence base.</p> <p>One of the aims of this process is to provide a strong evidence base for giving outdoor recreation greater visibility within the Programme for Government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport NI DCAL DOE Local Outdoor Recreation Forums 	<p>By 2016 to have outdoor recreation recognised within the Programme for Government as a mechanism for helping to combat social exclusion and health issues and to support improved economic development in Northern Ireland.</p>
Action Number: 2C			
Ensure that full account is taken of outdoor recreation in any Management Plan for each ANOB.	<p>As AONB Management Plans are developed or revised, the importance and management of outdoor recreation is to be incorporated within each Plan. The need to provide guidance for the development of local Action Plans for outdoor recreation in these areas was also highlighted through the consultation.</p> <p>This also requires an Officer or an organisation who can lead on this aspect within each of the AONB's.</p> <p>It is noted that the development of Management Plans for AONB's is not a statutory requirement and the Strategic Group (1A) should look into the options for developing legislation to give greater scope for outdoor recreation within Management Plans within the existing designated areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Group Land Management Bodies ORC 	<p>By 2020 to have Outdoor Recreation embedded into all AONB Management Plans.</p>
Action Number: 2D			
Embed the value of outdoor learning in providing the steps towards lifelong, healthy and active lifestyles and care for the environment.	<p>The need for curriculum development was highlighted within the consultations to give outdoor learning a higher priority.</p> <p>The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom which began as an England initiative is interested in rolling out its work across the UK including Northern Ireland and engaging further with stakeholders here.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to use outdoor learning to create links between local academic institutions and organisations that promote outdoor recreation.</p> <p>In the Republic of Ireland the Leave No Trace (LNT) ethic is being embedded into school programmes and stronger connections between LNT and schools in Northern Ireland could be sought.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DE Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Colleges Education for Sustainable Development Forum Wardens Association Council for Learning Outside the Classroom LNT Sport NI Landscape Management Bodies 	<p>By 2015 to have established baseline figures for the number of schools involved in outdoor learning projects.</p> <p>By 2016 to have 'Outdoor Learning' established and embedded into Teacher Training Programmes.</p>

Theme 3: Making the Outdoors More Accessible

This requirement received considerable coverage in the Issues Papers. Furthermore the consultation process showed that there is a strong desire for more facilities and equality of access to them. The need to develop concept plans and core path networks also featured highly in responses to the Consultation.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 3A			
Audit current hubs for outdoor recreation and identify geographical gaps and mechanisms to develop access and opportunities.	<p>This action links to 1C the development of Local Outdoor Recreation Forums as these provide the mechanisms for consultation and input into the plans.</p> <p>Develop a framework for creating recreational 'master plans' for hubs to ensure appropriate access infrastructure and management. Master plans must take account of the nature of the sites and proposed activities but where possible seek to deliver improved accessibility for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The inclusion of economic opportunities and other ecosystem services⁶ was highlighted as being an important element within these plans.</p> <p>Consideration must be given to areas of high social need and especially Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NIEA Sport NI CLOA ORNI Local Authorities Landscape Management Bodies 	<p>By 2014 to have developed a framework for the creation of Master Plans.</p> <p>By 2016 to have created a suite of a minimum of eight recreational Master Plans across Northern Ireland for key sites/ areas.</p>
Action Number: 3B			
Develop and provide information and guidance/ tools for Local Authorities and land managers on how to manage/ develop recreation.	<p>Good practice handbooks, guidance and workshops on standards are required to ensure a consistent approach.</p> <p>Develop guidance re signage and promote good practice.</p> <p>Production of good practice guides and agreement on acceptable standards, including sustainable trail development way marked routes and other recreational facilities.</p> <p>Guidance on the management of safety while balancing the need for freedom and adventure within outdoor recreation has been highlighted as a need.</p> <p>Published documents need to be created, but the value of training, workshops and sharing of information cannot be underestimated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLOA Sport NI NIEA ORNI Local Authorities 	<p>By 2017 to have produced guidance on standards for a range of outdoor recreation facilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail development; Management and maintenance of facilities; Visitor monitoring and management; Signage; and Safety and risk management in the outdoors.

⁶ Ecosystem services are the processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans such as clean air, water, food and materials.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 3C			
Develop a systematic toolkit for community path and the national cycle network development.	<p>Joint approach to be taken between Local Authorities, Central Government Departments and voluntary sector bodies to develop a toolkit that highlights the path network needs in conjunction with the national cycle network, the existing opportunities and the associated costs and benefits of development.</p> <p>To establish a trial for this toolkit (with funding package) for two target areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOE DOE Planning PHA Sustrans Local Authorities Voluntary sector 	<p>By 2017 to have developed a toolkit for the development of community path and national cycle networks.</p> <p>By 2018 to have piloted this toolkit with associated investment into both a rural and urban area.</p>
Action Number: 3D			
Identify special areas of significance for outdoor sport.	<p>Through utilisation of the existing ORNI research on trends in outdoor sports and liaison with governing bodies and other relevant organisations to identify the critical sites that are used for specific outdoor sports.</p> <p>This will also identify gaps in site and club provision.</p> <p>An audit of angling is being undertaken by Sport NI and NITB as there has been historically limited data on the scale and governance arrangements for angling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport NI DCAL Local Authorities 	<p>By 2015 to have established the key sites across Northern Ireland that are critical for specific outdoor sports.</p> <p>By 2020 to have established a mechanism by which such sites are offered increased protection through planning or policy development.</p>
Action Number: 3E			
Signposting and supporting training and skill development.	<p>The "Trends in Outdoor Sports" research undertaken by ORNI in 2008 and 2010 had highlighted a significant growth in participation in outdoor recreation and this has been verified by the Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS) in 2012. However, much of this activity is unaligned to clubs or NGBs.</p> <p>Participants who use the outdoors need to have a certain level of competence in the activities that they do in order to manage the risks that are inherent in outdoor recreation (especially adventure activities). Therefore the provision of increased opportunities for training in skill development is important.</p> <p>The promotion and provision of information on training opportunities should be incorporated into marketing information.</p> <p>The role of Tollymore National Outdoor Centre is important in maximising the delivery of training and development in outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport NI NGBs 	<p>By 2015 to have established baseline figures on the number of people undertaking skills development training in outdoor activities across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>By 2018 to have a significant increase in the number of participants undertaking skills and leadership training.</p> <p>By 2015 to have new partnerships between retailers and NGBs to disseminate information on training and good practice.</p>

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 3F			
Provide clearer information of what people can do near to where they live.	<p>Develop websites and downloadable information (including Apps and social media) and ensure websites are connected to show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where you can go and what there is to do on a local basis - and not necessarily as a tourism product; • Information on accessibility (disabled toilets, paths for buggies, wheelchairs and people with limited mobility, how to get there, etc.); • Events; and • Local clubs and providers. <p>This information needs to highlight the health benefits of outdoor recreation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI • Local Authorities 	By 2014 to have a fully functional web portal and other information that provides key information on opportunities to participate at a local level.
Action Number: 3G			
Provide diversity and social inclusion training for activity providers, clubs and recreational land managers.	<p>ORNI in partnership with Disability Sports Northern Ireland (DSNI) and Sport NI has designed and been delivering training to encourage diversity through innovative approaches and including an understanding of the motivations and aspirations of different user groups.</p> <p>Further discussion between providers and clubs, etc. on how diversity can be embedded.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI • DSNI • Sport NI 	By 2014 to have a range of toolkits for the implementation of the recommendations from the "Barriers to Participation" study 2008.



“Engaging people and especially young people with the natural environment is crucial.”

Case Study 4: Social paddling

The five canoe trails in Northern Ireland which were developed between 2005-2009, were the first of their kind in the UK and Ireland and were seen as a significant asset for outdoor recreation. However, the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) recognised that, while they were being used in an ad hoc manner by individuals and clubs, there was no coordinated approach to maximise the use of the canoe trails and increase participation.

In 2009 CANI employed a Club Development Officer and one of their key tasks was to develop a series of recreational paddles to engage clubs and individuals to make more use of the trails.

The trips are kept to around 10 kilometres so that they are inclusive for all and they are open to families, clubs and paddlers of all ages and abilities. By nature the events are extremely sociable and this has been a very important factor in developing the family friendly nature of the events. On the trips there has been just about every type of craft including inflatables; sit on tops; general purpose kayaks; sea kayaks; white water kayaks; all styles of open canoes; and even some currachs.

Over the three years there has been a very significant increase in the number of people attending these paddles and over 1700 participants have been on trips. The recreational paddles have now become a very effective mechanism for the different canoe

clubs to interact with each other and it has also been a springboard for newcomers to the sport to link to clubs in their area. As a result the club membership has grown and is continuing to grow rapidly.

A Recreational Steering Group has been established and they meet quarterly to plan the events and now organise a recreational paddle trip outside of Northern Ireland each summer.

Initially CANI staff organised and ran these events centrally, but in 2013 the clubs began organising all of the events and trips themselves.



Recreational Paddle on the Lough Erne Canoe Trail

Theme 4: Investment of Time, Energy and Resources

Funding is crucial for the development and maintenance of infrastructure, for the promotion of opportunities and to lever other funds. It was a key issue

which emerged from the consultation. The role and importance of volunteers in outdoor recreation provision and management should never be

underestimated. There is widespread understanding of the need to mobilise and properly utilise this valuable resource.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 4A			
Investigate, develop and implement appropriate opportunities for funding that supports sustainable outdoor recreation in the natural environment.	<p>There is a need to identify and provide information on the range of funding programmes that currently exist within Government Departments and Agencies and where these programmes may mutually be beneficial to applicants.</p> <p>There is a need to consider how timeframes can be developed that allow for match funding opportunities to be maximised.</p> <p>The health benefits of outdoor recreation are well recorded and the provision of funding for initiatives that improve opportunities for those from disadvantaged areas needs to be examined.</p> <p>Identify any significant gaps in provision of grants and seek ways to fill these gaps.</p> <p>The recognition of outdoor recreation and access within agri-environment funding programmes is a fundamental area for review along with providing clarity about where access development may reduce eligible area within agri-environment schemes. As most other European countries support access issues under these schemes there is a need to review the opportunities for this so that land-owners are supported rather than penalised for access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DARD • DOE • DCAL • DETI • PHA • NIEA • NITB • Sport NI • FSNI • Local Authorities 	<p>By 2016 to have created a mechanism between key funding bodies on mainstreaming the value and importance of outdoor recreation and ensuring its place within funding programmes.</p> <p>By 2015 to have resolved issues over Single Farm Payments and access and to have investigated ways to provide incentives for farmers and landowners who are prepared to support access.</p>
Action Number: 4B			
Promote information and provide guidance on applying for funding programmes which can be used to develop outdoor recreation.	<p>Good communication mechanisms to be developed to be able to reach all sectors.</p> <p>Some voluntary organisations, community groups, landowners and even NGBs have a limited capacity to provide the detailed requirements that are often required by funders for projects. Therefore training specifically for outdoor recreation has been identified as a requirement to build capacity.</p> <p>The Grant Tracker approach by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) is a useful example but is obviously much wider than outdoor recreation so the development of a distilled version of this would be very beneficial.</p> <p>ORNI has already been engaged in some of this work through the Venture Outdoors project and the opportunity to take this further should be explored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI • Sport NI • NITB • NICVA 	<p>By 2016 to have provided guidance on effective grant application.</p> <p>By 2016 to have a mechanism to provide information about new funding streams for outdoor recreation.</p>

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 4C			
Create new grant schemes for maintaining and supporting access and the ongoing development of path networks, greenways and the National Cycle Network.	<p>Through the consultation, there has been a clear call for a funding programme that is specifically focused on capacity and confidence building with respect to access.</p> <p>The creation of a funding pot for staffing and project funding to develop greenways, community path networks and remedial works on high pressure sites to maximise opportunities for local access and reconcile conflicts.</p> <p>There are currently 1304km of open National Cycle Network route in Northern Ireland with 198km of traffic free paths and 1106km of on-road routes. There has been an identified need to review and further develop the National Cycle Network including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising the potential of current greenways; • Developing new linear greenways; and • Developing greenway links to communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE • Sport NI • Department for Regional Development (DRD) • Local Authorities • Sustrans 	<p>By 2015 to have created an access funding stream that can be used to build capacity and deal with access related issues in the key sites and hubs for outdoor recreation.</p> <p>By 2020 to have increased the traffic-free sections of the National Cycle Network by 20%.</p>
Action Number: 4D			
Provide appropriate funding streams for a range of scales of events.	<p>Current funding for events tends to be focused on very large scale or international events.</p> <p>Events that encourage participation or that showcase the wonderful landscapes and natural facilities in Northern Ireland are important. However, the provision of such events needs to be done sensitively and sustainably to minimise their impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NITB • SNI • Waterways Ireland • Loughs Agency • Local Authorities 	<p>By 2016 to have a range of funding streams that include eligibility for events and linked to good practice guidelines in 5C.</p>
Action Number: 4E			
Investigate and provide information on cost effective insurance for volunteers, groups and land managers.	<p>Dialogue with insurance industry based on evidence needs to take place. Also the opportunity to work with Mutuels including the Adventure Industry Mutual, and the National Farmers Union Mutual need to be further explored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI 	<p>By 2016 to have produced guidance on insurance schemes and opportunities and ways to reduce costs for the management of outdoor recreation.</p>
Action Number: 4F			
Promote the value of and signpost opportunities for volunteering.	<p>Provide further training for groups starting out using volunteers.</p> <p>Promote the opportunities for volunteering for individuals and organisations including businesses.</p> <p>Support the development of "Friends of" groups with in organisations.</p> <p>Support the up-skilling of volunteers within outdoor recreation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSD • ORNI • Volunteering Now • Sport NI • NGBs 	<p>By 2015 to have a mechanism to recognise the value of volunteering specifically in outdoor recreation.</p>
Action Number: 4G			
Provide training for volunteers and share good practice across the outdoor sector.	<p>Develop a partnership approach to support the training of volunteers and to reduce duplication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSD • National Trust • Landscape Management Bodies • ORNI • Volunteering Now 	<p>By 2015 to have produced a joint programme of training and development opportunities for volunteers.</p>

"There has been a very significant growth in the adventure and activity tourism sector."



Case Study 5: Community Based Publicly Accessible Woodland Development

Carntogher Community Association (CCA) successfully bid for over £512,000 of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and £255,000 from NIEA to purchase 130 acres of land near Maghera adjacent to the Drumnaph woodland site, which was acquired and is managed by the Woodland Trust. The area contains ecologically significant habitats and trees dating back to the 1600's. This project creates a large publicly accessible woodland site and secures the future of the trees and rich heritage of the site.

The site is a wildlife haven, approximately 130 acres in size and includes native woodland, grazing meadows, wetlands, river bank habitats, and bog land. As it is adjacent to the Drumnaph Woodland Trust site there will be over 200 acres of accessible public green space for community access.

Including the CCA's existing 90 registered volunteers, the scheme will train school children, university students, conservation groups, and new community volunteers. They will help carry out research, gather information and gain management skills in conservation, including pre-project health and safety training.

Niall O'Kane, Director of Carntogher Community Association has stated: "This is a dream come true for the local Community Association. This is a grassroots, community-driven project that will provide the opportunity for the entire community to get involved in a landmark heritage project over the coming years. This will bring the size of the Drumnaph reserve to over 200 acres, giving a critical mass of inter-linked habitats that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the reserve. The involvement of the wider community in developing access and managing the reserve will also help develop the sense of community ownership, further underpinning its long-term sustainability for generations to come".



Learning about Meadows on the Drumnaph Reserve

Theme 5: Communication, Marketing and Promotion

The consultation responses in particular highlighted the need to disseminate good news stories about access, to promote good practice

and to increase awareness about both opportunities and personal responsibility. Good communication from the full range of organisations

involved in outdoor recreation is also essential in maximising partnership working.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 5A			
Develop and promote clear messages about personal and social responsibilities in the context of Occupiers' Liability.	<p>There has already been much work done on these issues but throughout the consultation process they continued to be prevalent.</p> <p>Therefore a continual process for delivering and improving messages on being responsible for self and behaving with consideration to others, especially land managers is essential.</p> <p>The continued issue of good dog management in the outdoors must also continue to be worked on.</p> <p>Information needs are known but having mechanisms for disseminating this information needs to be developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport NI • DOE • HSE • NGBs • ORNI • Local Authorities 	<p>By 2013 to have produced guidance on personal responsibility in the context of occupiers' liability aimed at users.</p> <p>By 2014 to ensure that all dog license holders receive very clear messages about responsible dog management in the outdoors with their license.</p> <p>By 2016 to ensure that information and guidance is embedded within training courses, Local Authority websites and land management bodies' information.</p>
Action Number: 5B			
Provide clear communication on environmental responsibility for users and providers in the outdoors.	<p>To promote the messages and ethos' of LNT Ireland, the Countryside Code, Wildlife Safe (WiSe) Scheme, the RYA Green Blue Scheme, and Invasive Species Ireland effectively to users, activity providers, schools, clubs and governing bodies for outdoor sports as relevant.</p> <p>To provide clear information about invasive species and biosecurity for both water and land activities.</p> <p>The risks associated with wild fires in the natural environment needs to be communicated effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIEA • Sport NI • DE • LNT Ireland • Forest Service • Waterways Ireland • Landscape Management Bodies • Fire and Rescue Service 	<p>By 2016 to have embedded the ethics of LNT into the leadership training programmes for outdoor sports.</p> <p>By 2018 to have the ethics of LNT embedded within the developments in outdoor learning.</p> <p>By 2016 to have established mechanisms to coordinate existing schemes and the development of training for activity providers.</p>

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 5C			
Disseminate information on good practice in the management of recreation and especially large scale events on protected sites and habitats and minimise disturbance of protected species.	Initial work has been done on this by ORNI to create a process for recreation providers to carry out Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRAs) when holding events or carrying out outdoor recreation project work especially on Natura 2000 sites ⁷ . There is a need to provide succinct and critical information to charities, activity providers and to the various land management organisations and local authorities to ensure they operate within National and European nature conservation legislation. The development and role of local outdoor recreation forums are important in further communicating these processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI • Sport NI • NIEA • AONB Bodies • Landscape Management Bodies • Local Authorities 	By 2014 to have the website for guidance on managing events fully functional and to have major land management bodies and the main charities signed up for the process for events.
Action Number: 5D			
Promote 'good news' stories and developments.	ORNI has been extremely effective at promoting developments, opportunities and events through the media in Northern Ireland and have achieved a Public Relations equivalent value of over £1 million per annum in this area. It will be important that this work continues and that there are also opportunities by which other organisations both on a local and national level including governing bodies of sport, local forums and land management bodies can learn from the approach taken by ORNI. Supporting training and developing further engagement with broader media and personalities will be instrumental in this process. Messages to be consistent that highlight the benefits to society including healthy lifestyles and social inclusion as well as benefits to the economy and to local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORNI • NITB • Sport NI • NIEA • DCAL • Local Authorities 	By 2018 to have provided guidance documentation and training seminars on effectively promoting outdoor recreation.

⁷ Natura 2000 refers to a network of designated sites across Europe that are protected under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds)

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 5E			
Promote the value of external accreditation to demonstrate compliance regarding safety and quality of provision.	In Northern Ireland adventure activity providers are not required by law to be licensed in the same way as providers in Great Britain. However, in lieu of this statutory licensing DCAL and Sport NI have been supporting and implementing 'Adventuremark' as a mechanism for the accreditation of activity providers to show that they work to industry standards. There are a number of other accreditations for facilities and sites such as the quality walks, the green flag awards, blue flag awards and country parks accreditation. The encouragement of facilities to achieve accreditation standards is important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport NI • DCAL • NITB • NIEA • Local Authorities • Voluntary bodies 	<p>By 2014 to have 30 activity providers accredited by Adventuremark across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>By 2016 to have established baseline information for the sites and facilities that hold accreditation.</p> <p>By 2018 to have increased the number of quality walks on WalkNI by 10%.</p>
Action Number: 5F			
Market Northern Ireland/Ireland as a tourism destination for outdoor recreation.	This action is important to boost the local economy through the promotion of outdoor recreation to out of state visitors and to encourage greater spend and economic activity. The importance of attracting national and international events was highlighted and there is the opportunity to boost the profile of the region and the opportunities presented for more specialist activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NITB • Tourism Ireland • Local Authorities • ORNI 	By 2015 to have established the top five outdoor recreation experiences to attract out of state visitors to Northern Ireland.



Theme 6: Research and Monitoring

The consultation reiterated the importance of relevant and focused research as highlighted in the Issues Papers. Feedback clearly supported the need for studies on the economic value of outdoor recreation and its benefits to participants and value to society. There was also felt to be an immediate need to evaluate

existing provision and identify gaps at a strategic Northern Ireland wide level. Partnerships with academic institutions presents improved opportunities to undertake research that will be of benefit to both the institution and organisations with responsibility for management of outdoor recreation. The actions

under 3A and 3D, while focused on accessibility, are also linked to research needs. 6B is required in order to effectively communicate the value of outdoor recreation (2B).

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 6A			
Undertake public surveys to identify recreation demand.	In the three other regions of the UK longitudinal surveys are being carried out that collect a range of information about people's visits to the natural environment. These include the type of destination, the duration of the visit, mode of transport, distance travelled, spend, main activities, and motivations for the visit. They also collect data on people that do not visit the natural environment and the reasons for this. While some work has been done by ORNI on trends in participation, there is no research on reasons why people do or do not use the outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport NI • NIEA • NITB 	By 2017 to have an agreed framework for undertaking research to get baseline data on demand and usage of the outdoors for recreation.
Action Number: 6B			
Undertake research into the economic and social (including community cohesion) benefits of outdoor recreation.	There is a need to get information on the economic value of outdoor recreation in line with similar economic studies in sport across Europe but also to capture the economic and social benefits of participation. These will need to take into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity tourism; • Consumer spending; • Employment; • Volunteering; • Health savings; and • Ecosystem services. * (defined at 3A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport NI • NIEA • NITB • PHA 	By 2016 to have baseline data on the economic and social value of outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland.

Action	Details/Outcomes	Lead body and Partners	Success Indicator
Action Number: 6C			
Develop a joined-up approach (systems and procedures) for monitoring and evaluation of facility use at a national level.	Currently there are electronic counters on some facilities throughout Northern Ireland, but there is no central collation of such data. There could be opportunities for a partnership with one of the Northern Ireland Universities to develop mechanisms to collate such data. Also funded projects require information to be returned to the funders on participation rates, economic spend and usage. However there is a great divergence into the requirements for the submission of data and what level of detail is required.	The Strategic Group defined in Theme 1A.	By 2015 to have an agreed framework for the monitoring of data provided through outdoor recreation facilities By 2016 to have developed a mechanism to capture all the various data sources and provide collated information.
Action Number: 6D			
Research into current and needed infrastructure for camping in key areas.	Wild camping is an integral part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and is a fundamental element to self-sufficient journeying in the outdoors whether on land or water. Some sites are extensively used for such camping activities particularly in the Mourne and Antrim Hills. However, wild camping can produce significant problems in terms of human waste and litter, as well as overcrowding of certain sites and the risks associated with campfires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme • Sport NI • DARD • Landscape Management Bodies 	By 2014 to have baseline data on the extent of levels of wild camping in the Mourne, Antrim Hills and to a lesser extent the Sperrins and Lough Erne. By 2018 to have established mechanisms to reduce the impact of wild camping through strategic planning and facility development.



Resourcing the Action Plan

As Outdoor Recreation is such a cross cutting theme that a number of Government Agencies and organisations are committed to, there will need to be a genuine partnership approach to funding the implementation of this Action Plan. Early in the implementation phase the Strategic Group needs to consider how this is best achieved.

There already has been a very significant joined-up government approach to outdoor recreation:

- ORNI is core funded by four Government Departments/ Agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU);
- The development of this Action Plan and recent research undertaken into the economic benefits of outdoor recreation and a review of angling were undertaken through partnership agreements between departments; and
- The development of new facilities for outdoor recreation usually involves a cocktail of funding from a range of sources and agencies.

These partnerships will need to be continued and extended to ensure the effective delivery of this Action Plan.

Emerging research from the Sports Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University into the economic impact of outdoor recreation has highlighted that in 2011 there were over approximately 3500 full-time equivalent jobs in the sector and that consumer spending was just under £132 million in outdoor recreation. These figures do not include secondary employment or spending on associated activities such as hospitality, accommodation, etc. but are purely related to the spending on outdoor recreation products and facilities. The overall Gross Value Added (GVA) by outdoor recreation exceeds £100million.

This Action Plan highlights 33 new actions that are deemed to be instrumental for the development of outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland and that these new actions will inevitably require a level of investment to ensure that they are effective. There is already public investment in outdoor recreation from both central and local Government and since the 1998 Countryside Recreation Strategy there have been very significant developments. The investment in ORNI by the four Government Departments and the engagement with Local Authorities has been instrumental in making this happen.

Many of the new actions are about resources of people and organisations working effectively together and so the cost of this in financial terms is not high. However, in order to effectively deliver this Action Plan (excluding staff time within departments and organisations) additional financial resources of approximately £2.9 million over seven years between 2013 and 2020 will be required. This is envisioned to be built into future budgets between the various delivery partner organisations and through effective joint working between these organisations.

It should be noted that the mapping of hubs for recreation and the resulting strategic plans for development are likely to highlight specific developments of trails and facilities that are not included in the costs for this Action Plan. These developments will need additional capital resources to ensure that they can be delivered. Further, once a toolkit has been developed for the creation of local community type path networks there may well be a significant drive from local communities and Forums for the development of such routes. Again the capital costs associated with such developments have not been included within this Action Plan and will need to be costed separately.

“A love for the natural environment is a strong part of the fabric and culture of many people in Northern Ireland.”



Appendix 1: Steering Group Members

The following individuals and organisations are members of the Steering Group for the development of this Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.

Chairman	Murray Cowan	Sport Northern Ireland Board Member
Vice-Chair	Maia Taylor	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
	Caro-Lynne Ferris	Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland
	Pat Wilson	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure - Inland Waterways (to 2013)
	Lawrence Stanford /Rosemary Petrie	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure - Inland Waterways (from 2013)
	Richard Schaible	Forest Service Northern Ireland
	Sean Fitzpatrick	Northern Ireland Agricultural Producer's Association
	Martin Carey	Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network
	Alan Moore	Northern Ireland Water
	Niall McAleenan	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
	Rosemary Lightbody	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
	Michael Lipsett	Chief Leisure Officers Association
	David Gray	Department of Environment Environmental Policy Division
	Barbara Muhly	National Trust
	Jason Rankin	Ulster Farmers' Union
	John News	Sport Northern Ireland
	Mike McClure	Sport Northern Ireland

Appendix 2: Organisations which Provided Input into the Consultation Process

1	Activities Ireland
2	Antrim Borough Council
3	Ardnabannon Outdoor Education Centre
4	Armagh District Council
5	Ballyholme Yacht Club
6	Ballymena Borough Council
7	Ballymoney Borough Council
8	Banbridge District Council
9	Belfast Canoe Club
10	Belfast City Council
11	Belfast Hills Partnership
12	British Association of Shooting and Conservation
13	British Horse Society
14	C3 Canoe Club
15	Canoe Association of Northern Ireland
16	Carrickfergus Sailing Club
17	Causeway Coast Adventure Racers
18	Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust
19	Causeway Coast Kayak Association
20	Causeway Open Award Centre
21	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
22	Chief Leisure Officers Association
23	Climb NI
24	Cloughey and District Community Association
25	Coleraine Borough Council
26	Colmcille Climbers
27	Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland
28	Cookstown District Council
29	Corralea Activity Centre Ltd
30	Countryside Alliance Ireland
31	Countryside Access and Activities Network (now ORNI)
32	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside
33	Craigavon District Council
34	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
35	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure - Inland Waterways Branch
36	Department of Education
37	Department of Enterprise Trade and Industry
38	Department of Environment Environmental, Policy Division

39	Department for Social Development
40	Derry City Council
41	Down District Council
42	Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
43	Dungannon Borough Council
44	East Antrim Boat Club
45	Far and Wild
46	Fermanagh District Council
47	Fermanagh Ramblers and Hillwalkers
48	Forest Service Northern Ireland
49	Foyle Hill Walking and Rambling Club
50	Francis McCrory
51	Gortatole Outdoor Education Centre
52	Green Party
53	Harps Cycling Club
54	Inland Waterways Association Ireland Newry and Portadown Branch
55	International Mountain Biking Association
56	Island Wheelers
57	Jill Montgomery
58	Jungle NI
59	Killowen Outdoor Education Centre
60	Lagan Canal Restoration Trust
61	Lagan Valley Regional Park
62	Lagan Valley Orienteers
63	Larne Borough Council
64	Leave No Trace Ireland
65	Limavady Borough Council
66	Lisburn City Council
67	Lissan House, Cookstown
68	Lough Neagh Partnership
69	Loughs Agency
70	Magilligan Field Centre
71	Maple Group Practice
72	Martin Crossin City Tours
73	Mencap
74	Mid Ulster Walking Club
75	Mountaineering Ireland
76	Mourne Heritage Trust
77	Moyola Angling Association
78	National Trust

79	Newry and Mourne Council
80	North Down Borough Council
81	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
82	Northern Ireland Environment Link
83	Northern Ireland Mountain Bike Alliance
84	Northern Ireland Orienteering Association
85	Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network
86	Northern Ireland Scouts
87	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
88	NW Mountaineering
89	Ocean Youth Trust Ireland
90	Omagh District Council
91	Ring of Gullion AONB
92	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
93	Shannaghmore Outdoor Education Centre
94	South West College - Omagh campus
95	Speleological Union of Ireland
96	Sperrin Harriers Running Club
97	Sperrins Gateway Landscape Partnership
98	Sperrins Tourism
99	Sport Northern Ireland
100	Sport Scotland
101	St Colmcille Climbing Club
102	Strabane District Council
103	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership
104	Sustrans
105	Tidy Northern Ireland
106	Tourism Ireland
107	TrailBadger.com
108	Ulster Angling Federation
109	Ulster Farmers Union
110	Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs
111	Ulster Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club
112	Ulster Rural Riders Association
113	Ulster Society for the Protection of the Countryside
114	Ulster Wildlife Trust
115	Upperlands Community Group
116	Visitor Monitoring Ireland
117	Waterways Ireland

Appendix 3: Current and Potential Local Outdoor Recreation Forums

The consultation highlighted that these could be aligned to new Council boundaries under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) within AONB management areas or linked to tourism destination areas.

Current Forums

1. Mourne Outdoor Recreation Forum (Facilitated by Mourne Heritage Trust)
2. Causeway Coast and Glens Outdoor Recreation Forum (Facilitated by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust)
3. Lagan Valley Regional Park Outdoor Recreation Forum (Facilitated by LVPR)
4. Antrim Outdoor Recreation Forum (Facilitated by Antrim Borough Council)
5. Sperrins Outdoor Recreation Network and Forum
6. The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership (SLLP) effectively acts as a Forum but a new Outdoor Recreation Sub Group for the partnership has now been developed

Potential new Forums

1. Fermanagh
2. Ring of Gullion
3. Lough Neagh/Lower Bann
4. Belfast Urban Fringe



Appendix 4: Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Body/Organisation
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ATF	Activity Tourism Forum
CANI	The Canoe Association of Northern Ireland
CCEA	Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CLOA	Chief Leisure Officers Association
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DE	Department of Education
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DOE	Department of the Environment
DofE	Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DSD	Department for Social Development
DSNI	Disability Sports Northern Ireland
FSNI	Forest Service Northern Ireland
LNT	Leave No Trace
MHT	Mourne Heritage Trust
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NICVA	The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NGB	National Governing Body
ORNI	Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (Formerly CAAN)
PHA	Public Health Agency
RPA	Review of Public Administration
SLLP	The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership
SNI	Sport Northern Ireland

This document is available
in other accessible formats
on request, and online at
www.sportni.net

Published: March 2014

Sport Northern Ireland
House of Sport
2a Upper Malone Road
Belfast BT9 5LA

T: (028) 9038 1222
E: info@sportni.net
W: www.sportni.net



Northern Ireland
Executive
www.northernireland.gov.uk



Department of
Culture, Arts
and Leisure
www.dcalni.gov.uk



Department of
Enterprise, Trade
and Investment
www.detni.gov.uk



Department of the
Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk