



Ring of Gullion Management Plan Launched



Environment Minister Alex Attwood launches The Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Action Plan 2011-2016 at the Slieve Gullion Courtyard on Wednesday 14th December.

Speaking at the launch Minister Alex Attwood said: "I am pleased to launch the Ring of Gullion AONB plan today in the heart of the AONB. While the preparation of the plan was led by the NIEA it has depended on the contributions of many..."

"I would like to give a special mention to Newry and Mourne District Council who has a central and very positive role in the future of the AONB. I am confident that through their AONB Officer they will support delivery of the management plan and in doing so unlock new opportunities for the area and those who live in it or visit."

The Minister added: "I am pleased to see that a number of actions contained in the Management Plan are already underway. The new path to the summit of Slieve Gullion will allow the heathland to recover by stopping erosion and also improve access to Cailliagh Berra's House, a 6000 year old monument of which the local population is very proud."

Supporting the Management Plan and speaking at the Launch Professor Patrick McKeever, from Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, said: "The geological heritage of the Ring of Gullion is known to

geologists the world over and it is the foundation of the high scenic value of the area. But when you then add that to the area's myths, legends and folklore and it's rich biodiversity, you really begin to understand what a special place the Ring of Gullion really is."

Charlie Casey, Mayor of Newry and Mourne District Council added that "Newry and Mourne District Council are very happy to welcome everyone to the very aptly named Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to celebrate the anniversary of its official designation as an AONB and to launch the Ring of Gullion Management Plan. The council has a strong history working with special unique places and will fully support this Management Plan's implementation"

The full document can be downloaded from the publications page on www.ringofgullion.org

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Photography Competition Winners Produce 2012 Ring of Gullion Calendar

The Ring of Gullion with Newry and Mourne District Council hosted a fantastic amateur Photography Competition in the Ring of Gullion for the first time this year. The theme was "Wildlife, landscape and Heritage", which photographers were obviously delighted to see, as the quality of images that were entered was outstanding.

There were four very generous companies within the Ring of Gullion who donated great prizes for 1st, 2nd and

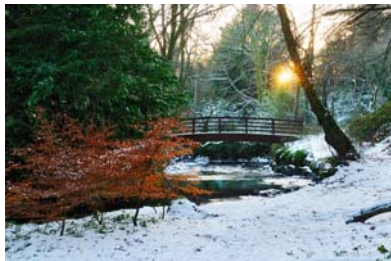
3rd; The Enchanted Spa and Resort, Cloverhill Golf Club, The Cross Square Hotel, and Murphys Bar and Restaurant.

A calendar was commissioned featuring the top 13 images from the competition and is on sale from any tourist office in Newry and Mourne Council for £2.50. More details can be found on www.ringofgullion.org

2012 Events???

The dates and locations for all of our events will be released in January on our website and social media, so even more reason to follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Go to www.ringofgullion.org and click on 'What's on' in the top tab. The events will range from bus tours to geology and rambling events for all the family. All the events run by Ring of Gullion/Newry and Mourne District Council are free of charge.



Ring of Gullion gets a New Officer

The much awaited appointment of a new Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Officer has finally been made by Newry and Mourne Council. Now the vital work can begin to implement the Ring of Gullion AONB Management Action Plan 2011-2016.

The Ring of Gullion holds a great variety of natural and built environments, many of which have been cared for with such love in the past that they have been recognised and designated as protected areas. Groups, organisations, and individuals across the Ring of Gullion have in recent years demonstrated their love for the countryside and its small towns and the heritage and wildlife that abounds there.

Darren Rice, who recently took up the post, explained, "We are very pleased with the continued support from the NIEA and Newry and Mourne District Council for funding this post. The level of local involvement and support in the area makes this a very refreshing and exciting post."

He added, "Through this project I plan to work with the community and implement the actions from the

management plan, indeed its success relies on all those who live, work, plan for, develop and manage the area taking its special character into account when making decisions that will affect its future. The landscape of Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty belongs to everyone here."

"One of the bigger projects to start this year is the repair of the path to the summit of Slieve Gullion, fully funded by SEUPB. An engineer has been appointed, and the contract for the ground work has been advertised. We hope work to start work on the ground in the Spring of 2012" he said.

There is a chance for everyone to get involved in projects run as part of the Action Plan such as heather regeneration, red squirrel conservation, and a range of biodiversity and heritage conservation work.

Charlie Casey, Newry and Mourne Mayor who was excited about seeing the Management Plan starting to be implemented added, "We are really keen to hear from people who have an interest in any of the actions in the Management Plan. I would request that they get in touch with Darren as we need help from as many people as possible to make this a truly LOCAL Action Plan for the Ring of Gullion."

2011 – A successful year for Ring of Gullion Events

The 2011 Ring of Gullion events programme has been a great success. We have had over 470 people take part in our events this year, and that's not including all the other events organised around the Ring of Gullion by other organisations, such as the hugely successful Trail Trekkers, Camlough Water Festival and Wee Binnain Walking Festival to mention a few.

Local events organiser Sharon Carroll ensured the Enspire run events were an experience not to be forgotten as she lead bespoke events and thrilled the kids with myths, nature and heritage from the Ring of Gullion on the geology, archaeology, art and the much anticipated winter wonderland

in Slieve Gullion Courtyard. Una Walsh left everyone on the bus tours filled with a new found enthusiasm for history, and heritage as she brought historical characters, buildings and history to life.

Deputy Mayor Geraldine Donnelly said, "Sharon has so much enthusiasm, and I love seeing the look in the children's faces when they learn something new in an exciting way and Sharon definitely takes the children AND parents on a journey that I certainly will remember. Fantastic event in a fantastic location"

Loretto Coyle from Outdoor North and our very own Biodiversity officer Danielle Cookson (Congratulations on her baby girl, Hannah) took families into wild with their minibeast hunts and rambles up Slieve Gullion.

Mayor Charlie Casey said about the ramble up Slieve Gullion, "This 'walk and talk' style ramble gave the whole family an opportunity to learn about the Ring of Gullion and explore the great outdoors together. And the ages ranged from 4 to 64!"

Ramblers Kerry, Aoife and Orla Curran said, "We had a great day, the tomb at the top was brilliant and we loved the story about Fionn mac Cumhaill and the old witch of the lake, we will definitely be back to explore more of Slieve Gullion."



Public Consultations

The Ring of Gullion will be holding an annual public Q & A about the Ring of Gullion Management Plan in February 2012, look out on the website and local newspapers for more details. During these meetings we will focus on the local, farming, and recreational communities. The main focus will be on reporting progress on implementing the Ring of Gullion Management Plan. It will also give people an opportunity to find out more, get involved and to allow thoughts, views and ideas to be shared between groups. If you would like something specific on the agenda and discussed please contact the Ring of Gullion Officer on the information below.



Trailtrekker 2011

Trailtrekker is one of Ireland's most exciting adventure challenges. The event originated in Hong Kong where it was used as a training exercise to test soldiers' stamina and teamwork skills. In 1986, Oxfam Hong Kong was invited to co-organise the event and since other Oxfam affiliates have taken on the event and run with it.



Oxfam Ireland has been organising Trailtrekker for the past three years. Teams of four commit to walking either 50km or 100km continuously over a designated route. As well as this, teams collectively pledge to raise €2000. The event follows sections of the picturesque Mourne and Ring of Gullion Ways and finishes in beautiful Carlingford. There are ten checkpoints

on the route where teams can regroup, meet their support crew and receive a variety of services from massage to hot meals from our wonderful volunteers.

Teams are made of up groups of friends, family members and we have many workplace teams. The main reason teams take part is because of the personal and physical challenge that the event provides. As a recent participant said about the event - "Trailtrekker is a challenge and an experience for anybody to enjoy, not just the super fit. Well worth the effort put in by all with lifelong memories."

Trailtrekker 2012 will take place over a weekend in September, the exact dates to be finalised soon. Registration will also soon be opening soon, keep an eye on the website to avail of Early Bird offers - www.oxfamireland.org/trailtrekker/

Ring of Gullion Website Launched

The website was launched in June this year and has seen over 1200 visits so far. Check out www.ringofgullion.org for more information on all the events in 2012, progress on projects and lots more. You can download lots of publications including the full Ring of Gullion Management Plan from the publications pages. There are also books about geology and fishing on there too. And if you're signed up to Facebook and Twitter, you can follow us there and get updates on what's happening in the Ring of Gullion, so you'll never miss an event again!



Ring of Gullion Homepage



Slieve Binnian Footpath Project

Slieve Gullion Footpath Repair

An assessment carried out on the condition of the pathway on Slieve Gullion Mountain has identified that a number of sections are badly eroded and require maintenance and repair to ensure the path remains in good condition for users.

A consultant has been appointed and work has begun on the surveying of the path and we hope draft drawings will be ready before the end of the year allowing us to stay on track and appoint a contractor early in 2012.

There will be a public consultation in January 2012, check the website and local papers for more details.

Management Group to meet in the New Year

Newry & Mourne District Council and NIEA have jointly funded an AONB Officer to oversee the management of the area in line with the management strategy. The Officer's work is aimed at enhancing the rich built, cultural and natural heritage in the area as well as increasing opportunities for public enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

The Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty also has a Management Plan Working Group comprising representatives of statutory, community, recreation and environment sectoral interests in order to raise awareness of the need for management of the area and to facilitate inter-agency co-operation. The group will meet up three times a year as per the Ring of Gullion Management Plan. The full group and management plan can be found on the publications page of www.ringofgullion.org.

Ring of Gullion Way Marked Way gets a Boost

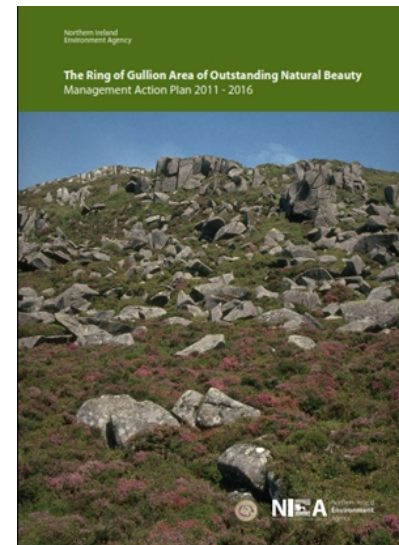
The Ring of Gullion Way works its way around the hills surrounding Slieve Gullion, linking together many of the area's sites of scientific and archaeological importance.

The Ring of Gullion Way passes five archaeological monuments in state care and many other earthworks, graveyards and lesser-known sites. In a region so rich with historic monuments, several stand out in particular. Clontygora Court Tomb, known locally as 'The King's Ring', is one of the country's most dramatic Neolithic tombs. Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone is the oldest known cross-carved stones in Ireland, which can be dated to 700 AD. An old Irish inscription on the eastern face has been interpreted as

"this place, bequeathed by Ternohc, son of Ceran Bic under the patronage of Peter the Apostle". Towards the end of the route you'll find Killeavy Old Church and St Moninna's Holy Well, sites that date back to an early Christian convent founded in the 5th century.



The Ring of Gullion is also rich in



folklore and mythology. It was thought that the young Irish hero Cú Chulainn had his residence on the slopes of the mountain. The most epic of all tales, Táin Bó Cuailgne ('The Cattle Raid of Cooley'), tells how Cú Chulainn battled single-handedly at the nearby 'Gap of the North' to defend Ulster from the armies of Queen Maeve. In another story, Finn McCool was bewitched by the Cailleach Béara and subsequently lost his blonde locks after swimming in the lough on the summit of Slieve Gullion.

Newry and Mourne District Council have given the Waymarked Way a boost by awarding it a maintenance grant in next years budget. This money is vital for keeping the Waymarked Way open, free and signposted for users.

Thanks to DMull, NIEA and Mourne Heritage Trust for supplying images for this newsletter.



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