

Overview of Training Programme for Private Landowners In the MacGillycuddy Reeks in Kerry

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SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP CLG.



*Todhchaí Cheantair
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Our Rural Future




**Coiste Forbartha Pobail
Áitiúil Chiarraí**
**Kerry Local Community
Development Committee**



**Rialtas
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2040**



The European Agricultural Fund
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Background

- Visitor access to many natural areas is across private lands; permission to cross such lands is at the discretion of landowners unless a legal right of way exists.
- Growing concerns around the impacts of increased recreational user activity on natural areas and private landowners in the MacGillycuddy Reeks, including liability.
- Requirement to support landowners impacted by increased visitor activity in a practical way.
- Pilot training course for landowners developed and delivered in collaboration with MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project.



Objectives

- Examine and increase understanding among stakeholders of the needs of private landowners concerning outdoor recreation and visitor management.
- Discuss and review the relevance of environmental stewardship to private landowners, and the promotion of personal responsibility among recreational users engaged in outdoor activities in Ireland.
- Equip private landowners with the skills they need to engage effectively with recreational users.

Programme Design

- Programme designed by experienced Leave No Trace Ireland Educators.
- Developed specifically for farmers and private landowners.
- Design process included a training needs assessment and the development of four learning modules.
- Pilot training course delivered through a 2-day facilitated workshop to 16 participants.
- Training days involved blended learning taking place across both indoors and outdoor settings; outdoor setting selected to facilitate open discussion and put a sense of place on the concerns of the landowners.



Course Modules

Module	Learning Outcomes
Introduction to Leave No Trace Ethos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Understanding the role of personal responsibility and the choice-based approach of Leave No Trace– Knowledge of the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace
Access and outdoor recreation: conflicts and conflict resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Understand different uses of outdoor spaces and how these can give rise to conflicting demands– Knowledge of the respective rights of private landowners and of recreational users on private land– Develop landowner knowledge and skills around how to manage recreational users who may be on their land– Develop knowledge and skills around how to manage dogs and livestock on private lands
Biodiversity and impacts from recreational activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Increase knowledge of local biodiversity, its relevance to private landowners in the MacGillycuddy Reeks and the methods to enhance it– Understand the links between biodiversity and outdoor space, and how outdoor spaces are used– Increase understanding of the impacts of outdoor recreation in the MacGillycuddy Reeks
Evaluation of the course and action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Development of an Action Plan for private landowners– Evaluation of the Course programme

Specific Aims

A group of people, including men and women of various ages, are walking along a stone path that runs alongside a small stream. The path is made of large, flat stones and is bordered by a wire fence. The stream is shallow and flows over rocks. The background shows a lush green landscape with trees and a fence line. The overall scene is a rural, outdoor setting.

- Examine specific environmental impacts from recreational activities in the MacGillycuddy Reeks and the surrounding areas.
- Develop communications and conflict resolution skills among local landowners and farmers in managing recreational activities.
- Increase the knowledge of private landowners and farmers of biodiversity and ecology.
- Increase the understanding of the legal rights of private landowners and recreational users on private lands.

Landowner Concerns: Respect

- There has been a breakdown in communication between landowners and recreational users in recent years, and particularly since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Increased participation in outdoor recreation has exacerbated this issue as many first-time visitors to the area are completely unaware of the impact of their impacts on the local natural environment and private landowners.
- Instances of wild camping and dogs entering working farms have increased, which can cause conflict with landowners, many of whom use the land for agricultural purposes.
- Mountain-biking in the higher sections of the Reeks has led to increased erosion and conflicts with landowners who have tried to discuss the safety and suitability of the terrain with mountain bikers, including the disturbances being caused to wildlife and farm animals, and the fragile ecosystems in upland areas.



Landowner Concerns: Irresponsible Behavior and Liability Fears

- A significant lack of knowledge among recreational users on the rights of landowners has led to increased tension between landowners/farmers and recreational users.
- The impacts of free-roaming dogs on livestock was a significant cause of concern for landowners and farmers in the area.
- An increase in littering and environmental damage has been linked to irresponsible behaviours by some recreational users in the area.
- Trampling and discarded food waste has negatively altered wildlife behaviours and damaged biodiversity.

Landowner Concerns: Conflicts and Communication

- Many landowners/farmers are happy to let people use their land responsibly, but the impacts of increased recreational activity are causing serious concerns.
- Landowners/farmers feel that some recreational users do not respect their interests and that this lack of respect has led to several issues.
- Many landowners/farmers are unsure about the best way to communicate with recreational users in the area.
- Landowners/farmers noted that although signage exists in many areas, these messages are failing to change behaviours of recreational users.

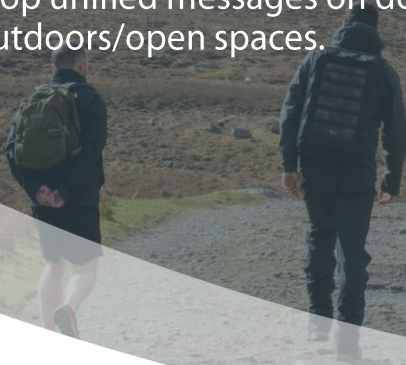


Evaluation and Open Discussion

- Course participants felt that their concerns had been listened to and that a sincere effort had been made to develop and support practical solutions that would support them.
- There was strong support among private landowners and farmers for the Leave No Trace ethos.
- Course participants felt positive about the potential for new ways of messaging and communicating with recreational users and learning new skills to help manage the issues that can occur with recreational users including dogs, littering, impacts on livestock, damage to natural areas and respecting the rights of private landowners etc.
- The critical success factor was the open discourse between landowners and trainers in developing and delivering the programme and the sincere efforts of both groups to work together in identifying practical solutions and the skills to effectively implement them.

Recommendations

1. Develop further training programmes for landowners on recreational use of commonage areas.
2. Develop further training programmes for tourism and local communities, and visitor interests.
3. Develop bespoke signage for site-specific impacts.
4. Support 'on-the-ground' programmes with considered public awareness campaigns and messaging.
5. Integrate localized programmes with national and regional activities.
6. Develop unified messages on dogs and working farmlands, and dogs in the outdoors/open spaces.



Next steps

- Develop proposals for further training and engagement to build on the success of the training programme for private landowners in the MacGillycuddy Reeks in Kerry
- Work with the local groups to develop bespoke messaging with the objective of raising awareness around the impacts of recreational use of private lands/farmlands and commonage areas and the personal responsibilities of recreational users.



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