



Newsletter

Issue 4 | Summer 2013

**Slieve Gullion Forest Adventure Park
wins 2 awards.**

**Great new activities on
offer in the Ring of
Gullion area and much
more...**

Inside this issue:

- 2 Slieve Gullion play park wins big in awards
- 3 New bus service for Slieve Gullion
- 3 New audio tours for Ring of Gullion
- 4 Ring of Gullion open for tourism
- 4 Up on Gullion planting heather
- 5 New tourism info point and walking guide
- 6 New conservation volunteer group
- 7 Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme
- 8 What's on at a glance

Slieve Gullion Adventure Play Park Wins Big at NITB Awards.

The Adventure Play Park won the award in the category of Tourism Partner Initiative. The development of the project was led by Mrs Julie McCann of Newry & Mourne District Council who worked closely with a wide range of local partners to establish the high quality adventure park.

The partners in this scheme included Sticky Fingers Arts Organisation, Forest Service NI, The Clanyre Group, Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium, youth groups and local primary schools.

The aims were to develop the tourism product base in south Armagh in a way that met the needs of the local community and visitors alike. It was hoped to increase visitors to south Armagh by at least 2,000 in the first two year period but in reality the park received approximately 2,000 visitors per day in July and August 2012.

All of the play equipment is designed to blend with the natural environment and to promote exercise. It also helps children develop their physical co-ordination skills and through adventurous elements, supports natural risk taking.

The judges thought there were clear benefits to all parties and were impressed with the project's ethos that play is central to the development of good physical and mental health.

The park was part funded by two programmes, CASA and The Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013, which is part financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and implemented locally by SOAR (Southern Organisation for Action in Rural Areas).



Slieve Gullion Play Park Wins Second Award.

Slieve Gullion Forest Adventure Park, picked up a second award by winning a Green Apple Environment Award in the national campaign to find Britain's greenest companies, councils and communities.



Deputy Mayor David Taylor and Julie McCann, Project Lead Officer, received this prestigious award from Doreen Lawrence, mother of murder victim Stephen Lawrence who was training to be an architect before his tragic demise.

The park competed against more than 200 other nominations in the Green Apple Awards for the Built Environment & Architectural Heritage, and they were presented with their trophy and certificate at a glittering presentation ceremony in the National Self Build & Renovation Centre on June 24th.

As a result of this Green Apple Award success, the Slieve Gullion Forest Adventure Park winning paper will be published in The Green Book, the leading international work of reference on environmental best practice, so that others around the world can follow their example and learn from their achievement. It could also progress to represent their country in the European Business Awards for the Environment.

The Green Apple Awards began in 1994 and have become established as the country's major recognition for environmental endeavour among companies, councils, communities and countries.

Red Squirrels Group

Check out the website for more information on what's happening with the Red Squirrel Group. There was an AGM at the meeting on Monday 12th August. The group also discussed the newly developed Management Plan for the group.

Another item on the agenda was the organising of the upcoming Red Squirrel Day on Saturday 5th October. Last year's day was highly successful and the group hope to build on this. Keep an eye on the facebook page as well, where photos and even videos of the red squirrels sighted in the area are posted. New members welcome!

New Slieve Gullion Rambler Bus Service

The service, which runs from Newry bus centre to Slieve Gullion Forest Park, started in July 2013 and operates from Tuesday to Sunday until 1 September 2013, with three return trips daily. The Slieve Gullion Rambler Service 443 will run from Newry Bus Centre to Slieve Gullion Forest Park. The bus will be leaving the bus station at 10:30, 13:30 and 16:30 and returning from the park at 11:00, 14:00 and 17:00. The last Sunday service departs from Newry at 17:30 instead of 16:30, returning at 18:00.

Minister of Transport, Danny Kennedy said: "The Ring of Gullion is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which has many different attractions for people of all ages. Families can enjoy the Slieve Gullion Forest Adventure Park, hikers can spend time walking the variety of walking routes, while nature lovers can sample the delights of the stunning scenery.

"This new service has been introduced by Translink with support from the Department of Transport's Rural Transport Fund and will enable tourists and locals alike to hop on a bus and see at first hand this beautiful area. This fund continues to make an important contribution to reducing social exclusion by providing transport in rural areas and helping to boost tourism."

Pick up a copy of the Rambler leaflet at your local Ulsterbus Station or Visitor Information Centre or download a copy from www.translink.co.uk.



Ring of Gullion Audio Guides



Mayor Councillor John McArdle launched the Ring of Gullion Audio Guides at the Slieve Gullion Courtyard just in time for the summer season. The launch was attended by the areas MP, MLA and local councillors as well as the local community and council officials who worked on the tour.

On these tours, you'll discover some of the rich cultural heritage of South Armagh, and experience the sheer beauty of its landscape. It will take you through some well known points of interest...as well as some more obscure places!

Both tours, the Cú Chulainn Journey and the Fionn mac Cumhaill Adventure, are flexible: You may decide to stop off and explore all the locations, in which case the tour may take most of a day – just depending on how long you spend at each location. Or you might decide to plan your own route around the sites that interest you most.

Mayor Councillor John McArdle said, "These two tours are a great boost to tourism in the area, visitors and locals alike can now explore the area at their own pace in their own time. As well as foreign tourists, students of Irish, French and German can come and learn from this and use it as a learning tool."

Both tours are available and can be used in a number of ways. To begin with visit www.ringofgullion.org and navigate to the driving trails pages.

Then choose your tour: the Cú Chulainn Journey or the Fionn mac Cumhaill Adventure. Once you choose, select your language: English, Irish, French and German are all available. When you have downloaded your audio tour and accompanying map, you can burn it to a CD, put it on your MP3 player, tablet, or phone then jump in your car or hop on your bike.

Darren Rice Ring of Gullion Officer said, "Both tours take you through fairly mountainous terrain at times, and like all the best things in life, some of our destinations require a little time and effort to reach. There already have been US and Canadian citizens downloading the tours in preparation for their visits this summer." He continued, "I would also like to thank the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme for their funding for this project and others in the pipeline."

The tours are also available on CD for the Tourism Information Points in Slieve Gullion and Newry at a cost of £3.00.

This project was part funded under Axes 3 & 4 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 by the European Union and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Up on Slieve Gullion Planting Heather



Slieve Gullion, recognised by its designation as a Special Area of Conservation, is one of the largest expanses of European dry heath in Northern Ireland, and heathland covers roughly 12% of the area in the Ring of Gullion.

Darren Rice Ring of Gullion Officer said, "The heaths form on thin acidic soils overlying granitic rocks and is home to colourful gorse and bracken in the autumn. However this thin soil is easily eroded and some parts need conservation if we don't want to see further erosion."

Pupils from St Josephs, Meigh and St Oliver Plunketts in Forkhill are working on a habitat restoration project for Slieve Gullion's heather. Cuttings were taken last year from Slieve Gullion and have been carefully looked after in specially controlled greenhouse. Pupils of the schools re-potted them a few months ago, and the time was right to plant them out.

Darren stated, "This is a great opportunity for the pupils to learn about the biodiversity in the Ring of Gullion. The children are taking real ownership of their mountain by helping to restore the heather on Slieve Gullion."

He continued, "Footfall over the last decade or so on Slieve Gullion has increased and is causing severe erosion. The new path will halt the erosion and through the CASA programme we are able to help restore some of the erosion on the mountain.

The pupils planted out 700 heather plants and the local Ring of Gullion Conservation Volunteer team planted out the remaining 300 plants.

Peter Shields, Eco Schools Coordinator in St Josephs said, "The kids are all so enthusiastic to be involved in real conservation work. It's a great opportunity for all of us to get our hands dirty and make a difference to Slieve Gullion."

Ring of Gullion Open For Tourism!



Newry and Mourne District Council's Mayor Councillor Michael Ruane launched The Ring of Gullion Way guide and Slieve Gullion footpath at the Slieve Gullion Courtyard in South Armagh on Friday 28th June. Newry and Mourne District Council received funding through the CASA partnership for the pathways.

Mayor Councillor Michael Ruane Said, "The Ring of Gullion has seen a number of tourism projects being implemented over the past few years, we have a fantastic product in the Ring of Gullion and now we aim to sell it.

The event was about launching the Ring of Gullion for this years summer season, and I have no doubt that everyone who visits the Ring of Gullion this summer will return again and again as it truly is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with lots to see and do. The Ring of Gullion and South Armagh are definitely open for tourists!"

Programme Manager, Eimear Bush for Special EU Programmes Body said at the event, "The Slieve Gullion Pathway is a fantastic opportunity for people to explore the Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty area and to enjoy the splendour on offer.

There is now a trail to the summit for people to walk the mountain safely and to attract visitors to sample the beauty. This is a huge asset which will benefit the local tourism economy."

"SEUPB are proud to have funded such a development as part of the overall CASA project. A £1.3m grant was allocated as part of the Interreg IVA Cross Border Programme to boost the Castleblayney and South Armagh economy."

The Third Ring of Gullion Photo Competition 2013 – Our Heritage

The Ring of Gullion photo competition is now in its third year and has established itself as a popular annual event in the area. The Ring of Gullion's third annual Photography Competition was launched on 2nd March. The theme this year is 'Our Heritage', which photographers are free to interpret any way they choose. This could be our Natural Heritage, Built or even Cultural Heritage.

Last years under 14s was so successful, we had so many quality entries, and this year we are opening it up to under 14s again. You and your winning entries will enjoy a wealth of publicity on our website, on all our social media and local media. There will also be prizes for the winners.

PLEASE NOTE - Only photos taken in the Ring of Gullion will be accepted.

We are providing a free photography workshop on the 7th September to provide some tips on how to get the best photos.

To submit your photo go to www.ringofgullion.org/Special-pages/Send-us-your-photos.aspx

Closing date is 12pm on the 27th September 2013. Call the Ring of Gullion officer on 028 30868900 for more information.

This is a free event supported by Newry and Mourne District Council and Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

New Visitor Information Point

The new Visitor Information Point at Slieve Gullion Courtyard offers a fantastic variety of exciting things for you and all the family.



So if your looking for ideas or inspirations on how to keep those little ones.... or the big ones occupied over the coming months.... call in and see what's on offer. Whether its events, attractions or activities, accommodation you are interested in there will be something to suit everyone.

Mayor of Newry & Mourne District Council, Councillor John McArdle said, "I am delighted to see a new Visitor Information Point at Slieve Gullion, steeped in an area renowned for myths & legends. We are very fortunate to have such a wonderful facility on our doorstep and welcome visitors from near and far come along and see for themselves.

Whether you are considering that climb to the summit of Slieve Gullion maybe even a leisurely walk on the Newry Towpath, come along & spend an afternoon at the new NITB Award Winning Slieve Gullion Adventure Play Park, sip over a coffee at Grounded & call over to the new office.... What better way to enjoy an afternoon.

Find Us On Facebook:

www.facebook.com/NewryandMourneTourism

www.facebook.com/NewryandMourneDistrictCouncil

Or visit our website:

www.visitnewryandmourne.com

New Walking Guide

Newry and Mourne Council and Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland have come to together to produce a 20 page walking guide on the Ring of Gullion Way.

The Ring Of Gullion Way is a 61km two-day walking route which allows walkers to explore the area's unique natural history by foot. The route follows a mixture of footpaths and country lanes as it makes its way around the ring, passing numerous historical sites along the way.

If 61km seems too long, the guide splits the route into 6 sections ranging in length from 6km to the longest at 15.7km. The Way is waymarked and is straightforward to navigate. The guide provides detailed maps and instructions on the section and photos of local wildflowers and areas of interest.

At the back of the guide there is also information on walker friendly accommodation and where to eat. Also available in the guide is contact details of walking guides in the area if you fancy being more adventurous after completing the Ring of Gullion Way.

Weather conditions in the Ring of Gullion area can be changeable- even during summer months. Waterproof and windproof clothing are essential and strong walking boots are advised to avoid getting blisters.

To pick up a free copy of the guide, visit the Tourist Information Office in Crossmaglen, Slieve Gullion or Newry. For further information on the Ring of Gullion Way and other walks across Northern Ireland, visit www.walkni.com.



New Cross Border Conservation Volunteers Group Set Up

For the first time the Ring of Gullion and Cooley cross border Conservation Volunteer team met up in February. Their task was to remove Rhododendron from Ravensdale Forest Park. This truly was a partnership event; with tools from the Mourne Heritage Trust, equipment from Newry and Mourne Council, and leaders from both Councils and four different programmes – there was expertise from every corner.

None of it could have happened without the hard work and enthusiasm from all the volunteers. The group spent about 4 or 5 hours clearing Rhododendron from the Coillte site. As a result this should allow native species to come back over time, making a forest rich with biodiversity. When Rhododendron is cleared from a site it allows light back to the forest floor, and in turn native plants can re-colonise and this leads to native insects, birds and mammals moving back too.

Darren Rice Ring of Gullion Officer added, 'It was a great day, and there was so much work done. With this amount of effort we can really make a difference to the area. We have a series of events lined up throughout the year, and I really would encourage anybody who enjoys the outdoors and giving a little back to nature and their community to come and join us in the future.'

Since February, the team have carried out a variety of activities which include wildflower planting across the area and helping with the planting of the heather on Slieve Gullion. There will be regular events over the coming months. If you would like more information check out www.ringofgullion.org. This project is supported by the INTERREG-funded projects Action for Biodiversity and the Mournes, Cooley Gullion Geotourism; by the Ring of Gullion management, Mourne Heritage Trust and Louth County Council.



Éin Chreiche i mBaol

A ithníonn lucht-féachana an Late Late Show an scréachóg reilige láithreach bonn. Tá an t-éan creiche seo i gcontúirt a bháis fud fad na tíre seo, áit ina bhfuil titim ollmhór orthu le 25 bliana anuas. Níl siad faoin bhagairt chéanna thall sa roinn Éorpa agus atá siad abhus in Éirinn.



Is léir go bhfuil cúis mhór le cailleadh na scréachóige reilige. Creideann saineolaithe éin go mbíonn an oiread sin dochair á dhéanamh don éan oíche seo ag daoine a leagann nimh síos chun francaigh, luchóga agus creimí eile a choinneáil faoi smacht.

Agus dá bharr sin, níl ach tuairim is 130 péire acu fágtha in Éirinn sa lá atá inniu ann. Bíonn fáil ar nimh anseo atá iontach láidir. Maraíonn an nimh seo luchóga agus ainmhithe eile, amhail na scréachóga reilige. Má sháraítear tairseach áirithe de nimh bíonn bás i ndán don ulchabhán álainn.

Bíonn an leibhéal a fhaightear iontu ceithre huaire níos airde anseo ná mar a bhíonn i dtíortha eile. Ba chóir d'feirmeoirí úsáid a bhaint as ábhar atá éifeachtach ach nach mbeadh chomh nimhiúil céanna ar ainmhithe eile a itheann an nimh.

Ní mór iarracht náisiúnta a chuir i bhfeidhm le cinntiú nach mbíonn siad ag dul in éag as seo amach. Bíonn na hulchabháin sa tseilg ar bhia thar roinnt feirmeacha.

Eitlíonn péire scréachóg, agus ál acu, suas le seacht míle thart ar an nead. Fiú má bhíonn daoine cúramach ar a gcuid talaimh féin, ní leor é sin gan ainmhithe neamhurchóideacha a nimhiú. An feirmeoir atá tuisceanach mar sin, tá sé ag brath go mór ar a chuid comharsan lena scréachóga féin a thabhairt slán as.

The Barn Owl -English Version

Viewers of the Late Late Show will instantly recognize the Barn Owl. This wonderful bird of prey is under threat throughout Ireland, numbers have fallen dramatically over the last 25 years; they are not subject to the same risks in Europe. There is clearly a reason for the decline of the barn owl.

Ornithologists believe that the damage is being done by people spreading poison to control rats, mice and other rodents on which the nocturnal birds feed. As a result there are only about 130 pairs of barn owls in Ireland today. Extremely strong poison is readily available here. This poison kills predators, such as the barn owl, which eat the harmful rodents.

Death is inevitable for the owl which ingests a certain amount of toxin. The level found in birds here is four times higher than in other countries. Farmers should use poisons which are effective in targeting rodents but are not so toxic to other animals which come across it.

A national effort is needed to ensure their survival in the future. Even people being careful on their own lands will not make much difference. A pair of barn owls with a brood of hungry chicks have a feeding range of about seven miles around the nest and hunt over a large number of farms. Consequently, the careful farmer is totally dependent on the actions of his neighbours if the barn owl is to survive and prosper.

If you would like to learn Irish, contact the Irish Language Unit in Newry and Mourne Council on 028 3031 3258.

Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Community Consultation a Great Success

The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme is four months into phase one. Newry and Mourne District Council received an earmarked first-round pass of £980,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the project. It aims to conserve built and natural heritage; increase community participation in local heritage and increase access to, and learning about, the landscape and its heritage. Development funding of £60,200 has been secured to help Newry and Mourne District Council progress its plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

There was a series of community consultation evenings throughout June and July. There was a fantastic turn out for each and every one. We had music and dance in Mullaghbane, storytelling in Forkill, a presentation by Banjo Bannon in Jonesborough and a photographic exhibition in Bessbrook. Everyone who attended got to "Have Their Say" about the project and many, if not all suggestions will be included in the final submission.

Explaining the importance of HLF's support, Paul Mullan, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Northern Ireland, said: "The Ring of Gullion is one of the most distinctive landscapes in Ireland. This project seeks to reconnect people and place as well as helping to open up an area which has been overlooked for many years. With the Landscape Partnership scheme we will see many exciting initiatives being developed to encourage a greater appreciation and understanding of the area."

It is hoped that a round two submission will be made in February 2014 with a decision on a start date received at the end of the summer 2014. This will see the release of the ear-marked £980,000 and the implementation of the project plans. If you are interested in heritage, you can keep up to date with the project by visiting www.ringofgullion.org and if you would like to get involved, please contact Darren Rice at info@ringofgullion.org, through the website or on 028 308 68900.

Visitor Participation Survey in Ring of Gullion Area.

Newry and Mourne District Council have awarded Perceptive Insight Market Research, the contract to carry out a Visitor Participation Survey in the Ring of Gullion. Surveys will be carried out across the area from July until the end of October.

Look out for Perceptive Insight staff members at Slieve Gullion, Mullaghbane, Camlough, Forkhill, Meigh and at upcoming events across the Ring of Gullion area. The survey should only take ten minutes at the most, to fill in. As part of the project, the Council will also be hoping to get the views of tourism providers in the area.

A wide variety of tourism research data is conducted by tourism organisations. This research data is often available at national and regional level, but it is not always appropriate for or even applicable to the needs of some communities, especially the tourism community of south Armagh and the Ring of Gullion area.

In order to get valuable information on visitors to the Ring of Gullion area, the Council are carrying out a formal evaluation of the visitor experience and their attitudes in terms of what is on offer. The findings will provide useful data which can assist in future marketing campaigns, develop the existing facilities and services available and also explore funding opportunities.

If you would like more information, you can contact us on: 028 30868900 or visit the Ring of Gullion website www.ringofgullion.org.

Derrymore Estate Partnership Launched

A new three way partnership between the National Trust, Friends of Derrymore and Newry and Mourne District Council has now been formally established to take forward the long term development of a range of projects within the Derrymore Estate.

The estate at Derrymore is a National Trust property of 110 acres located less than half a mile from Bessbrook village just off the main Newry to Camlough Road. With the partnership now in place, meetings between the partners are ongoing to identify projects and funding that can be delivered, for the benefit of the overall community in Bessbrook and wider South Armagh and South Down Areas.

Mr Michael Lynch, speaking on behalf of the Friends Group outlined that "The establishment of the Friends of Derrymore Group has brought a keen focus on behalf of the local community to what is needed from within the estate for the greater benefit of the people and communities that surround it".

Mr Edward Mason from The National Trust stated, "As we look to the future, some of the key projects being discussed involve upgrade of the roadway and pathways through the estate, introducing visitor facilities and additional car parking, along with the provision of an interpretation building and children's play area."

Derrymore House, with its highly regarded parkland estate, was built in the late 18th Century by the politician, Issac Corry, who represented Newry in the Irish House of Commons for 30 years. It was donated to the National Trust in 1952 by its then owner, John S.W. Richardson.

Contact the Chairperson Michael Lynch of the group on lynch.m@btinternet.com.

What's on in the Ring of Gullion September 2013 –December 2013 at a glance

Activity	Day	Date	Venue	Time	Booking Required
Heritage Photography Workshop	Saturday	7 th September	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	10.00am – 4.00pm	*Yes – www.ringofgullion.org
Ring of Gullion third annual Photography Competition		2 nd March-27 th September	The Ring of Gullion AONB		Submit online at www.ringofgullion.org
Get Outdoors Weekend	Sunday	22 nd September	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	12.00pm- 4.00pm	*Yes – www.ringofgullion.org
Red Squirrel Day	Saturday	5 th October	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	11.00am- 1.00pm	*Yes – www.ringofgullion.org
Seed Gathering on Slieve Gullion	Saturday	19 th October	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	11.00am- 1.00pm	*Yes – www.ringofgullion.org
Tree Celebration Day	Saturday	23 rd November	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	11.00am- 1.00pm	*Yes – www.ringofgullion.org

To keep up to date and find out more information about the Ring of Gullion and our events; 'like' us on Facebook; 'follow' us on Twitter and check our website regularly. Information is true at time of print. Please check the website before making plans.

**Please note that booking will only open one month before date of event.*

Upcoming Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism Events

Antiques Rock Show

Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism in conjunction with the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme are hosting an 'antique' event of a new kind. Slieve Gullion Courtyard will be the venue where Dr. Vanessa Ryan and Dr. Siobhán E. Power will host a unique Antiques Rock Show event on 22nd September 2013 affording people the opportunity to bring along old rocks, fossils, antiques and artefacts to find out more about them. The event will run from 10am - 4pm so people can drop in throughout the day.

European Heritage Open Days: 14th – 15th September 2013

To celebrate 'European Heritage Open Days 2013', Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism are hosting a Geology & Archaeology Workshop in Cullyhanna. Presented by Dr. Siobhán E. Power and Dr. Vanessa Ryan, the 'Dig into South Armagh' workshop will include an introduction to the geology & archaeology of South Armagh followed by interactive learning with images, rocks & artefacts. The workshop is set to take place in the Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Heritage Centre, Cullyhanna, on Saturday 14th September 2013 from 11am – 3pm. To register attendance please contact Dr. Vanessa Ryan on 028 3025 6650 or email: vanessa.ryan@newryandmourne.gov.uk or visit the website on www.mournecooleygullion.com.



t - 028 3086 8900

w - www.ringofgullion.org

O'Fiaich House, 25-26 O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9HG



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk



NIEA Northern Ireland
Environment
Agency
www.niea.gov.uk