



County Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan

**Action Plan
2025-2030**

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¹ Appendices are available in a separate document.

Introduction

Background

Need for a County Outdoor Recreation Plan

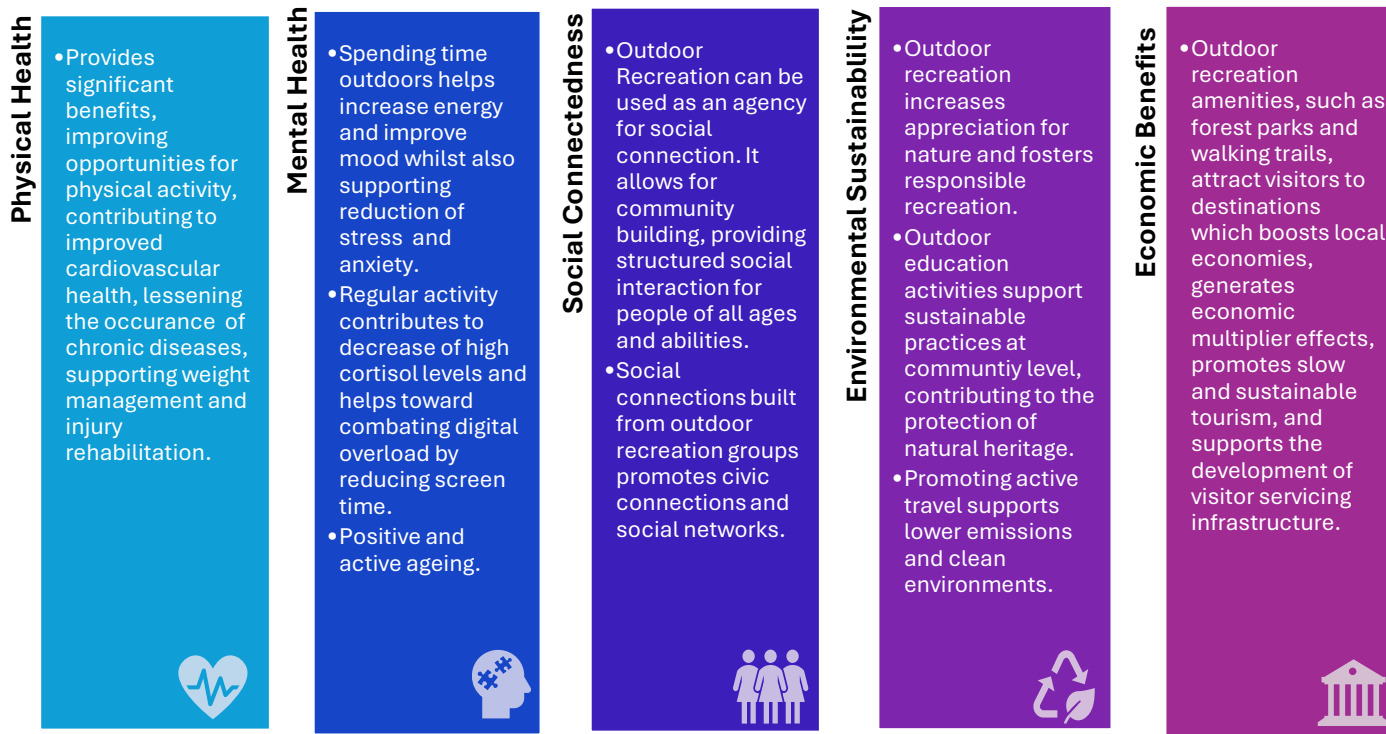
Outdoor recreation participation and interest have grown significantly across Ireland in recent years, this has led to considerable investment and the introduction of new strategies, including Embracing Ireland's Outdoors – The National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027. A County Outdoor Recreation Plan for Cavan has been developed to align with national goals while addressing local priorities. This plan adopts a collaborative, cross-sector approach, bringing together stakeholders to ensure the sustainable development and management of outdoor recreation. It sets out a strategic framework to enhance participation opportunities, address local needs and guide the delivery and management of outdoor recreation at county level.

Outdoor Recreation defined

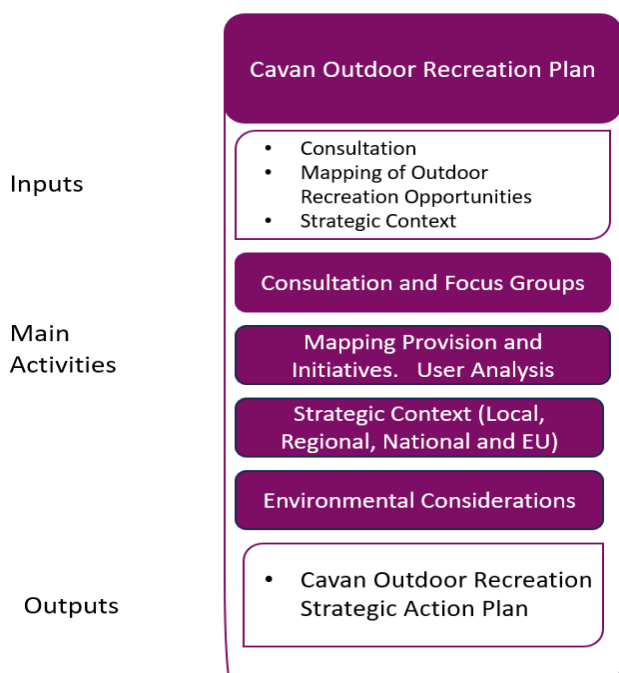
By 'outdoor recreation' we mean activities that take place in the natural environment, such as walking, canoeing, mountain biking, orienteering and wild swimming. A list of included activities is detailed below, however it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive.



The benefits and importance of outdoor recreation



Overview of the county Outdoor Recreation Plan development process



To inform the delivery of this plan, it was recognised from the outset that a collaborative approach was needed due to the interdependence of stakeholder partner roles with regard to outdoor recreation and the increasing demands placed upon them. An Outdoor Recreation Committee was established and contributed to the development of this plan through all stages of the design and action-planning process. The methodology used to develop the plan is summarised here. The inputs received from an inclusive community and extensive stakeholder engagement exercise provided a wealth of information for analysis. Detailed findings are attached in appendix 1.

Review of consultation undertaken

In developing this outdoor recreation plan, the Cavan Outdoor Recreation Committee has been keen to ensure meaningful engagement with communities across Cavan and with relevant stakeholders able to offer useful opinions and perspectives based on the priorities and needs in the local area. Findings are based on the experiences of end-users and key stakeholders at community, regional and national level. The consultation process was designed to maximise participation from residents and stakeholders; therefore a variety of mediums were used. Participants were given the opportunity to speak directly to the consultation team. The consultation process began on 8th October 2024 and closed on 13th November 2024. The mixed method approach combined one-to-one semi -

structured interviews, online survey and focus group meetings with key groups of stakeholders (such as grassroots clubs and underrepresented groups). Walk-in consultation sessions were held and written submissions were welcomed. In total, 370 participants engaged with the consultation over the course of five weeks. A wealth of quantitative and qualitative data was collated. The engagement included representatives from community, voluntary, tourism, farming, and public sectors, providing insights into local needs. This diverse, inclusive process ensured broad representation and valuable input for Cavan's Outdoor Recreation Plan. Further details of the programme of engagement are given in Appendix 1 Consultation Findings & Needs Analysis Report.



370

Number of people
contributing to the
consultation process
across county Cavan



52

Number of
stakeholders taking
part in 1:1 semi-
structured interview



241

Number of
responses received
from online survey



129

Number of people
engaging in-person
with the consultation

Strategic and External Context

Strategic Context

The County Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan cascades from the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Ireland (NORS) *Embracing Irelands Outdoors* which delivers the developmental framework required. Nationally, it complements Project Ireland 2040, which sets out the government's strategy to make Ireland a better place for all its people,

improving quality of life, environmental sustainability, and advancing long-term objectives for social and economic well-being. Additionally, the Outdoor Recreation Plan aligns with the Healthy Ireland Framework, Our Rural Future, the National Physical Activity Plan *Get Ireland Active*, Failte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Development Strategy, and the Climate Action Plan.

Local Policy Map



The Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan will contribute to the delivery of objectives under several integral local strategies. These include the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, the Local Economic and Community Plan 2023- 2027 and the County Cavan Tourism Development Plan 2017 – 2022 (under review). The outdoor recreation plan further aligns with Cavan County Council’s corporate plan through the ambition to create a developed vibrant and well-connected county. The plan enhances and supports regional policies through affirming a vision of Cavan in which outdoor recreation is essential to the social, economic, and environmental future of the county.



Image: Ballyconnell Canal Loop

External Environment

In preparation of the plan cognisance has been given to the wider external environment and emerging trends in outdoor recreation across Ireland and the European Union. Major trends considered include:



CHANGING DEMAND

Significant growth in demand for outdoor recreation



AGEING POPULATION

Ageing population enjoying better quality of life



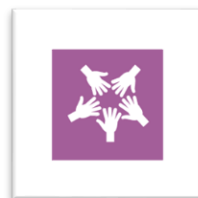
WELLBEING

Increased focus on mental and physical wellbeing



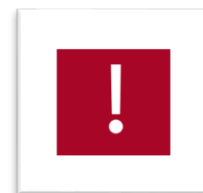
SUSTAINABILITY

Pressing need for climate action and sustainable future



VOLUNTEERS

Decline in community volunteerism and participation



LEGAL CHANGES

Changes to Occupiers Liability Act & Duty of Care

The number of people engaging in outdoor recreation in Cavan and across Ireland has risen significantly. This is attributed to many factors including the Covid–19 pandemic which re-emphasised the value of the natural environment and time spent outdoors. Outdoor Recreation takes place in our natural environment in outdoor spaces which are delicately balanced and there is growing awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability and conservation. Changing economic and social dynamics have led to a decline in volunteerism and community participation across developed countries. This trend has implications for all sectors heavily reliant on volunteers, which in Ireland includes community level sports and recreation. Advances in health care mean older people are living longer, healthier lives across many parts of the globe including Ireland. Participation in outdoor recreation has increased throughout the life course and is often a social rather than a solo activity for end-users. This further drives demand for recreational opportunities closer to home and family

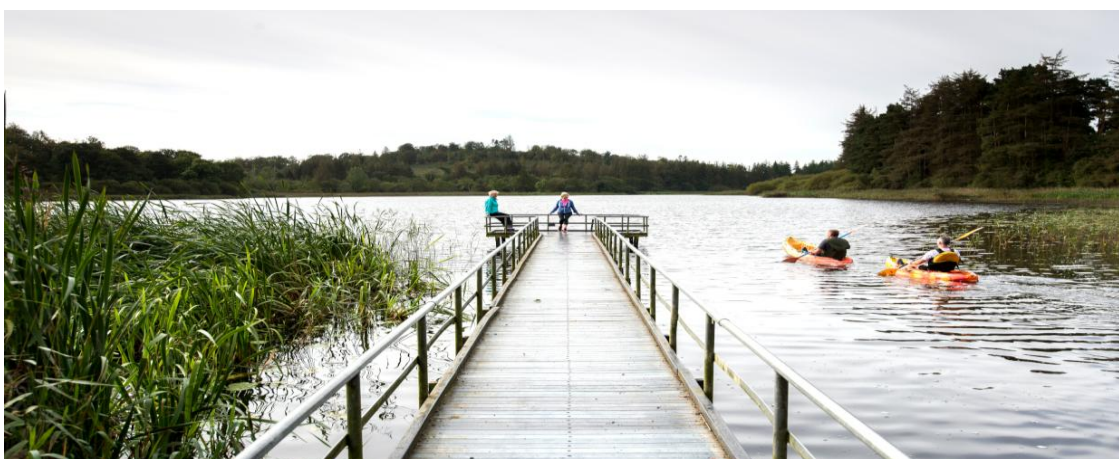


Image: Castle Lake Jetty

Summary of strategic and external context

An intelligence led approach aligned with national policy has shaped the preparation and substance of this plan. The importance of health and wellbeing, active ageing, social connections, lifelong learning, biodiversity, climate action and inclusion have been woven into the plan with the adoption of three cross-cutting pillars which form the foundation of each objective and action:

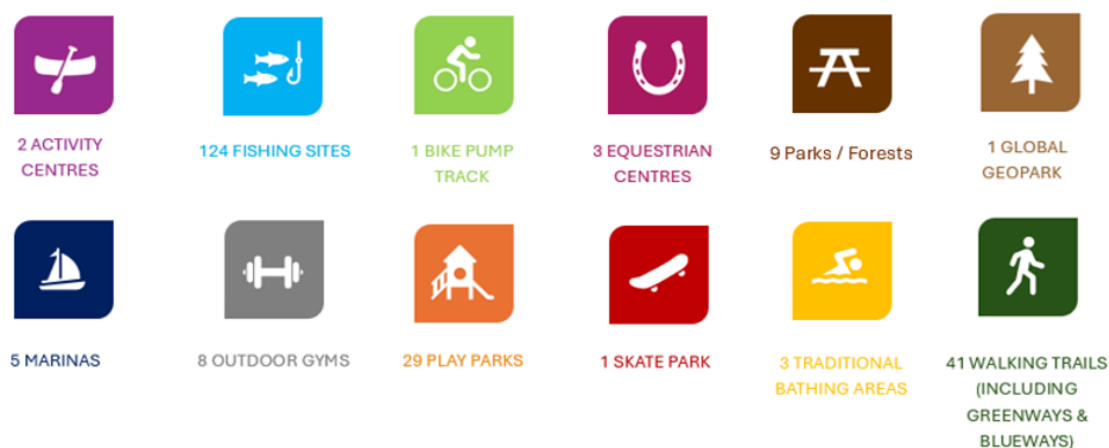


Current Situation Offering

The current outdoor recreation offering in County Cavan has been assessed in terms of the physical provision available and opportunities to participate. This review has been undertaken to achieve an overview of the baseline situation². This mapping exercise provides a broad overview of the outdoor recreation opportunities in County Cavan. Physical provision, participation opportunities and initiatives have been mapped using the National Digital Database of Sport and Recreation Activities alongside a desktop research exercise. Approved planned developments have also been included in the analysis. The mapping exercise was further informed by engagement with key stakeholders and consultees, including NGBs, local community groups and residents from across the county.

Physical Provision

There is a wealth of existing physical infrastructure for outdoor recreation in County Cavan as illustrated in the graphic below and the map overleaf. Only the key angling hotspots (n17) are shown on the summary map overleaf e.g. Belturbet³. The purpose of the map is to demonstrate the regional spread of physical infrastructure for outdoor recreation in Cavan, rather than providing a forensic analysis of infrastructure provision.



² A full and detailed mapping report was produced for the committee. A summary of this is presented here.

³ Mapping every watercourse with fishing stands and other angling provision in Cavan would have rendered the map ineffective due to the large volume of such sites (123 sites)

Physical provision for outdoor recreation in County Cavan

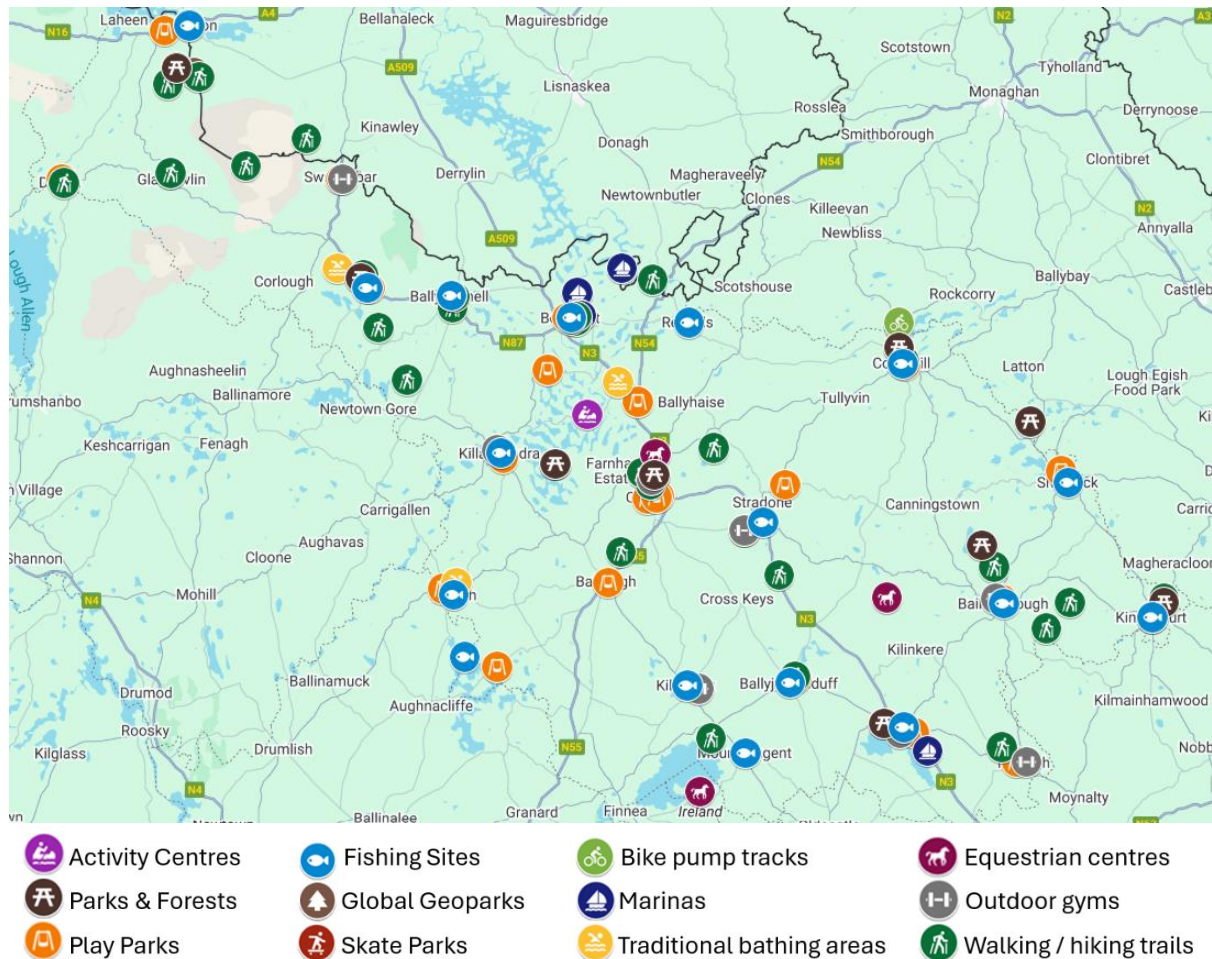


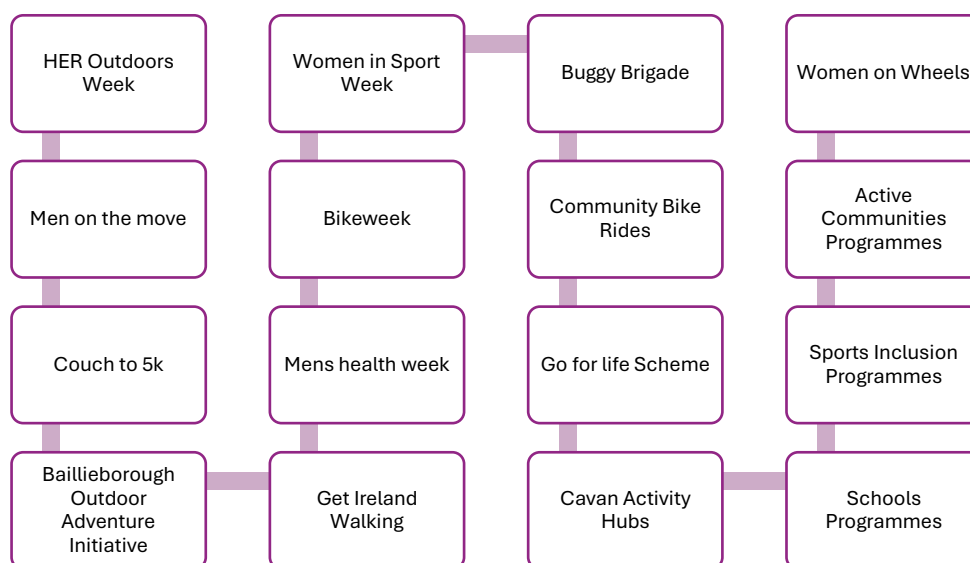
Image: Killykeen Greenway



Image: Sunset Kayaking on Lough Oughter

Participation Initiatives

Key participation initiatives aimed at promoting and increasing opportunities for outdoor recreation in Cavan:



Environment

County Cavan is celebrated for its unspoiled landscapes, rolling drumlin hills, an impressive network of 365 lakes, including Lough Oughter, Lough Sheelin, and Lough Ramor. Lough Sheelin is the largest lake in the county spanning 7.3 square miles. The topography of Cavan varies dramatically from one area of the county to another. Its unique and high value environment is a valuable asset, the county has three Special Protection Areas (all lakes) and six Special Areas of Conservation which include a variety of watercourses and landforms. These are all habitats which are considered significant at an EU level as well as nationally and locally. In addition, Cavan has two Natural Heritage areas and 18 proposed Natural Heritage areas designated under the Wildlife 2000 Act. These encompass nationally significant

habitats, landforms and sites such as lakes, marshlands, river sources and woodlands. Cavan boasts the world's first ever UNESCO designated cross border Geopark encompassing Cuilcagh and the prehistoric Cavan Burren Park. The geopark contains geological sites of special significance in terms of quality, rarity, aesthetic appeal and educational value. Cavan also boasts over 7,000 hectares of forest, covering approximately 3.6% of the county's total land area. Cuilcagh Mountain is Cavan's highest peak and is home to the Shannon Pot—the source of the River Shannon, Ireland's longest river at 386 kilometres. With its rich natural heritage, extensive waterways, and diverse landscapes, Cavan is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts.

In 2022, an EPA study of the ecological status of Irish rivers between 2016 and 2021 found that 20.5% of Cavan rivers were of poor quality (due to pollution from various sources) with 59% considered of good quality. By comparison 20.8% of lakes were rated as poor quality but the number of lakes categorised as good or high quality was much lower at 1% and 2% respectively. In contrast to demographic trends towards urbanisation in other counties, Cavan remains a predominantly rural county. Cavan has 5,111 farms representing 3.8% of all farms across Ireland (Census of Agriculture 2022). The mean standard output of farms in Cavan is 8% lower than the mean figure for Ireland as a whole,

impacting on the livelihoods of farming families in the county. The Cavan countryside is both living and lived-in. The consultation findings demonstrated that stakeholders and residents in Cavan have an appreciation of the natural assets of the county and wish to protect them. While it is acknowledged the landscape needs to continue to adapt to sustain local communities, it was also acknowledged that those needs must be met in a sustainable way which preserves the integrity of the landscape. Pride in Cavan and the need to conserve Cavan's natural environment was a recurring theme within all stages of the plan's development processes.



CASE STUDY

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, is a UNESCO-designated site recognised for its landscapes, unique geology, and rich biodiversity spanning across sections of County Cavan and County Fermanagh. As the world's first transnational geopark, it covers 1,741 km² and features over 60 sites of geological, archaeological, and ecological significance. It offers panoramic views of the lakelands, rolling hills and limestone pavements. Cuilcagh Mountain is designated as an EU Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to its diverse habitats, including wet and dry heath, limestone grasslands, and pavement landscapes. Established as the world's first cross border Geopark in 2008, the geopark actively promotes sustainability through the Geopark Code and the Leave No Trace initiative, encouraging responsible tourism and preserving its natural assets. The geopark serves as a hub for sustainable outdoor recreation, offering activities such as hiking, caving, and wildlife spotting, while also providing access to significant historical sites.

End-User

Key insights into the current usage and need for outdoor recreation opportunities in County Cavan are presented below. The findings detailed have been derived from an extensive period of consultation engaging local communities.

Residents surveyed (241 respondents):

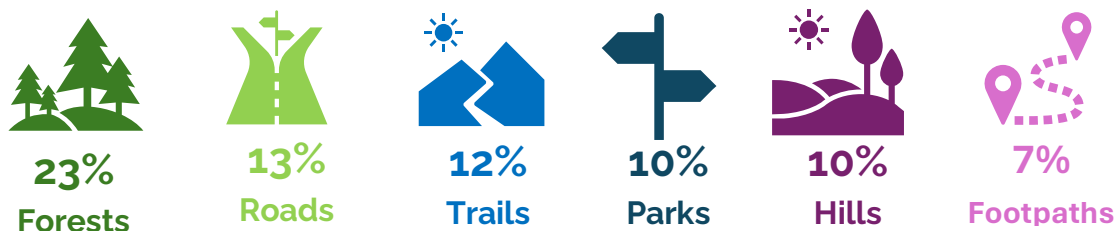
- **93%** of respondents stated they actively participated in Outdoor Recreation in County Cavan
- **31%** of responses received were from adults aged 45-54, followed by adults aged 35-44 (**27%**) and 55-64 (**15%**)
- **50%** of respondents were female and **50%** of respondents were male

Levels of participation

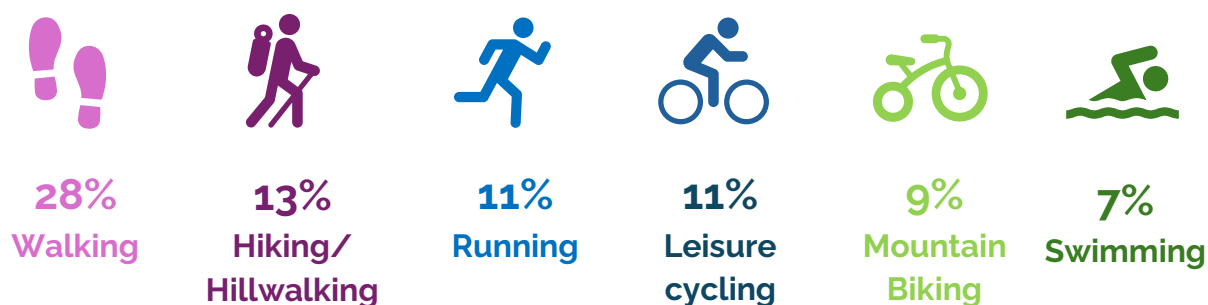
- **14%** of those surveyed engage in outdoor recreation at least once per day
- **58%** reported that they are currently part of an outdoor recreation group.
- **49%** of all respondents (N=112) reported that they participated in Outdoor Recreation several times per week

According to The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland at least **30 minutes of moderate intensity activity** is recommended for adults 5 days per week. Only **36%** of respondents in Cavan meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines⁴. Interventions which increase participation in outdoor recreation will support the achievement of Local Sports Plan objectives set to boost physical activity levels in Cavan.

The top preferred locations for outdoor recreation were:



The preferred outdoor recreation activities were:



⁴ Source: Cavan Local Sports Plan

The top 3 motivations for participation were:



Opportunities for outdoor recreation

When rating the amount of outdoor recreation opportunities in Cavan,

- **44.6%** of online respondents rated opportunities available as **average** while **20.4%** rated the number of opportunities as **below average**.
- **24.6%** rated the accessibility of outdoor recreation opportunities in Cavan as **below average**.
- **30%** of respondents considered the maintenance and upkeep of outdoor recreation provision in Cavan as **below average** or **poor**.
- Knowledge and awareness of Outdoor Recreation opportunities in Cavan received the most negative ratings from online survey respondents **45.4%** considered knowledge and awareness of opportunities **below average** or **poor** in Cavan
- **41.2%** of respondents rated the affordability of Outdoor Recreation opportunities as **good/excellent**
- Environmental sustainability was also rated relatively positively by respondents, **45%** considered environmental sustainability as **average** whilst **27.3%** considered it **good**.
- **62.5%** of respondents stated the variety of Outdoor Recreation opportunities were **average/good**



Image: Castle Lake Jetty September 2019

Stakeholder landscape

Key stakeholder organisations in outdoor recreation

Outdoor recreation is developed and managed by a variety of government agencies, departments, and other organisations. Communities play a vital role in the delivery of outdoor recreation as well as being an end user. The plan aims to facilitate improved coordination and partnership working across all stakeholders in the sector.

Stakeholder Organisations

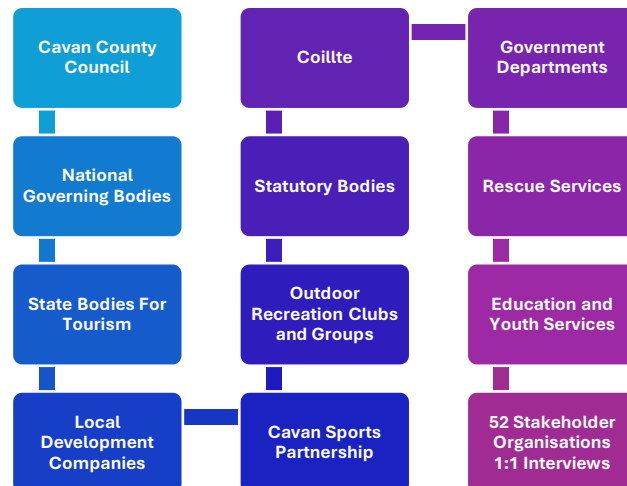


Image: Stakeholder Workshop for Outdoor Recreation Clubs & Groups Hotel Kilmore Cavan October 2024

Stakeholder Approach and Implementation across Cavan

The Cavan Outdoor Recreation plan reflects a collaborative approach to supporting outdoor recreation in Cavan and to the protection of the natural environment. On consideration of the strategic context, baseline provision, consultation findings and identified needs an action plan has been developed for each of the six priority themes. These will be implemented progressively and, in some cases, continuously throughout the lifetime of the plan. Some actions may be led by a nominated stakeholder but in many instances, they require a partnership approach and collaboration from across the committee. The committee will continue to meet to track progress and monitor outcomes in relation to the actions identified.

Summary of the Current Situation

Cavan offers a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities through the various landscapes and outdoor recreation amenities situated throughout the county. Despite the suitability of the landscape and the benefits to be gained for participants, there is a need for better promotion, improved maintenance and improved cross-sector collaboration to fully activate Cavan's potential for outdoor recreation.



CASE STUDY

The Cavan Way

The Cavan Way is a 23km, designated National Waymarked Trail which can be commenced at either the village of Blacklion or Dowra in Co. Cavan. The route showcases the amazing landscapes in West Cavan, from the magical Shannon Pot, source of the River Shannon to Cavan Burren Park, one of the finest relict landscapes in Ireland, to the majestic open heath and woodlands outside Dowra. It links the Ulster Way in Blacklion with the Leitrim Way and Miners Way in Dowra. The route also forms part of the Beara Breifne Way – Ireland's longest waymarked trail covering a distance of 700km, linking the Beara peninsula in West Cork with Blacklion.

The terrain consists of predominantly quiet roads, forest trails and open moorland. The trail is divided into two sections; Blacklion to the Shannon Pot (11km) and the Shannon Pot to Dowra (12km). The trail takes in a section of the Cavan Burren Park and travels through 10 privately owned lands where the landowners have given access to their land and maintain these sections as part of the national walk scheme. The Cavan Way offers hikers a deep connection to the landscapes and history of West Cavan. Its carefully maintained route, diverse terrain, and collaboration with local landowners ensure that the trail remains a sustainable and enriching experience for both locals and visitors to enjoy.

SWOT and Needs Assessment

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Abundant Natural Landscapes and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cavan's lakes (365 lakes) and waterways are a stand-out feature - Varied terrain in the county including forests, boglands, mountains, wetlands and drumlins - Beautiful landscapes with forest parks, waymarked trails, and walking areas e.g. Including, Cuilcagh Mountain, Cavan Burren Park, and Shannon Pot - UNESCO Global Geopark - Open water swimming with 14 sites used for instructor-led water safety programmes - Con Smith Park in Cavan with skate park and greenway access - Recreational activities in Cavan including canoeing, kayaking, angling, wild swimming, caving, rock climbing and walking opportunities <p>Tourism Potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key attractions and heritage sites including Cloughoughter Castle and Neolithic grave sites - Established infrastructure – newly refurbished jetty for anglers and watersports with disability access at Killeshandra Town Lake - Cavan is known as a prime destination for angling tourism coarse fishing, pike fishing and fly fishing - Natural and Built heritage - County Development Plan gives strategic direction and as it is implemented will support sustainable and planned development across the county. - Access to waymarked trails such as Cuilcagh lowlands walk and recreational events. - Cavan Adventure Centre provide excellent recreational opportunities for Cavan. - Established canoe trail in Ballyconnell - Landscape photography opportunities <p>Community and Organisational Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eager and committed clubs and groups - Organised activities by local groups– tidy-up initiatives, triathlons and events like cycling leagues and women on wheels. - Support from Cavan Sports Partnership - Leave No Trace programmes and climate action initiatives promoting sustainability. - The PPN supports over 400 community and voluntary organisations in Cavan including signposting to sources of funding - GAA facilities are a strength for football and Running 	<p>Infrastructure Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of changing areas, storage facilities, toilets, and signage at key lakes and activity hubs - Poor access for individuals with disabilities. - Limited provision for older children and teenagers, with a large focus on GAA and rugby - Poor entry and egress points to bodies of water - Lack of mountain biking trails - Many existing trails and greenways need extended - Wooden fishing stands and boardwalks at the end of their lifespan are removed and provision is lost. - Better signage is needed detailing length and terrain - Need for more multi-sport and youth-centered spaces that aren't fee-based. <p>Maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poorly maintained infrastructure, inadequate or missing signage, parking, and poorly maintained trails - Lack of recurrent funding for maintenance after initial infrastructure investments. <p>Organisational Fragmentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overlapping jurisdiction among some governmental bodies. - Need a single coherent and enforced set of regulations collective planning is needed - Access and land ownership issues <p>Trail Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of equestrian trails - Untapped potential for cycling tourism - Issues relating to Coillte forests included inability to access permits for biking or horse-riding - Inadequate provision for those with disabilities - Sense of vulnerability for older adults with mobility issues, need lighting, resting places (benches with armrests), clear signage, toilet provision <p>Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor communication and awareness of recreational opportunities and events - More outreach is needed for key groups - Inadequate sources of information on resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organised weekly park-run and park walks are a key asset - Vibrant Cycling Community - Watersafety courses available for children - Community focused 	<p>Cost, Funding and Volunteer Shortages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of trained leaders and declining volunteer engagement for outdoor activities and events. - Over-reliance on volunteers and small clubs to manage funding, governance and insurance - Participation costs for some activities are high, excluding underprivileged groups. - Costly transport fees deter school trips. - Not enough support given to communities to develop, guide and drive on project proposals - Lack of events and festivals <p>Accessibility, Transportation and Ecology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public transport is inadequate, expensive, and often doesn't reach recreation areas. - Rural dwellers and marginalised groups face barriers in accessing activities due to cost and distance. - Restricted access due to private land ownership and landowner permissions. - Sensitive and fragile landscapes (e.g., raised bog) can be damaged by even low levels of footfall - Limited access to Coillte lands for equestrians and cyclists due to permit requirements. - Issues with dog walkers, dogs not kept on leads, leading to access being withdrawn
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Grant Funding and External Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding for facility improvements, including changing rooms, toilets, and equipment - Effective collaboration between organisations. - Create outdoor recreation hub areas or hotspots - Provide cluster development supports. <p>Tourism Expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a Cavan Outdoors Brand - Blueways development plan - Lakeside Recreation Plan and Feasibility study - Untapped opportunities identified in Cavan relating to fishing, open water recreation, caving, mountain biking, horse sport and others - Evaluate the potential for Cavan to host international scale outdoor recreation events. - Forge links with national and international bodies - Long-distance trails similar to European models for cycling, hiking and adventure tourism. - Enhancing accommodation options near trailheads and outdoor facilities <p>Community Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing awareness and participation for all in 	<p>Environmental Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pollution from farming and domestic sources impacting water quality and eco-systems - Invasive species, algae-blooms and deforestation threatening biodiversity and habitats - Decline in biodiversity nationally - Intensive farming practices threaten the environmental balance. <p>Regulatory and Insurance Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High insurance costs and complex regulations deterring volunteer involvement and activity organisation - Rising insurance premiums hinder recreational development, access and events - Liability concerns as landowners are increasingly wary of allowing public access due to risks and lack of formal agreements <p>Aging Population and Participation Decline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerability of older residents and their reduced participation in outdoor activities. - Decreasing engagement from youth in outdoor recreation pursuits e.g. angling.

<p>outdoor recreation opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen networks through the development of a recreation forum - Designing spaces and activities through co- design with marginalised groups - Strengthening stakeholder collaboration for better resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and funding applications. - Partnering with schools, youth organisations, and sports clubs to build skills in activities - Taster days ‘come and try it’ events <p>Infrastructure Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building designated swimming areas, bike shelters, and multi-use tracks - Expand walking trails, looped water trails, and cycling paths, connecting attractions and towns - Opportunities in mountain biking, cross-country cycling, and equestrian trails <p>Sustainability and Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects to preserve habitats, enhance water quality, and educate the public on environmental stewardship. - Creating decarbonisation zones and using towns as testbeds for green initiatives. - Promote cycling and walking methods of transport - Developing infrastructure like washdown kits at water-based activity sites. - Enhancing safe cycling infrastructure, bike rental options, and repair hubs like social bike shops. - Enhancing biodiversity through nature trails and woodland conservation projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing marginalisation experienced by some population groups including teenagers, older people and new communities to Cavan. <p>Infrastructure Deterioration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Damage to trails from climate change and lack of maintenance. - Dependency on Coillte land, which is subject to forestry operations and permits - Poor or inadequate infrastructure (Older fishing stands and boardwalks, lack of slipways and cycling facilities) - Limited access for people with disabilities especially older infrastructure - Roads are deemed unsafe for cycling and walking due to heavy traffic and lack of cycle lanes and footpaths in some areas - Issues with vandalism and anti-social behaviour in some public spaces - Transport challenges affect accessibility of recreational sites restricting participation <p>Collaboration and funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited coordination between stakeholders and agencies increases the challenges associated with improving facilities and running programmes. - Lack of recurrent funding - Over reliance on voluntary sector to spearhead developments, lead funding applications and manage the resulting facilities and provision of services to the public
<p>Needs</p>	
<p>Infrastructure Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New or improved walking trails, forest trails, off road routes, looped walks (especially lakeside), greenways and way marked trails. Including extension of greenway. - Bike trails and cycle paths including, mountain bike trails, BMX tracks, learn to ride tracks and pump tracks. - Teenagers are underserved in terms of outdoor recreation provision. - Need for new and improved signage including replacement of missing way markers for data capture analysis - Planned and managed replacement of aging angling infrastructure in Cavan - Management plans, clean-up strategies, improved transparent water quality testing for key watercourses - Wherever possible provision should be designed to enable participation by all - Co-design should be practiced to reduce man- made barriers (e.g. kissing gates) being installed - Improving safety and useability by mapping waterways, including hazards like shallow waters, improving access and egress points for safer navigation. - Create trailheads and provide updated, accessible information on walks (e.g., council websites). - Improved amenities such as moorings, jetties, access points, parking, toilets, changing facilities, cafes, bins, resting places and lighting in outdoor spaces - Designated safe swimming areas, better access to lakes, and infrastructure for water sports. - Audit and long-term planning for maintenance of infrastructure to improve longevity and usability 	

- Need to diversify the range of activities and broaden the experience of outdoor recreation in Cavan

Education, Information and Promotion

- Create an information source that communicates all the information on events, amenities and participation opportunities within the county (e.g. portal or tab on key website)
- Better promotion of the opportunities that exist to boost participation from residents and visitors
- Installing counters and tracking visitor data to guide development and funding decisions.
- Feasibility studies to gauge costs and benefits of planned developments, reducing risk and supporting evidence led decision making.
- Robust data-driven master planning including environmental analysis and community consultation.
- Training for volunteers in recreation clubs including accredited sector specific training for coaches, accessing funding, governance, marketing and digital media, outdoor events training, insurance, health and safety etc.
- Collaboration and Governance:
 - Engage with neighbouring counties on land and water outdoor recreation initiatives
 - Establishing clear points of contact for landowners to address concerns
 - Formation of an outdoor recreation forum to foster collaboration and share best practice
 - Working with key agencies to prioritise the commercial outdoor recreation sector (often working seasonally)

Ecology, sustainability and Protection

- Improvement in the provision of public transport links to Outdoor recreation opportunities in the
- Develop, manage and increase participation in outdoor recreation while championing natural assets.
- Outcomes of the plan should seek to enhance biodiversity and as a minimum demonstrate full compliance with all relevant requirements arising from EU and Irish planning and environmental legislation.
- Incorporate biodiversity measures as standard practice - simple measures like nesting boxes to large scale measures like rewilding.
- Routine monitoring of recreational activity to minimise ecological harm, improving data capture and analysis will support this monitoring.
- Keep fragile and sensitive environments wild
- Where possible maintain and improve existing infrastructure, lessening the land destruction

Improve participation and community engagement

- New and improved bike lanes and bike shelters at public spots, schools, and parks
- Greater funding opportunities for clubs and grassroots organisations, incentivise clubs to offer youth provision as many currently do not, due to administrative and regulatory burden
- Transport links to reduce barriers to accessing amenities.
- Creating and subsidising new programmes and initiatives e.g. social enterprises refurbishing bicycles
- Support initiatives for hard -to reach groups e.g. walking groups for older people
- Co-designed spaces that meet the needs of local populations and disadvantaged groups
- Increase multi-use facilities that accommodate diverse needs and foster intergenerational interactions

Tourism Development

- Aim for Cavan to establish itself as a leading outdoor recreation and regenerative tourism destination in Ireland, building on Cavan's natural assets to attract slow and niche tourism.
- Increasing glamping, guesthouse, and family-friendly lodgings to attract more visitors and complement the strong offering the County has for destination hotels
- Layering the experience diversify the base range of activities, and broaden the experiences
- Scaling up festivals and outdoor events to enhance tourism potential
- Evaluate the potential for Cavan to host international scale outdoor recreation events.
- Support events and clubs running festivals and competitions e.g. triathlons and angling competitions
- Integration of recreation opportunities with local businesses, e.g. coffee docks, bike and boat hire
- Need to convey the story and folklore. Tap into artistic, literary and cultural inspiration to bring places to life

Strategic Themes & Priorities

Leadership

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

Our ambition is to establish a clear leadership structure at national level and ensure funding is better aligned with national and county priorities. The Department of Rural and Community Development will be the lead government department and Sport Ireland will assume a co-leadership role. Comhairle na Tuaithe will retain the oversight and advisory role. At county level, our ambition is to achieve a more planned and coordinated approach, with the introduction of a County Outdoor Recreation Committee and Plan. This will ensure that county needs are identified and prioritised, as well as aligned with the national strategy.

Opportunities

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

Our ambition is to increase the number of people active in the outdoors and to support a rise in physical activity levels, with an increased focus on those with the lowest participation levels. Our ambition is also to expand the role of outdoor activities in formal education and early learning.

Awareness

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

Our ambition is to significantly raise people's awareness of where to go and what to do in the outdoors. Our ambition is to ensure they understand how to enjoy the outdoors respectfully and are fully aware of their personal responsibilities

Expertise

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

Our ambition is to equip those working in this area with the skills and expertise awareness of where to go and what to do in the outdoors. Our ambition is to ensure they understand how to enjoy the outdoors respectfully and are fully aware of their personal responsibilities.

Environment

To protect the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation, in keeping with best practice management of landscape and habitats

Our ambition is to protect our landscapes, habitats and built heritage by better planning where and how we develop our outdoor recreation infrastructure. Given the increase in visitor numbers, our ambition is to develop visitor management approaches for Ireland that prevent adverse impacts to sensitive habitats and species.

Access

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

Our ambition is to work with landowners to protect and enhance the access that is currently facilitated and seek to improve access in other locations. Ways will be explored such as through the expansion of the Walks Scheme and changes in legislation. Our ambition is also to change behaviour, so when people access the outdoors, that they do so with respect for other people, care for the environment and with responsibility for their own actions.

Action Plan

The Action Plan sets out to achieve the strategic priorities and objectives for each of the six key themes from *Embracing Ireland's Outdoors*: Leadership; Environment; Awareness; Opportunities; Infrastructure and Access; and Expertise. The Plan is underpinned by three overarching pillars: Inclusion; connectivity and sustainability. These cross-cutting pillars sit at the heart of the plan and are a lens through which each objective and action of the plan and their subsequent outcomes are considered. They reflect the importance of these indicators, and the positive quality-of-life impacts they can generate for local communities.



CASE STUDY

Lough Ramor Marina Project

The Lough Ramor Water Sports Club Marina project features 52 berths for boats and includes the *Lady Amanda*, an *Access for All* boat designed specifically for individuals with disabilities. To further enhance accessibility, a dedicated ramp has been installed, ensuring safe and easy entry to and exit from the lough. The project received €200,000 in funding through the LEADER programme, which supports private enterprises and community groups in rural areas to enhance rural infrastructure and social inclusion. Aligned with Fáilte Ireland's tourism objectives, this development serves as a key driver for tourism growth for Virginia and the wider county, providing an invaluable asset that benefits the entire community and strengthens the local economy.

Leadership



Leadership & Collaboration Action Plan

Given the size and topography of County Cavan it is inevitable that a multitude of organisations are involved in planning, developing, managing and promoting outdoor recreation across the county. In addition, landowners and commercial providers are involved directly in facilitating and supporting participation. This fragmented approach constrains the management and development of outdoor recreation. Through sharing expertise, resources and collective responsibility more can be achieved for end-users while preserving the County's natural environment. Usership data and feedback from the extensive consultation clearly evidenced growing demand for outdoor recreation provision and opportunities in Cavan.

Strategic objective: To create a more co-ordinated, cohesive approach at county level to support the effective management and sustainable development of outdoor recreation across Cavan

Action 1: Continued effective delivery of the Cavan Outdoor Recreation Committee through the members and appropriate mechanisms and structures

Description: As part of the development of this plan, a Cavan Outdoor recreation Committee was established including representatives from relevant sectors. The continued effective delivery of the committee will help to ensure co-operation and collaborative working between all key stakeholders are retained going forward. This will support the effective delivery of planning, development, participation, management and promotion of outdoor recreation across Cavan over the next five-year period.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
CORC (until an ORO is secured)	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025–2030	

Action 2: Expand the membership of the current County Outdoor Recreation Committee, to deliver the CORP and ensure a coordinated approach to the management and development of outdoor recreation going forward

Description: By expanding the current membership of the Outdoor Recreation Committee effective development and management of outdoor recreation opportunities will be

continually broadened and maintained to foster active participation, continued collaboration and improved access for all managing and participating in Outdoor Recreation Activities.

CORC (until an ORO is secured)	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025–2030	
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Action 3: Development and delivery of an outdoor recreation forum for outdoor recreation groups, providers and clubs at grassroots level.

Description: Baseline research showed hundreds of small, grassroots outdoor recreation groups and clubs are operating in Cavan. There is no meaningful or sustained collaboration between the groups and clubs involved in outdoor recreation. Networking these groups provides valuable opportunities for members to meet, learn and co-ordinate their activities. A forum can also act as a sounding board and a means to provide new information and support to the groups and the active communities in Cavan they serve.

CORC (until an ORO is secured)	LSP, RRO/CCLD, Geopark		2025–2030	
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Action 4: Improve promotion of existing Outdoor Recreation provision in Cavan through the addition of new webpage to ‘This is Cavan’ Website and partner signposting.

Description: Showcasing Cavan as an ideal destination with a broad offering in terms of outdoor recreation while fostering outdoor recreation as an everyday activity for the local population.

CCC Tourism Team	LSP, Failte Ireland, Geopark, WWI, CCC, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, IFI, and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	
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Environment Action Plan

Cavan's particularly unique and high value environment is a valuable asset. The county has three Special Protection Areas (all lakes) and six Special Areas of Conservation which include a variety of watercourses, sites and landforms such as lakes, marshlands, river sources and woodlands. These are all habitats which are considered significant at an EU level as well as nationally and locally. The consultation findings demonstrated that both stakeholders and residents in Cavan have an appreciation of the natural assets of the county and wish to protect them. It was also acknowledged that community and visitor needs for countryside recreation must be met in a sustainable way which preserves the integrity of the landscape. Pride in Cavan and the need to conserve Cavan's natural environment was a recurring theme within all stages of the plan's development processes.

Strategic objective: To conserve the environment and prioritise at risk sites through better planning and development of outdoor recreation.

Action 5: To promote the adoption of climate mitigations, climate adaptations and biodiversity protection measures within stakeholder organisations, networks and guidance to funding applicants.

Description: Climate mitigations seek to prevent climate change and adaptations seek to respond to the impacts of climate change. There is a need to foster the development of a greater range of local responses to climate change and the decline in biodiversity. A large volume of unclear information in relation to environmental sustainability presents challenges for local communities keen to undertake local climate and biodiversity actions.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
CORC	IFI, CCC Climate Action Team, CCC Biodiversity Officer (once appointed) CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, Failte Ireland, CCC Climate Action,		2025-2030	

	Biodiversity protection teams and Heritage Teams			
Action 6: Considering the environmental sustainability of all proposed outdoor recreation provision and seeking to manage and minimise the impact of outdoor recreation activity.				
Description: Promoting environmentally sustainable design practices to deliver initiatives and projects that encourage biodiversity and long-term sustainability.				
CORC	IFI, CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, Failte Ireland, CCC Climate Action, Biodiversity protection teams and Heritage Teams		2025-2030	

Awareness



Awareness Action Plan

Communities and stakeholders reported through the consultation that the promotion of recreation opportunities is fragmented and needs to be available in one place. A lack of information was identified as a key barrier to people accessing the outdoors during the consultation. Creating and increasing awareness of Cavan's recreation opportunities is an essential component for increasing participation in outdoor recreation across the county. Ensuring the information provided on Cavan's outdoor recreation provision and opportunities is accurate, current and accessible for all requires a collaborative approach.

Strategic objective: To create awareness of our outdoor recreation opportunities in Cavan and how to enjoy them responsibly

Action 7: Signpost participants to Get Ireland Active website, raise awareness of this central resource and work towards its further development through provision of quality information.

Description: A cohesive approach to promoting outdoor recreation that provides clear and accessible information through agreed information sources to encourage participation.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
LSP	CCC Tourism Team, CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	

Action 8: Promote education and awareness regarding responsible recreation across stakeholder organisations linking with potential partners such as Leave no Trace.

Description: To create an understanding of the importance of respecting nature and outdoor spaces from an early age and foster lifelong habits of environmental stewardship. This should align with responsible recreation principles such as the Leave no Trace Campaign and the Geopark code.

RRO/CCLD and Geopark	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark,		2025-2030	
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	IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team			
Action 9: Clearly promote a key contact for farmers and landowners who already have access arrangements in place wishing to raise concerns				
Description: Establishing clear points of contact for farmers and landowners who already have access arrangements in place to ensure concerns about land and water protection are dealt with as and when they arise. This is to prevent issues such as irresponsible dog walkers leading to access arrangements being withdrawn.				
RRO/CCLD	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	

Opportunities



Opportunities Action Plan

Opportunities exist in Cavan to develop new outdoor recreation facilities, community trails and visitor services, extending and enhancing the proposition on offer at existing outdoor recreation amenities and developing new outdoor recreation facilities to cater for needs and interests which are underserved. A wealth of opportunities were identified through consultation with local communities and stakeholders, including trail development in communities and throughout the county, mountain biking provision, equestrian trails, lakeside recreation amenities, refurbished angling infrastructure and more niche opportunities such as caving and orienteering were also recommended for development. The need for new developments to be undertaken sustainably, to facilitate access for all and to be accompanied by costed, planned maintenance schedules were recurring themes within the consultation findings.

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

Action 10: Creation of a Trail Development and Maintenance strategy with identification of trail and maintenance priorities to include community trails

Description: Identify trail and path maintenance priorities, new trail development opportunities and resourcing commitments required to make the necessary improvements. The trail maintenance and inspection plan for the Geopark will provide a useful reference in developing this county-wide strategy.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
CCC, RRO/CCLD and Geopark	Coillte, CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	

Action 11: Support the development of new and existing outdoor recreation infrastructure through delivery of relevant funding programmes e.g. ORIS scheme.

Description: Developing new and existing outdoor recreation infrastructure to enhance the quality, accessibility and sustainability of facilities to meet the evolving needs of local communities and maximise user benefits. With the implementation of counters and the

creation of a trail development and maintenance strategy high usage areas will be identifiable supporting the delivery of effective maintenance of infrastructure.				
CCC	All partners developing infrastructure or administering capital funding		2025-2030	
Action 12: Delivery of feasibility study exploring the potential costs, benefits, risks and opportunities associated with lakeside recreation development options in Cavan.				
Description: There is a need to gather detailed information regarding potential costs, benefits and opportunities associated with lakeside recreation incorporating good practices examples from other jurisdictions and their impacts. This will support intelligence-led decision making and options appraisal in response to demand for amenities to cater for open water recreation at key lakes.				
CCC	WWI, IFI CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, Geopark, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2027	
Action 13: Foster the development of existing and new outdoor recreation events in Cavan through capacity building, linkages and sectoral support provided via forum.				
Description: Enable the expansion of outdoor recreation events across the county and enhance the potential for Cavan to host larger events, including those of a national and international scale. This action will be addressed through capacity building supports offered to local groups and clubs, cultivating opportunities to build necessary connections and linkages and the provision of guidance and support in relation to outdoor events via the proposed outdoor education forum.				
CORC	LSP, Geopark, CCC Tourism Team		2025-2030	

Access



Access Action Plan

Participation levels in outdoor recreation are not uniform in Cavan nor in any other county in Ireland. Some sections of the community engage less in outdoor recreation and this disparity is due to the barriers experienced by those groups including young people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, older people, women and those from deprived backgrounds. This disparity is already being addressed through the work of the Healthy Ireland Programme, the Cavan Local Sports Partnership, Cavan and Monaghan ETB and other stakeholders with some notably successful interventions in Cavan e.g. the Buggy Brigade. The most common barriers to outdoor participation in Cavan include the inaccessibility of sites to those with mobility issues, perceived lack of skills, poor public transport system and the cost of equipment for certain activities. Some barriers can be addressed through adopting co-design⁵ practices to foster participation and improve access for those with disabilities, young people, older people through better development of infrastructure and interventions which support participation of hard-to-reach groups. Wherever possible provision should be designed to enable participation by all.

Strategic objective: To enhance and improve access to the outdoors in Cavan for the benefit of all

Action 14: Seek Sport Ireland accreditation for all walking and cycling trails (to allow inclusion and promotion on the Sport Ireland National Trails Register) and to increase the number of walks in Cavan on the national walks scheme

Description: In response to locally identified needs for further trails to be developed there is an ambition to see an increase in the number of walks in Cavan included in the national walks scheme. This will support the phased national expansion of the Walks scheme over the next two years (from 80 walks to 150 walks).

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
RRO/CCLD	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and		2025-2030	

⁵ Co-design involves designers working together with specific user groups to create solutions. For instance, taking the views of those with disabilities on board when designing an accessible Jetty.

	CCC Heritage Team			
Action 15: To support the development of new and existing outdoor recreation infrastructure which addresses marginalisation through delivery of relevant funding programmes				
Description: Reduce physical barriers to participation through the installation of new outdoor recreation equipment or the development of new outdoor recreation infrastructure which addresses marginalisation. Applications which improve accessibility will be encouraged via relevant stakeholder administered funding programmes where possible.				
CORC	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	
Action 16: To support the development of more inclusive outdoor recreation initiatives (both new and existing) through delivery of relevant funding programmes'				
Description: Projects which create more equitable opportunities will be encouraged where possible via relevant stakeholder administered funding programmes in order to support the development of new initiatives and programmes which increase participation from underrepresented groups.				
CORC	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	
Action 17: To promote the adoption of co-design practice⁶ and inclusive engagement within stakeholder organisations, networks and guidance to funding applicants.				
Description: The benefits of inclusive community engagement and the adoption of co-design practices in the development of projects and programmes will be promoted by stakeholder-partner organisations and incorporated into all capacity building and sectoral supports.				

⁶ Co-design involves designers working together with specific user groups to create solutions. For instance, taking the views of those with disabilities on board when designing an accessible Jetty.

CORC	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	
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Expertise



Expertise Action Plan

Consultation feedback underscored the need to support clubs, groups and volunteers to manage the complex funding, governance and insurance issues which arise when delivering outdoor recreation activities. Other training needs identified by respondents included marketing on a budget and managing events. The decline in volunteerism and subsequent over reliance on a decreasing pool of community volunteers was highlighted by many small clubs and organisations from across Cavan. There was clear demand for paid resource to support the sustainable development of outdoor recreation at county level. A requirement to better equip outdoor recreation providers with the skills and knowledge required to ensure sustainable and consistent quality provision was often cited. Other measures highlighted which would support the knowledge, skills and expertise of stakeholders and providers included data capture and access to technology, research and analysis to better inform development proposals and track progress.

Strategic objective: To improve the knowledge, skills and expertise of outdoor recreation stakeholders in Cavan including grassroots level groups and clubs.

Action 18: Capacity building and training supports delivered to groups, organisations and volunteers (via the Outdoor Recreation Forum)

Description: A wide range of training gaps and capacity building requirements were highlighted by clubs, groups and volunteers tasked with managing the complex issues which can arise when delivering outdoor recreation activities.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
CORC	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team		2025-2030	

Action 19: Support the appointment of an Outdoor Recreation Officer for Cavan to increase participation and sustainable management of outdoor recreation.

Description: To ensure the co-ordination and delivery of the outdoor recreation plan a dedicated resource namely an outdoor recreation officer is required.

Local Sports Partnership	CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD,		2025-2030	
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	CCC Tourism Team, Coillte, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team			
Action 20: Supporting data capture and analysis through incorporating the installation of pedestrian/ vehicles counters or user surveys into project implementation and project monitoring.				
Description: Installing counters and visitor tracking data to guide development and decision-making. Robust baseline data on which to gauge the benefits of proposed developments, reducing environmental risks and supporting evidence- led decision making. Robust methods of data capture support the effectiveness of the trail development and maintenance strategy through the identification of high usage areas.				
CORC	Coillte, CCC, LSP, RRO/CCLD, CCC Tourism Team, WWI, Geopark, IFI, Failte Ireland and CCC Heritage Team	Coillte	2025-2030	



Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan Appendices

**Appendix 1: Committee
Membership
Appendix 2: Consultation
Findings & Needs Analysis Report**

Appendix 1: Current Cavan Outdoor Recreation Committee Membership

The committee are in the process of expanding the current membership as set out in Action 2. The membership of the committee is expected to continually grow over the lifespan of the plan.

Cavan County Council

Cavan Sports Partnership

Cavan County Local Development

Cavan County Council – Tourism Team

Coillte

Waterways Ireland

UNESCO Geopark

Cavan County Council – Heritage Team

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Failte Ireland

Appendix 2: Consultation Findings and Needs Analysis

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Consultation Overview

In developing its outdoor recreation plan, the Cavan Outdoor Recreation Committee has been keen to ensure meaningful engagement with communities across Cavan and with relevant stakeholders able to offer useful opinions and perspectives based on the priorities and needs in the local area. Findings are based on the experiences of end users and key stakeholders at community, regional and national level. The consultation process was designed to ensure maximum participation from residents and stakeholders therefore a variety of mediums were used. Participants were given the opportunity to speak directly to the consultation management team. The consultation process opened on 8th October 2024 and closed on 13th November 2024. The mixed method approach combined one-to-one semi structured interviews, focus group meetings with key groups of stakeholders and an online survey. Two walk-in consultation sessions were held and written submissions were welcomed and accepted. In total 370 participants engaged with the Outdoor Recreation Plan consultation over the course of five weeks including 129 individuals who engaged in -person with the consultation process and 241 individuals who engaged online.

Consultation Process

Promotion of the consultation

The consultation plan included focus group events, consultation workshops and an online survey. These opportunities to engage with the consultation and shape the development of the Outdoor recreation Plan were publicised by a number of key organisations including:

- Cavan County Council through their website and social media;
- Cavan County Local Development through their website and social media; and
- Cavan Public Participatory Network (PPN) through their social media platforms and weekly e-zine.

The following organisations also supported the awareness raising process by circulating details of the consultation events and online survey links to their membership bases or wider networks via email or newsletter:

- Cavan LCDC;
- Cavan Disability Network;
- Comhairle na nóg;
- Waterways Ireland;
- Water safety Ireland;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Mountaineering Ireland;
- Failte Ireland;
- Irelands Association of Adventure Tourism;

- Speleological Union of Ireland;
- Created in Cavan;
- Cavan Sports Partnership;
- Cuilcagh Lakelands Partnership; and
- Cavan County Council Tourism team.

This helped the consultation to gain traction particularly among marginalised groups and special interest groups. All communications aimed to raise awareness of the consultation events and circulate the link to the online survey.

Community Consultation

Focus Groups and Consultation events

Three focus group events for primary and secondary schools, a consultation workshop for outdoor sports groups and two ‘walk-in’ consultation sessions were conducted. Walk-in sessions were open to anyone to attend with no booking required. In total 77 individuals engaged through the focus groups and consultation events listed below:

Event	Date
Schools Focus group (Online Meeting)	Wed 9 th October 2024 (Evening)
Schools Focus group (Online Meeting)	Thurs 10 th October 2024
Schools Focus group (Online Meeting)	Mon 14 th October 2024
Outdoor Sports Workshop (Kilmore Hotel)	Thurs 17 th October 2024 (Evening)
Walk In Consultation Session (CCLD Offices Cavan)	Mon 4 th November 2024 (Evening)
Walk In Consultation Session (CCLD Offices Cavan)	Tuesday 5 th November 2024
Elected Members Workshop (Council Chamber Cavan)	Monday 9 th December 2024

An outdoor sports workshop was conducted at Kilmore Hotel in Cavan on Thursday 17th October 2024, this was attended by 48 outdoor sports and recreation clubs. The consultation event began with a presentation from Failte Ireland providing useful information and resources for outdoor event organisers in Ireland in addition to signposting to further sources of support. This was followed by an interactive workshop session exploring the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and identified needs for Cavan in terms of outdoor recreation.



Image 1: Public Consultation Event at Kilmore Hotel, Cavan Thursday 17th October 2024

Active participation was facilitated as the participants were divided into groups according to their area of interest (e.g. angling) to enable small group discussion to take place. Facilitators from the consultation team were present with each group to support the discussion and recording of information. The event lasted three hours and 270 comments were received from this evening event alone.



Image 2: Example of feedback responses gathered from small group sessions

The input received from the groups active in this space was vital in terms of helping to understand the current provision and the needs of small grassroots outdoor recreation clubs across all corners of Cavan.

Online Survey Consultation

In order to engage with members of the public from across all corners of Cavan an online questionnaire was designed and distributed through the Microsoft forms online survey tool. This method allowed data to be collected from a wide audience. A copy of the online survey can be viewed at Appendix 1. In total 241 online questionnaires were submitted. The online questionnaires facilitated the collection of detailed responses and potential project ideas. This option was welcomed by some grassroots organisations as well as individuals, as there can be a reluctance from some clubs and commercial providers to discuss their project proposals in a public or workshop setting.

Stakeholder Consultation

Engagement with local, national and regional stakeholders was extensive. Semi structured one-to-one interviews were conducted with targeted stakeholders who represented the needs of a particular group or who had expertise to offer in terms of outdoor recreation provision and activities. The input from these stakeholders was crucial to understanding the baseline provision across Cavan and the local needs experienced by disadvantaged population groups in relation to outdoor recreation. These interviews provided a further opportunity to support the participation of marginalised and hard-to-reach groups in the consultation. In total, 52 stakeholders took part in one -to one semi structured interviews to support the development of an Outdoor Recreation Plan for Cavan. These interviews typically lasted 40 minutes to an hour. This included extensive representation from the community and voluntary sectors and national governing bodies. Activity providers were well represented as were the tourism, farming and environmental sectors. Participation was also secured from local statutory and public sector organisations.

The table below lists some of the organisations which participated in stakeholder consultation interviews. The consultation team are grateful for the time invested by these stakeholder organisations to support the development of the outdoor recreation plan for county Cavan.

Organisations which attended 'in-person' events	
CARA Active Disability Ireland	Cavan Disability Network
Cavan and Monaghan ETB	CYPSC (Tusla)
Comhairle na nóg	CCLD Workability Job Coach
Foroige Youth Association	Bounceback Youth Services
Cavan Public Participation Network	Age Friendly Programme Team / Social Inclusion Unit Cavan
Cavan County Local Development (CCLD)	Waterways Ireland
Canoeing Ireland	Water safety Ireland
Get Ireland Walking	Rural Recreation Officer
Inland Fisheries Ireland	ICMSA (Irish Creameries and Milk Producers Association)
Rural Social Scheme/ SICAP	Mountaineering Ireland
Cycling Ireland	Orienteering Ireland
NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service)	Faite Ireland (incl RTO Hidden Heartlands)
Coillte	Environmental and Conservation group (Ecologist)
DRCD (Outdoor Recreation Unit)	Sport Ireland Outdoors

Leave no Trace Ireland	Irelands Association of Adventure Tourism
Speleological Union of Ireland	Horse Sport Ireland
Council Heritage Team	ORIS Funding Scheme
Cavan Tourism Information Centre	Created in Cavan
Water Safety Officer	Infrastructure Team Cavan
Local Link Transport Team	CLÁR funding Scheme
Climate Change Team	Cavan Sports Partnership
Cavan LCDC	Rural Recreation Team
Slaintecare Healthy Communities	Active Travel Team
Greenways Team	Cavan Belturbet Municipal District Team
UNESCO World Heritage Geopark - Cavan	Town Centre First Team
Tourism Team Cavan	Cavan Adventure Centre

Consultation Findings

Headline Findings from Online Survey Analysis

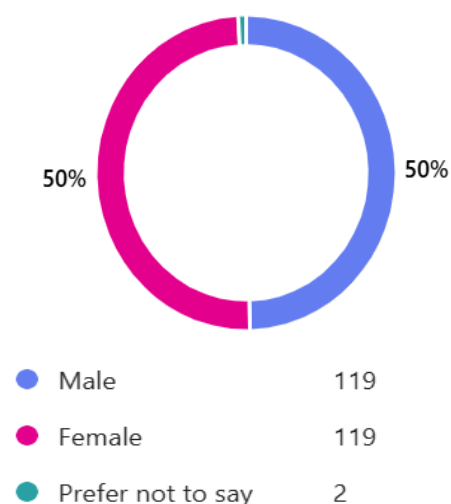
- Of those surveyed, 93% of respondents stated they actively participated in Outdoor Recreation in County Cavan
- Nearly half (49%) of respondents stated they participated in outdoor recreation several times per week, with a further 21% stating they engaged weekly.
- The most popular form of outdoor recreation activity was walking (28%), while hiking/hillwalking (13%), leisure cycling (11%), mountain biking (9%), running (11%) and swimming (7%) were also among the most popular selections.
- More than half (57%) of respondents were part of an Outdoor Recreation group.
- The five most common places for engaging in Outdoor Recreation among respondents were forests, on roads, on trails, in parks and on hills.
- When asked about their motivation for participating in Outdoor Recreation the most common response was 'for improving health and fitness' (29%) followed by 'improving mental/emotional wellbeing' and simply to 'have fun'.
- Nearly half (44.6%) of respondents stated outdoor recreation opportunities in Cavan were average with 20.4% ranking current opportunities as below average.
- Again almost half (45.4%) of participants stated their knowledge and awareness of opportunities in Cavan was either poor or below average.
- When asked how outdoor recreation provision opportunities can be improved 'more trail facilities' was the most common response, forest trails, mountain biking trails, horse riding trails and off road trails were repeatedly mentioned.
- When discussing current barriers to outdoor recreation participation 'not enough opportunities/facilities' was the most commonly selected response.
- Just over half (53%) of participants responded 'Yes', when asked if the current provision caters for the type of activity they want to take part in.

- When asked about the need for additional provision the top five most popular responses selected were increased provision of trails, greenways, parks or forest parks, cycle paths/ pump tracks and lake/ water-based activity provision.

Breakdown of Online Survey Respondents

The Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan Survey gathered a total of 241 responses. 50% of respondents were female and 50% of respondents were male which allowed for a holistic overview of Outdoor Recreation from both perspectives.

The survey was distributed across the county which allowed for a large representative group of varied respondents. To ensure the survey was inclusive it was important that people from a wide cross section of age groups and abilities responded to the survey.



The demographic range of respondents to the survey was wide. A significant proportion of responses were from adults aged 45-54 (31%), followed by adults aged 35-44 (27%) and 55-64 (15%). A small but significant portion of respondents reported having a disability (6%).

The survey attracted responses from across Cavan's three local electoral areas and also from residents of neighbouring counties who participate in outdoor recreation activities in Cavan.



43% of respondents were based in Cavan-Belturbet



23% of respondents were from the Ballieborough-Cootehill area



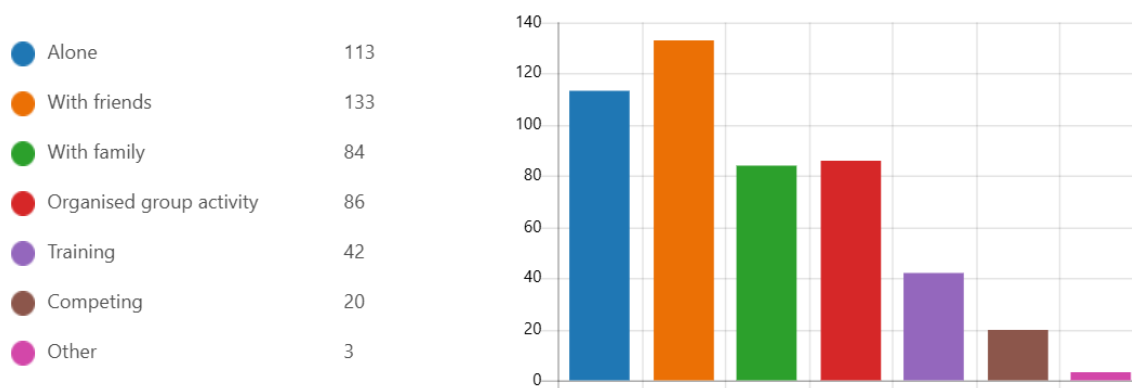
20% of respondents resided in the Ballyjamesduff area

Current levels of Participation

Respondents were asked about their current levels of participation in outdoor recreation activity. A significant portion (14%) of those surveyed engage in outdoor recreation at least once per day, while at the other end of the spectrum 2% of respondents were participating on a monthly basis or less frequently. The largest grouping comprising 49% of all respondents (N=112) reported that they participated in Outdoor Recreation several times per week. The majority of those surveyed (58%) reported that they are currently part of an outdoor recreation group.

Interestingly, for many of those surveyed outdoor recreation is a social activity. Over a quarter of respondents (27%) reported that they usually participate in outdoor recreation with friends, while 23% of those surveyed participate in outdoor recreation on their own. A smaller portion engage in outdoor recreation activities as part of family groups (17%).

Outdoor Recreation Activity Groupings



Preferred Locations for Outdoor Recreation

Online respondents were asked to detail the locations they most commonly use for outdoor recreation activity. The most popular locations selected were forests (23%); roads (13%); trails (12%); parks (10%); hills (10%); footpaths (7%) and watercourses (7%). This usership data was reflected in the volume of feedback received in relation to these types of sites across Cavan.

Preferred Activities

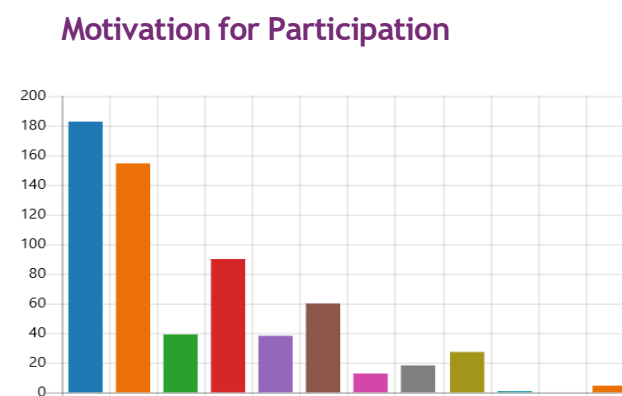
Online respondents were asked to detail what type of outdoor recreation activity they partake in most often, the most common types of activities reported were walking (28%); Hiking/Hillwalking (13%); Running (11%); leisure cycling (11%); mountain biking (9%) and swimming (7%).

Motivation for participation

The most common reasons given by online respondents for participation in outdoor recreation include to improve health and fitness (29%); to improve mental/emotional

wellbeing (25%) and to have fun (14%). The most common reasons for taking part in sport and physical activity were consistent across demographic breakdowns.

● To improve health and fitness	183
● To improve mental/emotional ...	155
● To control my weight	39
● To have fun	90
● To relax	38
● To spend time with family/frie...	60
● To improve my athletic skills	13
● To take care of pets	18
● To train or compete	27
● To commute	1
● For work	0
● Other	5



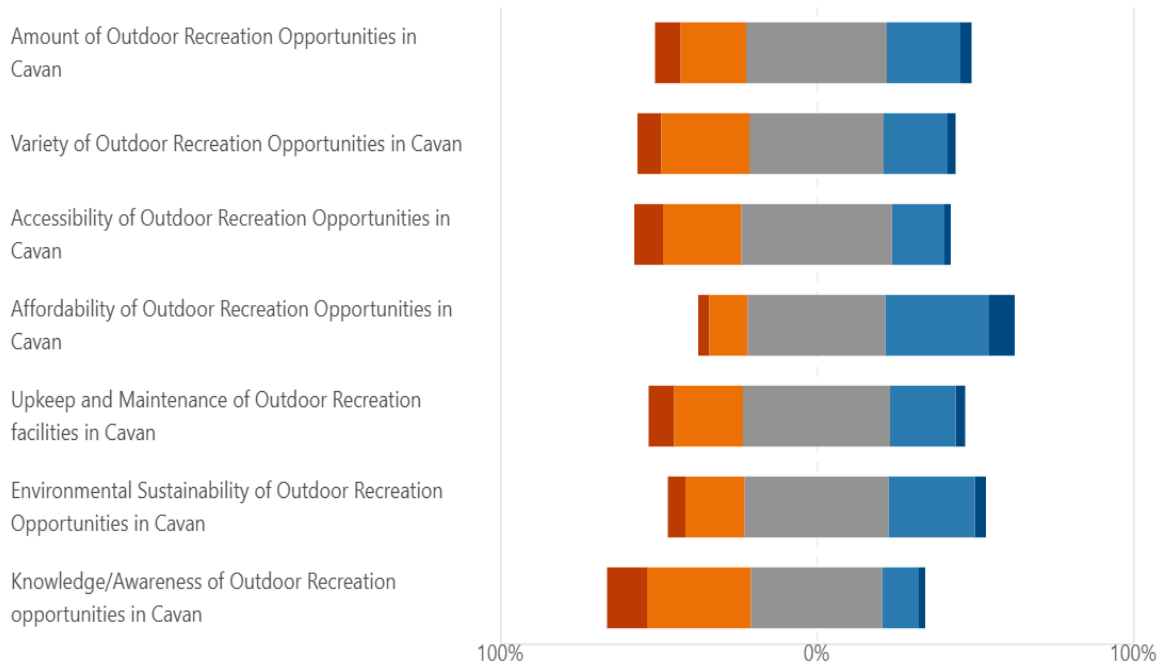
Rating the opportunities Cavan has in terms of outdoor recreation provision

The online survey detailed a question which required respondents to rate the amount, variety, accessibility, affordability, upkeep/ maintenance, environmental sustainability and knowledge/ awareness of opportunities in Cavan. When rating the amount of outdoor recreation opportunities in Cavan, 44.6% of online respondents rated the amount of opportunities available as average while 20.4% rated the number of opportunities below average. When asked about the variety of opportunities 20% of those surveyed rated the variety as good, 42.5% rated the variety of opportunities as average and 27.5% rated the variety as below average. Accessibility of outdoor recreation was most commonly rated as average (47.5%) but a quarter of respondents (24.6%) rated the accessibility of outdoor recreation opportunities in Cavan as below average.

Affordability was also analysed with 75.7% of respondents rating the cost of participation as average/good. Environmental sustainability was also rated relatively positively by online respondents, 45% considered environmental sustainability as average whilst 27.3% considered it good. Nearly a third (30%) of respondents considered the maintenance and upkeep of outdoor recreation provision in Cavan as below average or poor. Knowledge and awareness of Outdoor Recreation opportunities in Cavan received the most negative ratings from online survey respondents. Of those surveyed 41.2% considered knowledge and awareness of opportunities was average whilst 45.4% considered this was below average/poor in Cavan.

Rating of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Cavan

■ Poor ■ Below average ■ Average ■ Good ■ Excellent

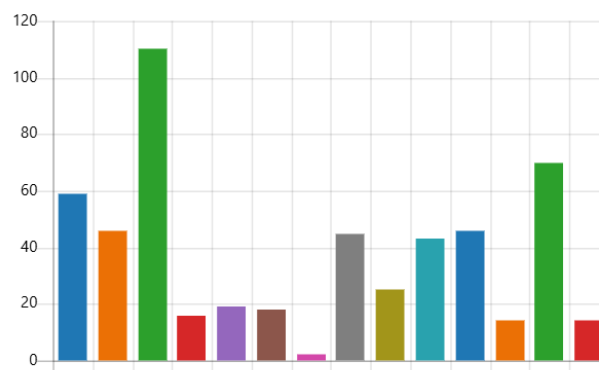


Barriers to participation in Outdoor Recreation

The online survey posed a series of questions in relation to the barriers experienced which can hinder participation in Outdoor Recreation. The top responses from online respondents in terms of barriers to participation in Outdoor recreation are; Not enough opportunities/facilities available (21%); Lack of awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities (13%); and a lack of time available due to work commitments (11%).

● Lack of time due to work	59
● Lack of time due to family co...	46
● Not enough opportunities/ fa...	110
● Lack of motivation	16
● Too expensive	19
● Disability/ Lack of accessible f...	18
● Age	2
● Concerns about personal safety	45
● Lack of transport	25
● Bad weather	43
● Opportunities/ facilities don't ...	46
● Lack of family friendly provision	14
● Lack of awareness of outdoor ...	70
● Other	14

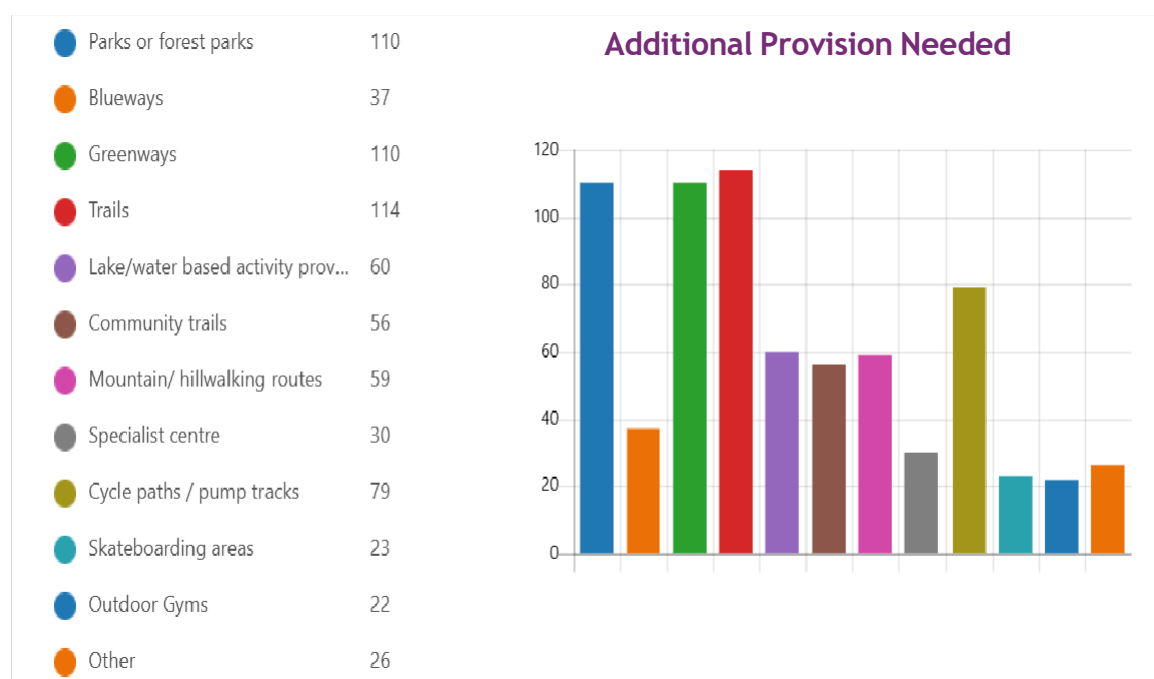
What are the main barriers to participation in Outdoor Recreation in Cavan?



Online respondents were asked if the current outdoor recreation provision available in Cavan catered for the type of activity they wanted to engage in, only 53% (N=125) responded that the facilities did cater for their needs, whilst 47% (N=110) indicated that the facilities did not cater for the activities they want to take part in.

Additional provision

The respondents were asked if there was a need for additional outdoor facilities in Cavan. The response with the highest volume of responses indicated the need for more trails (N=114) in the county, this was closely followed by Greenways (N=110); Parks or forest parks (N=110); Cycle paths / Pump tracks (N=79); and Lake/river-based activity provision (N=60). Although these were the options with the largest volume of responses a wide range of response were received, with the results indicated in the table below.



SWOT and Needs Analysis

Findings of community and Stakeholder Consultation Combined

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Abundant Natural Landscapes and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cavan's numerous lakes (365 lakes) and waterways are a standout feature including popular lakes such as Annagh Lake, Brackley Lake and Arvagh Lake. Some lakes such as Annagh lake have amenities such as toilets, picnic areas and changing facilities - Varied terrain throughout the county including forests, conservation boglands, mountains, wetlands and drumlins - Beautiful landscapes with forest parks, waymarked trails, and walking areas e.g. Including, Cuilcagh Mountain, Cavan Burren Park, Beara Breifne Way, Cavan Way, and Shannon Pot - UNESCO World Heritage Geopark - Opportunity for open water swimming with 14 sites used for instructor-led water safety programmes for children every summer. - Investments through funding schemes such as ORIS have improved recreational offering - Con Smith Park in Cavan with skate park and greenway access - Recreational activities on offer in Cavan including canoeing, kayaking, angling, wild swimming, caving, rock climbing and walking opportunities i <p>Tourism Potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key attractions and heritage sites such as Cloughoughter Castle, Bawnboy Workhouse, Mullaghmeen and Neolithic grave site - Established infrastructure - newly refurbished jetty for anglers and watersports with disability access at Killesandra Town Lake - Cavan is known as a prime destination for coarse fishing, pike fishing and fly fishing with developed infrastructure such as 	<p>Infrastructure Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of changing areas, storage facilities, toilets, and signage at key lakes and activity hubs such as Lough Sheelin and Lough Ramor. - Relatively poor access for individuals with disabilities. - Limited provision for older children and teenagers, with a large focus on GAA and rugby in the county. - Poor entry and egress points to bodies of water especially lakes e.g. homemade handrails and concrete blocks - Lack of mountain biking trails in spite of popularity of this activity. - New trails, way-marked trails and off-road routes are needed - Many existing trails and greenways need to be extended - Where no funding is available to replace wooden fishing stands and boardwalks at the end of their lifespan they have to be removed and that provision is lost. - Better signage is needed e.g. detailing length and terrain of pathways. Users report getting lost or ending up on unsuitable paths with buggies for example. - Need for more multi-sport and youth-centered spaces that aren't fee-based. - Stakeholders perceive there is a disproportionate focus on East Cavan development to the detriment of West Cavan - Need for BMX tracks and pump tracks <p>Maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poorly maintained infrastructure, such as inadequate or missing signage, parking areas, and poorly maintained trails (e.g. Cavan Way). - Lack of recurrent funding for maintenance after initial infrastructure investments.

<p>angling stands available. Fishermen come from all over Europe to experience traditional fly fishing in Lough Sheelin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Angling tourism is particularly significant, attracting longer stays and generating economic benefits. - Regional tourism brand proposition is 'Active in Nature' and aligns to Outdoor Recreation. Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Strategy seeks to develop tourism responsibly and attract visitors who want meaningful engagement with the place they are visiting. - Natural and Built heritage of Cavan - County Development Plan is an asset, gives strategic direction and as it is implemented will support sustainable and planned development across the county. - Tourism attractions such as UNESCO World Heritage Geopark. - Every community in the geopark area has access to waymarked trails such as Cuilcagh lowlands walk and recreational events. - Cavan Adventure Centre provide excellent recreational opportunities for Cavan. - Established canoe trail in Ballyconnell - Landscape photography opportunities e.g. Cloughoughter Castle - Heritage, folklore and history. <p>Community and Organisational Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eager and committed clubs and groups - Organised activities by local groups- tidy-up initiatives, triathlons and events like cycling leagues and women on wheels. Many of these programmes promote active lifestyles. - Support from Cavan Sports Partnership - Leave No Trace programmes and climate action initiatives promoting sustainability. - The PPN supports over 400 community and voluntary organisations in Cavan including signposting to sources of funding - GAA facilities are a strength for football and running 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased heavy rainfall and severe weather mean higher maintenance costs for trails in particular - Invasive species. agricultural runoff and concerns about water quality - <p>Organisational Fragmentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overlapping jurisdiction among some governmental bodies. Waterways are regulated by a number of different governmental bodies. Need a single coherent and enforced set of regulations - Access and land ownership issues - Lough Sheelin is part of three counties, some long-distance walks such as Beara- Breifne way (from Cork to Cavan) also cross county lines hence collective planning is needed <p>Cost, Funding and Volunteer Shortages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient and seemingly sporadic funding programmes hinder long-term planning. - Lack of trained leaders and declining volunteer engagement for outdoor activities and events. - Over-reliance on volunteers and small clubs to manage complex funding, governance and insurance issues. - Participation costs for some activities (e.g. cycling, swimming lessons, kayaking, pony-trekking) are high, excluding underprivileged groups. - Increasing transport fees since COVID deter school trips and have to be passed on to families. Children from poorer families then decline to participate. Schools indicate they now go on shorter trips less often. - Expensive insurance requirements significantly hinder outdoor recreation developments and events - Cost of visiting Ireland is relatively high which deters more price-sensitive visitors - Some communities have less capacity than others. Not enough support given to communities to develop, guide and drive on project proposals - Lack of events and festivals, loss of the walking festival to the area
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organised weekly park-run and park walks are a key asset - Some excellent activity providers - Vibrant Cycling Community - Watersafety courses available for children - Community focus 	<p>Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor communication and awareness of recreational opportunities and events across the county. - More outreach is needed for key groups such as younger people - Multiple sources of information relating to outdoor recreation, users would prefer one central source of information which is well communicated and recognised. <p>Trail Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for creation, extension and improvement of walking trails, forest trails, off road routes, looped walks (especially lakeside), greenways and way marked trails. - Need for coherent trail development and maintenance strategy - Lack of bike trails and cycle paths including mountain bike trails, learn to ride tracks and pump tracks - Need for equestrian trails and bridleways, opportunities for riding out are non-existent in Cavan. - Untapped potential for cycling tourism - Belmont Forest park used by generations in Cootehill area has been sold by Coillte, land and water-based provision therefore lost to the area. Further issues relating to Coillte forests included inability to access permits for biking or horse-riding - Inadequate provision for those with disabilities - Older adults can feel unsafe or have mobility issues, they need lighting, resting places (benches with armrests), clear signage, toilet provision and prefer manned facilities <p>Accessibility, Transportation and Ecology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public transport is inadequate, expensive, and often doesn't reach recreation areas. - Rural and other marginalised communities face barriers in accessing activities due to cost and distance. - Restricted access due to private land ownership and landowner permissions.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitive and fragile landscapes (e.g., raised bog) can be damaged by even low levels of footfall - Limited access to Coillte lands for equestrians and cyclists due to permit requirements. Privately-owned land and the lack of formal agreements hinder public access to trails and recreational spaces. - Issues with forests - deforestation in Killykeen. More native trees should be planted and less commercial spruce. - Issues with dog walkers, such as not keeping dogs on leads, leading to access being withdrawn - Certain population groups such as the elderly and those with young children cannot access outdoor recreation amenities without toilet facilities
Opportunities	Threats
Grant Funding and External Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities to secure funding for facility improvements, including changing rooms, toilets, and accessible equipment through schemes like ORIS - Opportunities for effective collaboration between organisations involved in Outdoor Recreation. Opportunities for joined up action - Create a handful of outdoor recreation hub areas or hotspots. Provide cluster development supports. Tourism Expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to create a Cavan Outdoors Brand - Need to tell the story and folklore associated with some of the key recreational sites, capturing the imagination of visitors - Blueways development plan - Lakeside Recreation Plan and Feasibility study - Wealth of untapped opportunities identified in Cavan relating to fishing, open water recreation, caving, mountain biking, horse sport and others 	Environmental Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pollution from farming and domestic sources impacting lake and river water quality and eco-systems - Invasive species, algae-blooms and deforestation threatening biodiversity and habitats - Decline in biodiversity nationally - Lack of respect for the natural environment generally and intensive farming practices threaten the environmental balance. Regulatory and Insurance Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High insurance costs and complex regulations deterring volunteer involvement and activity organisation - Rising insurance premiums hinder recreational development, access and events particularly for activities like cycling, water sports, and equestrian pursuits. - Liability concerns as landowners are increasingly wary of allowing public access due to risks and lack of formal agreements - Lack of coordinated planning and collective thinking among local stakeholders.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate the potential for Cavan to host international scale outdoor recreation events. Forge links with national and international outdoor recreation bodies. Organised events have a big role to play in promoting the area. - Encouraging long-distance trails similar to European models for cycling, hiking and adventure tourism. - Enhancing accommodation options near trailheads and outdoor facilities for better integration with tourism. - Enhancing visibility of opportunities and activities through online portals, dedicated webpage on the council website or apps - Layering the experience. Most participation is through a small number of activities. There is an opportunity to diversify the range of activities, providing strategic business supports <p>Community Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing awareness and participation in outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly for youth through schools. - Using the community's existing enthusiasm for outdoor events to strengthen networks through the development of a recreation forum - Wherever possible provision should be designed to enable participation by all. Projects should be designed to minimise or alleviate man-made barriers to access. - Designing spaces and activities through co-design with marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and youth. - Strengthening stakeholder collaboration for better resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and funding applications. - Partnering with schools, youth organisations, and sports clubs to build skills in activities like cycling, swimming, and outdoor navigation. - Taster days 'come and try it' events i.e biking, coarse fishing, pony riding, orienteering etc 	<p>Aging Population and Participation Decline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerability of older residents and their reduced participation in outdoor activities. - Decreasing engagement from youth in outdoor recreation pursuits e.g. angling. - Increasing marginalisation experienced by some population groups including teenagers, older people and new communities to Cavan. <p>Infrastructure Deterioration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Damage to trails from climate change and lack of maintenance. - Dependency on Coillte land, which is subject to forestry operations and permits - Poor or inadequate infrastructure (Older fishing stands and boardwalks, lack of slipways and cycling facilities) - Limited access for people with disabilities especially older infrastructure - Signage Issues, poor signage leads to visitors getting lost or ending up on unsuitable paths - Roads are deemed unsafe for cycling and walking due to heavy traffic and lack of cycle lanes and footpaths in some areas - Issues with vandalism and anti-social behaviour in some public spaces - Transportation challenges affecting accessibility of recreational sites and restricting school and group participation <p>Collaboration and funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited coordination between stakeholders and agencies increases the challenges associated with improving facilities and running programmes. - Lack of recurrent funding limits the longevity of some very impactful youth and community programs. - Over reliance on voluntary sector to spearhead developments, lead funding applications and manage the resulting facilities and provision of services to the public
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Infrastructure Development

- Building designated swimming areas, bike shelters, and multi-use tracks
- Improving signage for trails and waterways, including heritage links to natural sites
- Efforts to make amenities and trails accessible to all are ongoing, such as footpaths, greenways, and inclusive programs like “Her Outdoors.”
- Expanding walking trails, looped water trails, and cycling paths, connecting them with local attractions and towns
- Major opportunities in mountain biking, cross-country cycling, and equestrian trails
- Growing popularity of wild swimming, kayaking, and canoeing, supported by initiatives like Swim Ireland's programmes
- Opportunities to improve lake access, particularly for disabled users

Sustainability and Environment

- Projects to preserve habitats, enhance water quality, and educate the public on environmental stewardship.
- Creating decarbonisation zones and using towns as testbeds for green initiatives.
- Promote cycling and walking as sustainable forms of transport especially for short journeys, recognising the important role they can have in reducing emissions, improving air quality and improving health and physical activity levels.
- Developing infrastructure like washdown kits for kayaks, toilets, and showers at water-based activity sites.
- Enhancing safe cycling infrastructure, bike rental options, and repair hubs like social bike shops.
- Enhancing biodiversity and conservation through nature trails and woodland conservation projects e.g. simple measures like nesting boxes or large-scale measures like rewilding.
- Adopting best practice for minimising environmental impact, such as stone paths rather than boardwalks.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnering with organisations like Leave No Trace for training and awareness campaigns. - Improve data capture and analysis. 	
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Needs

Infrastructure Needs

- New or improved walking trails, forest trails, off road routes, looped walks (especially lakeside), greenways and way marked trails. Including extension of greenway.
- Need for bike trails and cycle paths including, mountain bike trails, learn to ride tracks and pump tracks.
- Equestrian trails and bridleways; opportunities for riding out are non-existent in Cavan.
- Teenagers are underserved in terms of outdoor recreation provision.
- Need for new and improved signage including replacement of missing way markers
- Toilet facilities: certain population groups such as the elderly and those with young children are excluded from using outdoor recreation amenities without welfare facilities.
- Planned and managed replacement of aging angling infrastructure in Cavan
- Management plans, clean-up strategies, improved open and transparent water quality testing for key watercourses.
- Facilities like moorings, jetties, toilets, changing areas, access points and shelters are undersupplied in some areas
- Wherever possible provision should be designed to enable participation by all e.g. disability-friendly facilities, ramps, graded trails, dementia friendly pathways and adapted equipment such as bikes.
- Co-design should be practiced to reduce man-made barriers (e.g. kissing gates) being installed
- Improving safety and useability by mapping waterways, including hazards like shallow waters, improving access and egress points for safer navigation.
- Create trailheads and provide updated, accessible information on walks (e.g., council websites).
- Improved amenities such as parking, toilets, changing facilities, cafes, bins, resting places and lighting in outdoor spaces
- Designated safe swimming areas, better access to lakes, and infrastructure for water sports.
- Audit and long-term planning for maintenance of infrastructure to improve longevity and usability
- Need to diversify the range of activities and broaden the experience of outdoor recreation in Cavan

Education, Information and Promotion

- Create an information source that communicates all the information on events, amenities and participation opportunities within the county (e.g. portal or tab on council website)
- Better promotion of the opportunities that exist in the county to boost participation from residents and visitors
- Installing counters and tracking visitor data to guide development and funding decisions.
- Feasibility studies to gauge costs and benefits of planned developments, reducing risk and supporting evidence led decision making. Robust data-driven master planning including environmental analysis and community consultation.

- More training for volunteers in recreation clubs including accredited sector specific training for coaches. Also training related to accessing funding, governance, marketing and digital media, outdoor events training, insurance, health and safety etc.
- Educate users from childhood regarding responsible recreation. Linking with potential partner organisations such as Leave no Trace.

Collaboration and Governance:

- Need for clear leadership and joined up actions. Further collaboration is required between the organisations involved in the development and management of Outdoor Recreation
- Enterprise support for outdoor recreation providers who are often operating seasonally and in challenging circumstances
- Engage with neighbouring counties on land and water outdoor recreation initiatives
- Establishing clear points of contact for landowners to address concerns to ensure land and water protection issues are dealt with as and when they arise
- Formation of an outdoor recreation forum to foster collaboration and share best practice
- Organised events can bring communities together and promote the area
- Create a handful of outdoor recreation hub areas or hotspots. Provide cluster development supports
- Working with other agencies to prioritise and strengthen the commercial outdoor recreation sector in Cavan.

Ecology, sustainability and Protection:

- Improvement in the provision of public transport links to Outdoor recreation opportunities in the county including the 'last mile' to key sites. Bike transport options on buses.
- Develop, manage and increase participation in outdoor recreation while championing natural and built assets.
- Outcomes of the plan should seek to enhance biodiversity and as a minimum demonstrate full compliance with all relevant requirements arising from EU and Irish planning and environmental legislation.
- Incorporate biodiversity measures as standard practice - simple measures like nesting boxes to large scale measures like rewilding.
- Routine monitoring of recreational activity to minimise ecological harm, improving data capture and analysis will support this monitoring.
- Monitor and respond quickly to land and water protection issues as they arise.
- Educate users from childhood regarding responsible recreation. Linking with Leave no Trace.
- Keep fragile and sensitive environments wild
- Where possible maintain and improve existing infrastructure, lessening the land destruction with the development of new trails.
- Ensuring funding mechanisms for ongoing maintenance and operational sustainability
- Promote cycling and walking as sustainable forms of transport especially for short journeys

Improve participation and community engagement

- New and improved bike lanes and bike shelters at public spots, schools, and parks
- Taster days 'come and try it' events i.e biking, coarse fishing, pony riding, orienteering etc

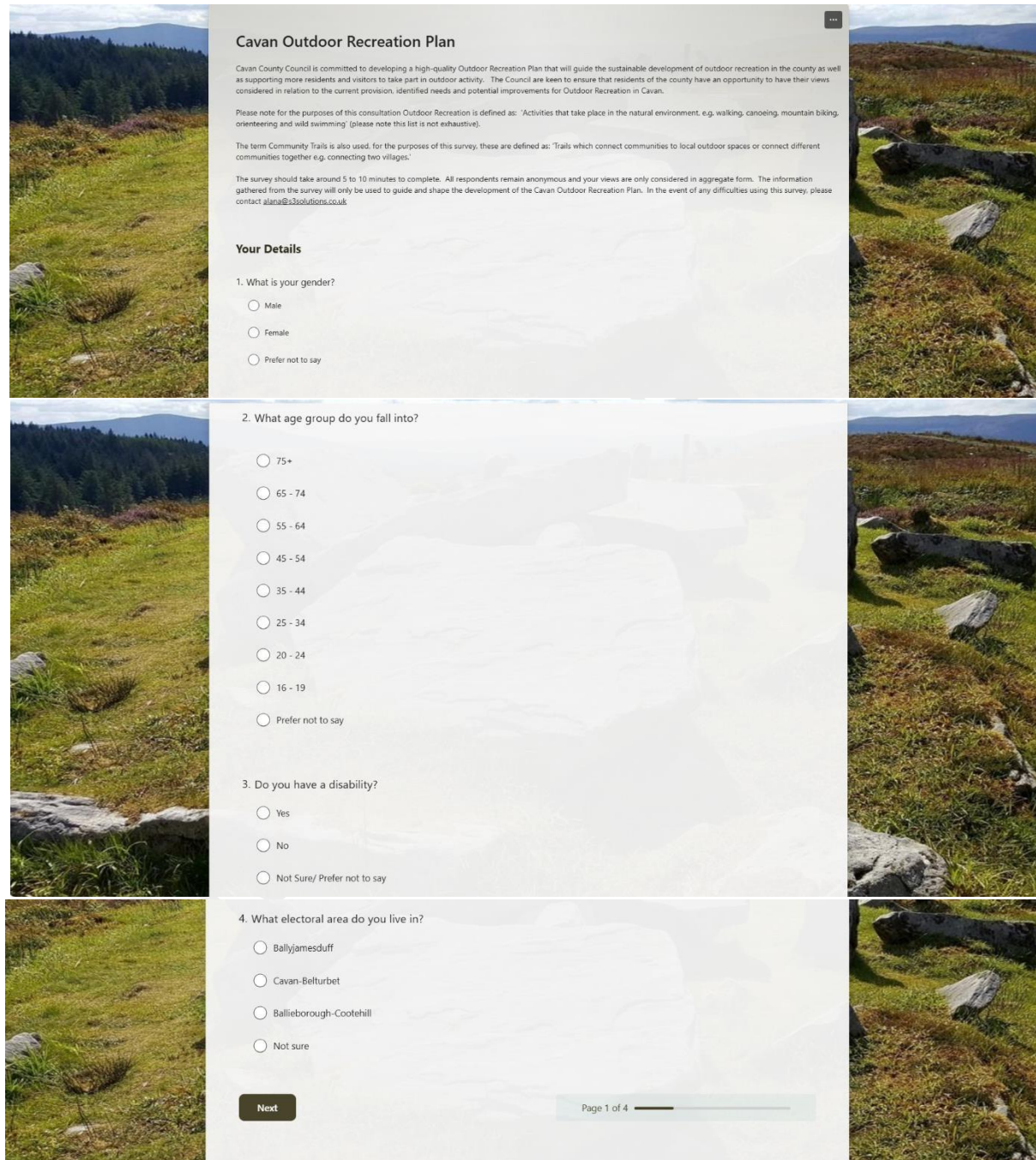
- Greater funding opportunities for clubs and grassroots organisations, incentivise clubs to offer youth provision as many currently do not, due to administrative and regulatory burden
- Transport links to reduce barriers to accessing amenities.
- Creating and subsidising new programmes and initiatives e.g. social enterprises refurbishing bicycles for donation locally
- Most participation is through a small number of activities. There is a need to diversify the range of activities, increase the skill set of participants and broaden their experience of outdoor recreation in Cavan.
- Establish networks such as outdoor recreation forum
- More events and festivals
- Support initiatives for hard-to-reach groups e.g. walking groups for older people
- Co-designed spaces that meet the needs of local populations and disadvantaged groups
- Increase shared multi-use facilities that accommodate diverse needs and foster intergenerational interactions
- The high number of outdoor recreation clubs in the county highlights the importance of clubs as a means of participation. If networked, they can provide a sounding board for stakeholders and are a means to channel communications with active communities across Cavan. Cavan sports partnership is a key link with these clubs

Tourism Development

- Aim for Cavan to establish itself as a leading outdoor recreation and regenerative tourism destination in Ireland, building on Cavan's natural assets to attract slow and niche tourism.
- Increasing glamping, glamping, guesthouse, and family-friendly lodgings to attract more visitors and complement the strong offering the County has for destination hotels
- Myriad of opportunities identified in Cavan relating to fishing, open water recreation, caving, orienteering, cycling, mountain biking, horse sport, blueways development and much more
- Create a handful of outdoor recreation hub areas or hotspots. Provide cluster development supports. Prioritise and strengthen the commercial outdoor recreation sector in Cavan
- Layering the experience. There is an opportunity to diversify the base range of activities, and broaden the experiences offered by outdoor recreation in Cavan
- Scaling up festivals and outdoor events to enhance tourism potential
- Evaluate the potential for Cavan to host international scale outdoor recreation events. Forge links with national and international outdoor recreation bodies.
- Organised events have a big role to play in promoting the area, need to support events and clubs running festivals and competitions e.g. caving events, triathlons and angling competitions
- Integration of recreation opportunities with local businesses, e.g. coffee docks, bike and boat hire
- Need to convey the story and folklore. Tap into artistic, literary and cultural inspiration to bring places to life and capturing the imagination
- Creating a Cavan Outdoors brand or new Hidden Heartland Outdoors brand. The Hidden Heartlands Brand proposition is 'Active in Nature' and aligns to Outdoor Recreation more than any other of the Regional Experience Brand offerings

Appendices

Appendix 1: Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan Survey



Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan

Cavan County Council is committed to developing a high-quality Outdoor Recreation Plan that will guide the sustainable development of outdoor recreation in the county as well as supporting more residents and visitors to take part in outdoor activity. The Council are keen to ensure that residents of the county have an opportunity to have their views considered in relation to the current provision, identified needs and potential improvements for Outdoor Recreation in Cavan.

Please note for the purposes of this consultation Outdoor Recreation is defined as: 'Activities that take place in the natural environment, e.g. walking, canoeing, mountain biking, orienteering and wild swimming' (please note this list is not exhaustive).

The term Community Trails is also used, for the purposes of this survey, these are defined as: 'Trails which connect communities to local outdoor spaces or connect different communities together e.g. connecting two villages.'

The survey should take around 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All respondents remain anonymous and your views are only considered in aggregate form. The information gathered from the survey will only be used to guide and shape the development of the Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan. In the event of any difficulties using this survey, please contact alana@3solutions.co.uk

Your Details

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Prefer not to say

2. What age group do you fall into?

☐ 75+

☐ 65 - 74

☐ 55 - 64

☐ 45 - 54

☐ 35 - 44

☐ 25 - 34

☐ 20 - 24

☐ 16 - 19

☐ Prefer not to say

3. Do you have a disability?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not Sure/ Prefer not to say

4. What electoral area do you live in?

☐ Ballyjamesduff

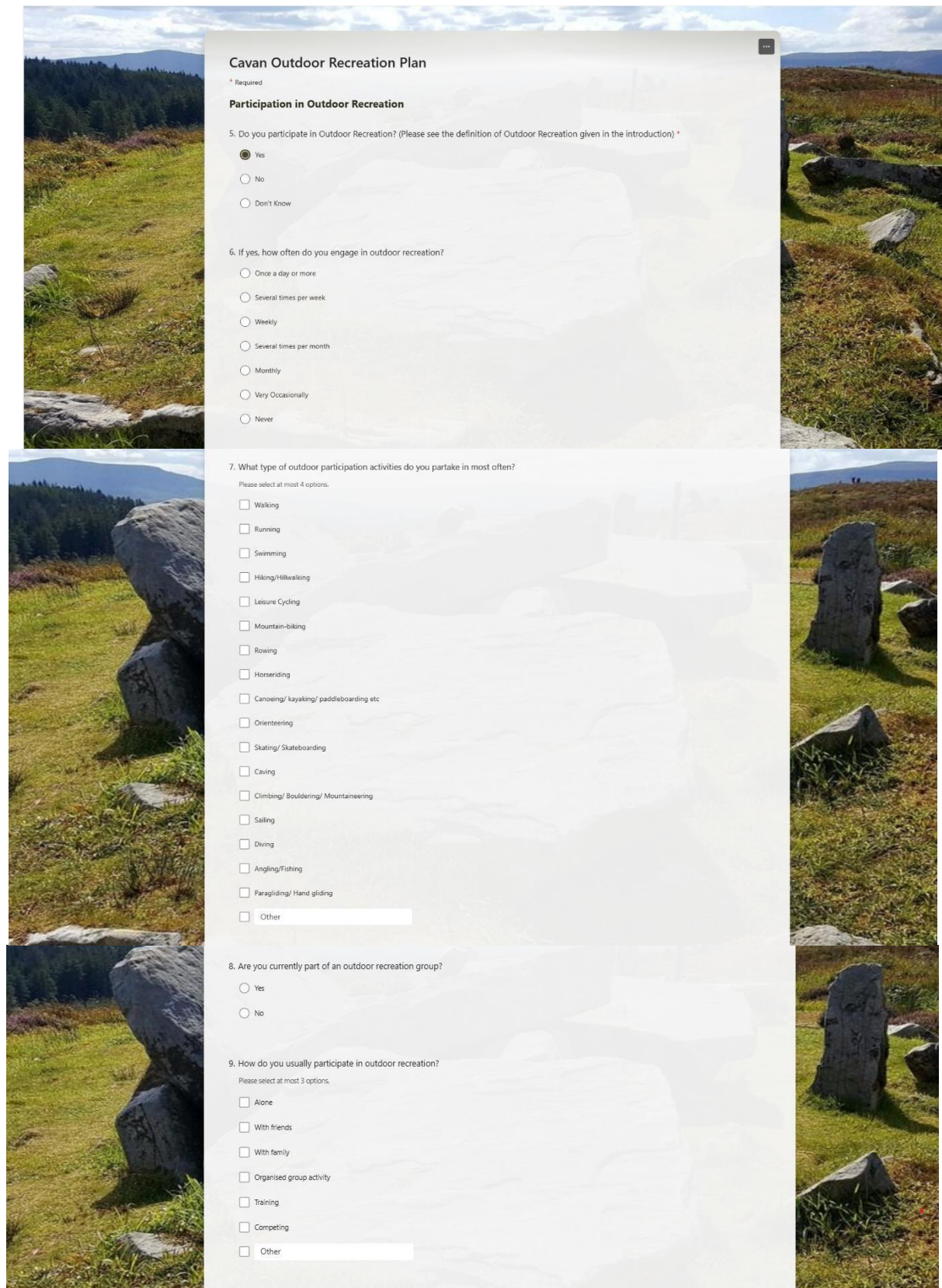
☐ Cavan-Belturbet

☐ Ballieborough-Cootehill

☐ Not sure

Next

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Cavan Outdoor Recreation Plan

* Required

Participation in Outdoor Recreation

5. Do you participate in Outdoor Recreation? (Please see the definition of Outdoor Recreation given in the introduction) *

☒ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't Know

6. If yes, how often do you engage in outdoor recreation?

☐ Once a day or more
☐ Several times per week
☐ Weekly
☐ Several times per month
☐ Monthly
☐ Very Occasionally
☐ Never

7. What type of outdoor participation activities do you partake in most often?

Please select at most 4 options.

☐ Walking
☐ Running
☐ Swimming
☐ Hiking/Hillwalking
☐ Leisure Cycling
☐ Mountain-biking
☐ Rowing
☐ Horseriding
☐ Canoeing/ kayaking/ paddleboarding etc
☐ Orienteering
☐ Skating/ Skateboarding
☐ Caving
☐ Climbing/ Bouldering/ Mountaineering
☐ Sailing
☐ Diving
☐ Angling/Fishing
☐ Paragliding/ Hand gliding
☐ Other


8. Are you currently part of an outdoor recreation group?

☐ Yes
☐ No

9. How do you usually participate in outdoor recreation?

Please select at most 3 options.


☐ Alone
☐ With friends
☐ With family
☐ Organised group activity
☐ Training
☐ Competing
☐ Other




10. In what locations would you commonly take part in outdoor recreation?

Please select at most 4 options.

- ☐ Parks
- ☐ Forests
- ☐ Roads
- ☐ Footpaths
- ☐ Cycle paths
- ☐ Hills
- ☐ Trails
- ☐ Lakes/Rivers
- ☐ Sports pitch
- ☐ Outdoor Gym
- ☐ Greenways
- ☐ Blueways/Waterways
- ☐ Specialist centres for outdoor activity
- ☐ Other







11. What are your main reasons for taking part in outdoor recreation?

Please select at most 3 options.


- ☐ To improve health and fitness
- ☐ To improve mental/emotional wellbeing
- ☐ To control my weight
- ☐ To have fun
- ☐ To relax
- ☐ To spend time with family/friends
- ☐ To improve my athletic skills
- ☐ To take care of pets
- ☐ To train or compete
- ☐ To commute
- ☐ For work
- ☐ Other






12. What are the key strengths Cavan offers in terms of outdoor recreation areas and facilities?


Enter your answer





13. How would you rate opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation in Cavan?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Amount of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Variety of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessibility of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affordability of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upkeep and Maintenance of Outdoor Recreation facilities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental Sustainability of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge/Awareness of Outdoor Recreation opportunities in Cavan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	<p>14. If there are any comments you would like to add in relation to the above ratings, please detail them below.</p> <div>Enter your answer</div> <p>15. How can outdoor recreation provision and opportunities be improved in Cavan?</p> <div>Enter your answer</div> <p>16. What are the weaknesses which hold the county back in terms of outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities? You can also detail any emerging challenges or threats you identify for the county going forward in terms of outdoor recreation?</p> <div>Enter your answer</div>	
	<p>17. What are the current barriers to participating in Outdoor Recreation in Cavan?</p> <p>Please select at most 3 options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of time due to work<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of time due to family commitments<input type="checkbox"/> Not enough opportunities/ facilities available<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation<input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive<input type="checkbox"/> Disability/ Lack of accessible facilities<input type="checkbox"/> Age<input type="checkbox"/> Concerns about personal safety<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of transport<input type="checkbox"/> Bad weather<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities/ facilities don't match my interests<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of family friendly provision<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities<input type="checkbox"/> Other <div></div>	
	<p>18. Do the current facilities/ outdoor recreation opportunities cater for the type of activity you want to take part in?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>19. Is there a need for additional provision of any of the following types of outdoor facilities:</p> <p>Please select at most 4 options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Parks or forest parks<input type="checkbox"/> Blueways<input type="checkbox"/> Greenways<input type="checkbox"/> Trails<input type="checkbox"/> Lake/water based activity provision<input type="checkbox"/> Community trails<input type="checkbox"/> Mountain/ hillwalking routes<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist centre<input type="checkbox"/> Cycle paths / pump tracks<input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding areas<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Gyms<input type="checkbox"/> Other <div></div>	
	<p>20. What can Cavan County Council and partners do to enhance participation in Outdoor Recreation over the next 5 years?</p> <div>Enter your answer</div> <p>21. If you would like to add any further comments in relation to Outdoor Recreation in Cavan, please use this space.</p> <div>Enter your answer</div>	