

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy Public Consultation (Phase 2)

Fields marked with * are mandatory.



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development



**Todhchaí Cheantair
Thuaithe na hÉireann**
Our Rural Future

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, T.D. has launched a second public consultation on the Government's new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, which is currently being developed by Comhairle na Tuaithe (The Countryside Council).

By 'outdoor recreation', we mean activities that take place in the natural environment, such as walking, canoeing and wild swimming. It does not include activities that take place outdoors on confined courses or pitches (such as golf, football, show jumping) nor motorised activities (such as quads) except for ability assistance, activities that do not involve human effort/power or hunting and shooting as they do not fall within the remit of Comhairle na Tuaithe and therefore are not within the scope of this strategy.

In Phase 1, we gathered your views on key themes in outdoor recreation to help develop the Strategy. We received positive feedback from you on the proposed Strategy vision, mission and values.

Vision: *Ireland's outdoors, a world of activities for all.*

Mission: *The strategy will lead, guide and facilitate the sustainable development and management of outdoor recreation and increased participation, in order to realise social, health and economic benefits. We will do this whilst respecting the custodians of the land and water, caring for the environment and promoting responsible recreation.*

Values: *Collaboration, Leadership, Inclusion, Quality, Respect, Adventure*

Based on feedback from Phase 1, we developed proposed objectives and actions for 6 key themes. In Phase 2, we are now seeking your views on these objectives and actions prior to making final decisions on the Strategy content.

To accurately capture your views on the 6 themes, please complete the short online survey. For each theme, brief background information, the proposed objective and proposed actions are provided within the survey for you to comment on. All information relating to Phase 2 consultation is contained within this survey; there is no separate document to reference.

The information gathered will be confidential and anonymous. If you choose to supply an email address, the information will still be anonymised, but we will send you a link to the Strategy once it has been launched.

The consultation will close on 17 May 2022 at midnight. We appreciate your time in contributing to this process and value your input.

Thank you.



*** 1. Please select the option that best describes the capacity in which you are responding to this survey:**

- Frequent participant in outdoor recreation
- Occasional participant in outdoor recreation
- Representative of a community group or organisation
- Private landowner
- Representative of a club or a national governing body
- Employee of a public landowning body
- Employee of government or a state body
- Employee of a local authority - planning/engineering
- Employee of a local authority - other
- Employee of a local development company
- Employee of a local sports partnership
- Outdoor activity provider / outdoor education provider
- * Other (please detail)

* If you selected 'other', please provide details here:

150 character(s) maximum

*** Which county do you live in?**

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Carlow | <input type="radio"/> Kerry | <input type="radio"/> Louth | <input type="radio"/> Tipperary |
| <input type="radio"/> Cavan | <input type="radio"/> Kildare | <input type="radio"/> Mayo | <input type="radio"/> Waterford |
| <input type="radio"/> Clare | <input type="radio"/> Kilkenny | <input type="radio"/> Meath | <input type="radio"/> Westmeath |
| <input type="radio"/> Cork | <input type="radio"/> Laois | <input type="radio"/> Monaghan | <input type="radio"/> Wexford |

- Donegal Leitrim Offaly Wicklow
- Dublin Limerick Roscommon Outside Republic of Ireland
- Galway Longford Sligo

*** In which county do you mostly take part in outdoor recreation, or county you work in if representing an organisation?**

- Carlow Kerry Louth Tipperary
- Cavan Kildare Mayo Waterford
- Clare Kilkenny Meath Westmeath
- Cork Laois Monaghan Wexford
- Donegal Leitrim Offaly Wicklow
- Dublin Limerick Roscommon Outside Republic of Ireland
- Galway Longford Sligo



Environment

In the Phase 1 Consultation Survey, we asked you about planning and the environment in the context of outdoor recreation.

From your responses ‘the protection of the environment’ rated as the single most important aspect of outdoor recreation that you wanted us to address.

Stakeholders working in outdoor recreation said that the following elements would be key:

- Agree procedure for development of local community green/blue spaces and trails
- Improve visitor management at overcrowded sites
- Increase focus on maintenance of existing infrastructure
- Address ground erosion at busy locations and on fragile terrain
- Plan for amenities and supporting infrastructure, not just trails

- Forward plan where infrastructure would be best located

Based on this feedback, we then developed an overall objective and some actions that we propose to include in the Strategy.

Proposed Objective

To protect the environment by improving how we plan and develop outdoor recreation

Proposed Actions

The strategy will include the following actions:

- Create clear guidance on processes and practices of planning, developing, maintaining and managing trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure.
- Develop new visitor management approaches for Ireland's most crowded outdoor recreation sites.
- Ensure greater emphasis on the management and maintenance of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure.
- Develop the role of local stakeholders in the process of planning, developing, maintaining and managing trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure including volunteers, local community groups, private landowners and community support organisations.

*** Do you agree that the proposed objective and actions go far enough to address the environmental issues relating to outdoor recreation in Ireland?**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

Please add any observations on the proposed objective and actions

500 character(s) maximum



Awareness

In the Phase 1 Consultation Survey, we asked you about awareness of how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly and awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities.

84% of everyone who took part in the online survey said 'education on how to respect the outdoors' was 'very important', and 98% of private landowners who responded said this was 'very important'. 71% said that 'better information for people on where to go and what to do' was also 'very important'.

Stakeholders working in outdoor recreation said that the following elements would be key:

- Better information for people on where to go and what to do
- Promote the benefits of outdoor recreation
- Educate on good practice in the outdoors

Based on this feedback, we then developed an overall objective and a number of actions around raising awareness and communication that we propose to include in the Strategy. (Please note that additional actions around enjoying the outdoors responsibly are included in the 'Access' section, such as dog control, wardens and sanctions)

Proposed Objective

To create awareness of our outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly

Proposed Actions

The strategy will include the following actions:

- Collate information on opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation and make this readily available digitally and in other formats, so that everyone living in and visiting Ireland has easy access to good quality information.
- Deliver the dual objective of increasing awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities for all and encouraging responsible behaviour in the outdoors.
- Provide a clear approach on communicating how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly, which will be adopted by all key stakeholders.

*** Do you agree that the proposed objective and action plan will help us achieve a greater level of awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them more responsibly?**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

Please add any observations on the proposed objective and actions

500 character(s) maximum



Opportunities

In the Phase 1 Consultation Survey, we asked you about opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation.

72% of everyone who took part in the online survey said 'increasing participation in the outdoors' was 'very important' and 57% said that 'greater inclusion of people from under-represented groups' was also 'very important'.

Stakeholders working in outdoor recreation said that the following elements would be key:

- Engage people from under-represented groups
- Educate on good practice in the outdoors
- Develop skills of new and existing participants in outdoor recreation activities

Based on this feedback, we then developed an overall objective and some actions that we propose to include in the Strategy.

Proposed Objective

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

Proposed Actions

The strategy will include the following actions:

- Increase the number of people participating in outdoor recreation through participation programmes; with a specific focus on inactive people and those with the lowest participation levels in outdoor recreation, including ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older adults, unemployed, disadvantaged areas, Travellers, women and girls and young people.
- Build capacity in formal education, early learning and school-age childcare so that children and young people have increased opportunities to be active regularly, and learn, in an outdoor setting.
- Explore the opportunities for the development of more social and green prescribing programmes linked directly to the health sector.
- Examine the role of National Governing Bodies in supporting participation programmes and opportunities.

*** Do you agree that the increased focus on underrepresented groups and enhanced role for formal education are key elements in increasing opportunities in the outdoors?**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

Please add any observations on the proposed objective and actions

500 character(s) maximum



Expertise

During the Phase 1 stakeholder workshops (for those working or volunteering in the sector), we discussed the level of expertise within the sector for all aspects of outdoor recreation.

Stakeholders from the outdoor recreation sector told us that:

- The approach to outdoor recreation was adhoc, and not fully planned, with varying levels of proficiency
- There are numerous stakeholders within outdoor recreation, with no mechanism to share good practice or learnings
- There is a significant need to standardise and improve outdoor recreation practices in Ireland
- Communication and training are key to imbed better practices in the many organisations involved in outdoor recreation

Based on the strength of the feedback, we developed an objective specific to 'expertise' and an action plan that we propose to include in the Strategy.

Proposed Objective

To improve the knowledge, skills and expertise of stakeholders and partners

Proposed Actions

The strategy will include the following actions:

- Develop greater guidance for specific areas of outdoor recreation development such as trail planning and maintenance, upland path management, disability inclusion etc., as well as the identification and sharing of good practice.

- Access to more opportunities to learn and improve skills through a range of stakeholder events such as training, conferences, site visits and other communications.
- Establish methods to measure and review the engagement in, and the benefits of, outdoor recreation.
- Review the potential to improve the safety and quality of commercial provision of outdoor activities.

*** Do you agree that the action plan will increase the skills and expertise of stakeholders sufficiently to ensure consistently better practice across Ireland?**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

Please add any observations on the proposed objective and actions

500 character(s) maximum



Access

In the Phase 1 Consultation Survey, we asked you about access to the outdoors.

‘Solution for landowners regarding liability concerns’ rated as the second most important aspect of outdoor recreation that you wanted us to consider. For those private landowners who responded, it was the single

most important aspect to address. In addition, 72% of everyone who took part in the online survey said 'improving access to private and public land was 'very important'.

Stakeholders in outdoor recreation said that the following elements would be key:

- Explore how to address concerns of landholders
- Explore solutions to land access issues based on insurance and indemnity
- Improve access to private and public land
- Develop a framework to secure access for the development of local community trails and green/blue spaces
- Explore options to land access, including the approach to land access in other countries

Based on this feedback, we then developed an overall objective and some actions that we propose to include in the Strategy.

Proposed Objective

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

Proposed Actions

The strategy will include the following actions:

- Review and enhance the legislative provisions to address the concerns of landowners regarding liability and the responsible behaviour of recreational users.
- Develop specific communications to landowners and recreational users so that there is greater clarity and awareness around access and liability.
- Review approaches and models in other countries that provide access for people to engage in outdoor recreation, based on respect for land ownership and responsible conduct.
- Develop and implement a plan to improve recreational behaviour in the outdoors, including in relation to dog control

*** Do you agree that the proposed objective and action plan goes far enough to address the current issues for landowners and participants in outdoor recreation?**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

Please add any observations on the proposed objective and actions

500 character(s) maximum



Leadership

In the Phase 1 Consultation Survey, we asked you about leadership and coordination of the outdoor recreation sector.

96% of everyone who took part in the online survey said that 'Coordination between different bodies involved in outdoor recreation' was important.

Stakeholders working in outdoor recreation said that the following elements would be key:

- Improve coordination between the different bodies involved in outdoor recreation in each county
- Increase collaboration across government departments/public bodies
- Improve communication to and between all stakeholders
- Develop an outdoor recreation plan for each county
- Make clear the roles, responsibility, and accountability of stakeholders

Based on this feedback, we then developed an overall objective and some actions that we propose to include in the Strategy.

Proposed Objective

To create a more coordinated, cohesive approach at national and county level to ensure best use of our resources

Proposed Actions

The strategy will include the following actions:

- Increase coordination and coherent leadership across the sector at both a county and national level, with clear roles and responsibilities for Department of Rural and Development Community and Sport Ireland.
- Establish a County Outdoor Recreation Committee and a Stakeholder Forum in each county, who will develop a short, action-focused County Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Provide mechanisms and resources to support Local Sports Partnerships to co-ordinate the delivery of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Ensure investment is balanced between national and local priorities and between maintenance and new infrastructure, supporting facilities, services and information provision.
- Explore the opportunities for greater emphasis on outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands.

*** To what extent do you agree that the proposed objective and action plan meet the challenges and opportunities around leadership in outdoor recreation in Ireland?**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

Please add any observations on the proposed objective and actions

500 character(s) maximum

Additional Comments

If you have any additional observations on the proposed objectives and actions for the Strategy, please add your comments.

500 character(s) maximum

If you would like to receive a link to the Strategy once it has been launched, then please enter your email address below.

Your email address will only be recorded for the purposes of communication regarding the publication of this Strategy.

