

Wednesday, 2nd June 2021

Our Rural Future: Minister Humphreys launches public consultation on the first ever National Outdoor Recreation Strategy

- ***New strategy to shape the development of outdoor pursuits and activity tourism for years to come***
- ***Public asked for feedback on how to enhance amenities such as trails, cycleways, waterways, beaches, mountains, bogs and forests***
- ***Delivery of new strategy a key commitment in 'Our Rural Future'***

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, has today (Wednesday, 2nd June, 2021) launched a public consultation on Ireland's first ever National Outdoor Recreation Strategy.

The delivery of the strategy is a key commitment in Our Rural Future, the Government's ambitious five-year policy to revitalise Rural Ireland.

The consultation will last for three weeks and will involve members of the public giving their views on how best to improve and develop our outdoor amenities such as our trails, cycleways, waterways, beaches, mountains, bogs and forests.

The public are also being asked to consider ways to develop activity tourism and outdoor pursuits such as cycling, rock climbing, kayaking, surfing, wind-surfing, sailing, paragliding and hang-gliding.

The consultation will run for the next three weeks with the closing set scheduled for 5pm on 23 June, 2021.

The strategy is being developed in partnership with Comhairle na Tuaithe (The Countryside Council).

Launching the public consultation today, Minister Humphreys said:

“COVID-19 has shown us all how vital our outdoor amenities are for our mental and physical wellbeing.

“Our new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy will be all about investing in our great outdoors.

“I want to get the views of as many members of the public and stakeholders on how best to develop our outdoor amenities such as our hiking trails, cycleways, rivers, forests and mountains.

“And I want this strategy to place a big focus on tourism, including adventure tourism. There is clearly growing interest in the great outdoors amongst all tourists, both domestically and internationally, and we are well positioned to respond to that demand.”

Minister Humphreys continued:

“Without doubt, outdoor recreation is going to be key to our recovery post-COVID-19.

“So let’s think big and ambitious. I am delighted that Comhairle na Tuaithe are spearheading this work in conjunction with my Department.

“Above all, I want to see as many members of the public as possible submit their ideas over the next three weeks.

“Together, let’s devise a National Outdoor Recreation Strategy that we can be proud of and one that has the capacity to benefit our economy for years to come.

“A strategy like this will help us re-imagine and revitalise our rural countryside, which is what we have set out to do in ‘Our Rural Future’.”

Dr. Liam Twomey, Independent Chair of Comhairle na Tuaithe added:

“Comhairle na Tuaithe has done much to support and facilitate the sustainable development of outdoor recreation in Ireland. The development of this Strategy is vital to guide the work of Comhairle na Tuaithe and indeed the strategic development of the sector across Government in the coming years. This consultation provides an opportunity for all to input on the future direction of the sector and I would encourage all stakeholders to participate in the consultation.”

This is the first stage of a two-stage consultation process. In the first stage, interested stakeholders and individuals are encouraged to share their views on outdoor recreation via an online questionnaire.

To input your views on outdoor recreation, please complete the online questionnaire on gov.ie.

Responses will inform the preparation of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Ireland. The closing date for receipt of submissions is 5pm on 23 June, 2021.

ENDS

Notes to editor:

Comhairle na Tuaithe (The Countryside Council)

Comhairle na Tuaithe is collaborative body which supports the development of outdoor recreation activities for social, health and economic benefits, and which promotes sustainable and responsible use of the outdoors where the rights and responsibilities of both landowners and recreational users are recognised and respected. It is comprised of representatives of farming organisations, recreational users and State bodies with a responsibility for, or interest in, outdoor recreation and the countryside.

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy

A National Outdoor Recreation Strategy is currently being developed by Comhairle na Tuaithe. Views on outdoor recreation in Ireland are now sought to help develop the Strategy.

Outdoor Recreation NI have been awarded the contract to provide support services for the development of the Strategy. They are a not-for-profit organisation with an expertise in outdoor recreation strategy, planning, design, development, management and promotion.

Activities included are listed below.

Land-Based	Water-Based	Air-Based
Walking	Canoeing/Kayaking	Paragliding
Hillwalking/Hiking	Rowing	Hang-gliding

Leisure cycling	Wild swimming
Mountain biking	Surfing
Horse riding	Coasteering
Trail/Off-road running	Wind surfing/Kite surfing
Orienteering	Sailing
Bouldering, scrambling, rock climbing, mountaineering	Diving
Caving	Angling

Consultation

This is the first stage of a two-stage consultation process. In this first stage, interested stakeholders and individuals are encouraged to share their views on outdoor recreation via an online questionnaire.

The information gathered will be confidential and anonymous.

It is important that input is received at this early stage as the submissions will feed into the development of the new Strategy. At the second stage of the public consultation, a draft Strategy document will be issued whereby interested stakeholders and individuals will be invited to give detailed feedback before the Strategy is finalised.

The closing date for submissions is 23 June 2021.

How to participate

To input your views on outdoor recreation, please complete the online questionnaire gov.ie.

For those who would like to submit their views by hard copy, the form is available to print from gov.ie and can be sent by post to **Outdoor Recreation Public Consultation, Department of Rural and Community Development, Government Buildings, Ballina, Co. Mayo, F26 E8N6.**

Any questions on the consultation process can be emailed to NORS@dracd.gov.ie.