

*Seoladh Phlean Bainistíochta Limistéar Sáráilleachta Nádurtha  
(LSN) Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn 2011-2016 i dtráth  
chomóradh fiche bliain d'ainmniú Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn  
mar Limistéar Sáráilleachta Nádurtha*

Launch of the Ring of Gullion AONB  
Management Plan 2011-2016 on the

# 20<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of the  
Designation of the Ring of  
Gullion as an Area of  
Outstanding Natural Beauty

View from Slieve Gullion Cairn | Photograph courtesy of D Mull



Dé Céadaoin 14 Nollaig 2011  
I gClós Shliabh gCuillinn

Wednesday 14th December 2011  
At Slieve Gullion Courtyard



*“The Ring of Gullion is one of only a few small areas in Ireland to have so clearly retained its local identity.”*



Réamhrá an Mhéara

## Mayors Introduction



*It* gives me great pleasure to present to you the Ring of Gullion Management Plan 2011-2016 and welcome you to this celebration of the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Ring of Gullion as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and also the launch of its 2011 to 2016 Management Plan by Mr Alex Attwood MLA.

This document sets out a general overview of the management of the Ring of Gullion as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the make-up of the management plan's working group and a guide to what work has been completed and ongoing.

The past year has seen many actions from the Management Plan being delivered and projects are ongoing. Indeed I have been involved in many events already, learning about archeology, geology, making mini-beast sculptures and even helping judge the first Annual Ring of Gullion photography competition. My congratulations to all those who entered and won.

One of the most significant ongoing projects is the Slieve Gullion upland path repair project. With draft drawings finished, applying up to date path repair techniques, we plan to start work on the ground in April 2012 and to finish it in the winter of the same year. We are very thankful to those organisations who have their own upland path projects, especially the Mourne Heritage Trust, and who have offered advice and time.

There are many more projects and actions to be implemented and I hope that funding is forthcoming over the next five years, especially in these lean times.

I would like to thank the members of the Ring of Gullion AONB Management Plan Working Group and other stakeholders and I look forward to their continued support in the implementation of the action plan.

*Charles Casey*

Eden Valley view, Photograph courtesy of DMull

## *Intreoir Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn* *Introduction to the Ring of Gullion*

*“The area is rich in historic monuments dating from Neolithic times to the Plantation, including burial sites, raths, ecclesiastical sites and the early 17th century fortification at Moyry.”*

**The** Ring of Gullion is defined topographically by the hills of the ring dyke. The boundary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty generally includes these hills and their outer slopes but a deviation to the west has been made to include the whole of a historic site, ‘The Dorsey’ enclosure. The Ring of Gullion in the south of County Armagh is a remarkable area with a fascinating history. Its distinctive landscape owes much to long, complex and turbulent geological activity. The most important landforms are the volcanic ring dyke with Slieve Gullion at its centre. These features are the remnants of the heart of a volcano formed some 60 million years ago, features that were later remoulded by glacial activity and weather to form the landscape we know today. People have lived in the Ring of Gullion for over 6000 years. The area is rich in historic monuments dating from Neolithic times to the Plantation, including burial sites, raths, ecclesiastical sites and the early 17th century fortification at Moyry. Many of the sites have been well studied and their significance understood. Others such as the Dorsey earthworks, thought to be both a gateway and defensive boundary to Ulster, may still have secrets to

reveal. The area has been important for communications and travel through the ages and the AONB is traversed by both the modern and newly-upgraded A1 and the Slige Midluachra, the ancient road from Drogheda to Dunseverick. Farming and commerce have also shaped the landscape with its overlay of ancient field boundary patterns, parklands, market towns and villages, and the dense network of roads and lanes. Industrial development led to the creation of man made features such as the Newry Canal in the east of the AONB, the railways, and the enlargement of Camlough Lake to power the mills of Bessbrook and to supply the canal. Until the end of the 1600s it is likely that the Ring of Gullion area was densely wooded; John Speede’s map of 1610 shows extensive woodlands in the lowlands between Fathom, Camlough and Forkhill. This woodland was gradually cleared for farming and to support an increasing population with fuel and raw materials. Although today there are remnants of important semi-natural woodlands and mature parklands, the bulk of the AONB’s woodland is recent upland conifer plantation. Many of the bogs that would have characterised the lowland areas have been drained to allow for agricultural

improvement, though some important wetlands remain.

The area today has a rich flora and fauna with many nationally and internationally important habitats and species. The upland heaths of Slieve Gullion and the ring dyke hills are of particular significance, as are Camlough, the Cashel Loughs, and the intertidal mud of the upper reaches of Carlingford Lough. The species rich grassland at both Carrickasticken and

Levallymore is testament to the persistence of traditional farming methods. Indeed much of the biodiversity of the AONB lies in its farmland with its patchwork of hedgerows, walls and pockets of woodland.

The Ring of Gullion AONB attracts many visitors, drawn by the opportunities to walk the heather clad uplands of Slieve Gullion, to explore its archaeology, its many cultural events and opportunities for study, and to enjoy the scenic Slieve Gullion Forest Drive.



Ballymacdermott Cairn. Photograph courtesy of Alan Hopps

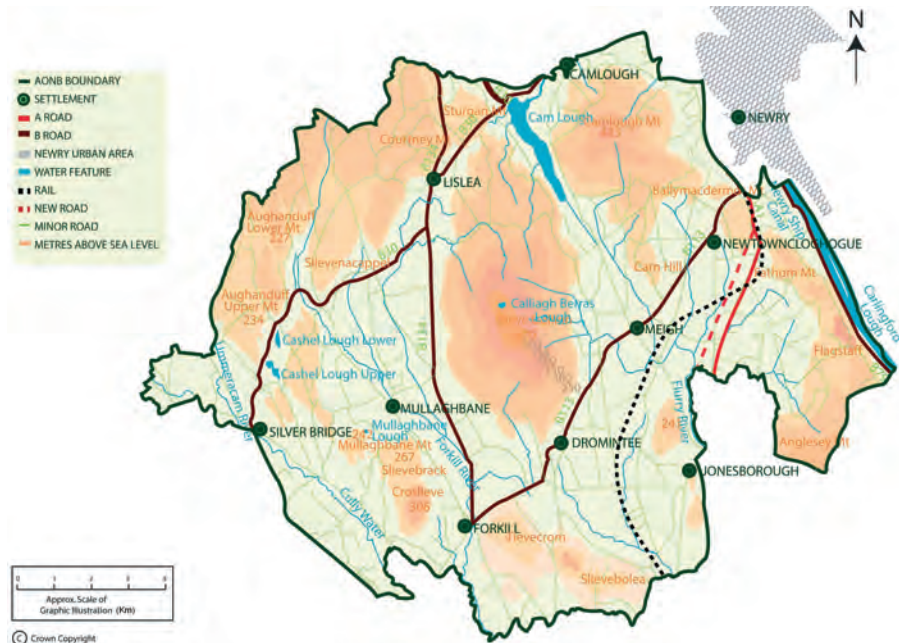


*The* current powers to designate AONBs are derived from the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985. Designation signals that the landscape is of importance to the whole of Northern Ireland and it allows NIEA to make proposals for:

- Conserving or enhancing the natural beauty and amenities of the area;
- Conserving wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena within it;

- Promoting its enjoyment by the public;
- Providing or maintaining public access to it.

Other public bodies are required to have regard to protecting the area's special features in their work. District Councils in Northern Ireland usually provide additional resources to manage an area designated as an AONB. There are nine designated AONBs in Northern Ireland, and a map of the Ring of Gullion AONB is shown below





## *Conas a bainistítear LSN i dTuaisceart Éireann* *How AONBs are managed in Northern Ireland*

**In** Northern Ireland, NIEA is responsible for the designation of AONBs and facilitates their management. However in practice, public bodies, conservation organisations, communities and landowners normally work together in AONBs to protect the landscape and to provide for countryside enjoyment.

In the Ring of Gullion, NIEA and Newry and Mourne District Council jointly fund the AONB officer. The AONB officer's work programme is aimed at enhancing the built, cultural and natural heritage of the area, and in increasing the opportunities for public enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB. A steering group has been convened for the Ring of Gullion AONB comprising statutory, community, recreation and environment sectoral interests in order to raise awareness of the need for management of the AONB and to facilitate inter agency co-operation.

AONB management plans provide an agreed framework for all stakeholders to work to. It is NIEA's policy, outlined in 'Shared Horizons', to have a management plan for every AONB. An important objective of AONB management plans is to retain

vibrant rural communities and traditional land management practices, as well as protecting and enhancing the landscape and providing opportunities for its study and enjoyment.

*Réimse an Phlean Bainistíochta  
Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn*

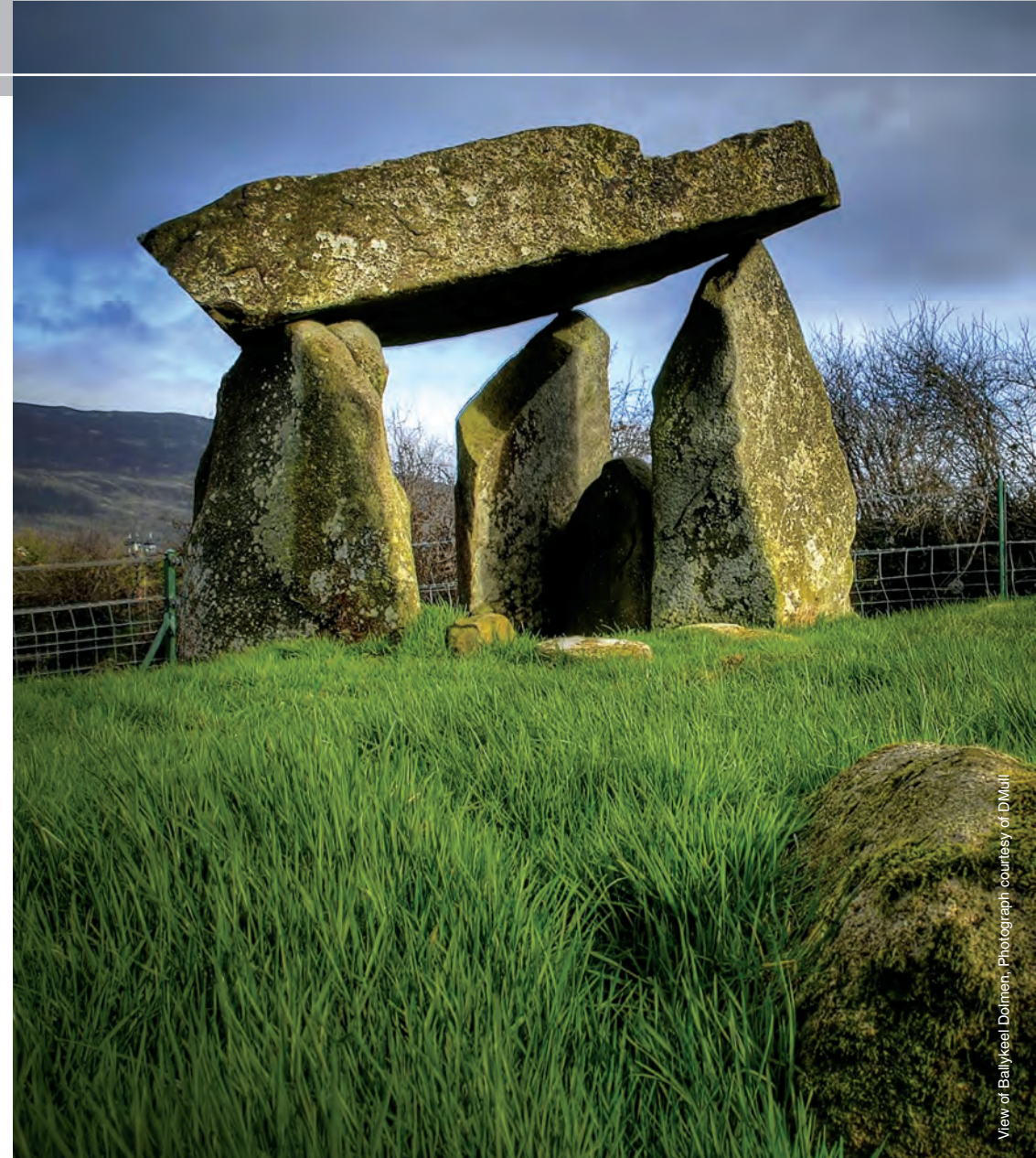
### **The Scope of the Ring of Gullion Management Plan**

The management plan outlines an agreed set of objectives and actions for the period 2011-2016 for the Ring of Gullion AONB. The action programme identifies what needs to be done and provides details of when it will be done and who will take responsibility for leading the action. In Northern Ireland, the legislation does not provide statutory status for management plans for AONBs. Instead they are implemented through voluntary agreement.

*Cé a bhfuil an Plean Bainistíochta ann dó?*

### **Who is the Management Plan for?**

This management plan is for the benefit of the Ring of Gullion AONB. Its success relies on all of those who live, work, plan for, develop and manage the area taking its special character into account when making decisions that will affect its future.



View of Ballykeel Dolmen, Photograph courtesy of DMull

## Plean Gníomhaíochta Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn 2011-2016 *The Ring of Gullion Action Plan 2011-2016*

*“The Ring of Gullion is regarded as the as the finest expression of a ring dyke on these islands.”*

**This** management plan, like the designation, aims to raise awareness and encourage a focus on the landscape - the beauty and distinctiveness of its natural features and cultural heritage, the opportunities to derive benefit from this landscape and it's capacity to accommodate change. The development of the management plan was overseen by a working group (see Appendix).

**Priorities are identified under three themes as follows:**

### *Maoirseacht LSN*

#### **Looking after the AONB**

- Protecting the natural environment by maintaining biodiversity, encouraging participation in agri-environment schemes and encouraging broadleaved woodland planting.
- Maintaining the cultural landscape by mapping rural heritage features, promoting the restoration of traditional farm buildings, developing guidance on design of villages and dwellings.
- Engaging the community in protecting the area by developing a deeper understanding of its special features.

### *I do chónaí nó ag obair i LSN*

#### **Living and Working in the AONB**

- Sustaining vibrant rural communities by seeking ways to bring derelict houses back into use as affordable accommodation.
- Encouraging 'safe routes' to schools and to village services.
- Promoting sustainable rural enterprise through advice and developing job skills in countryside management, environmental management and tourism and encouraging financial support for new and sustainable tourism businesses.
- Safeguarding the cultural heritage of the AONB through assisting the local community to retain, invest in and celebrate knowledge of its history, culture and traditional skills.

### *Ag tabhairt cuairt ar agus ag baint sult as an LSN*

#### **Visiting and Enjoying the AONB**

- Encouraging visitors to be aware of the special qualities of the Ring of Gullion AONB through provision of more accessible information.
- Providing a warm and informed welcome for visitors at a major visitor centre at Slieve Gullion Courtyard; also by installing AONB boundary signs, signs on special interest

trails and a map of the AONB aimed at visitors.

- Preparing masterplans for a wider range of visitor facilities to help provide an excellent visitor experience.
- Increasing opportunities for off road walking, cycling and horse riding, developing a 'Ring Dyke Walk' and

For others, the co-operation of several agencies will be required to attain the target. In the plan below, we have sought to identify which agency will take responsibility for leading on implementation, will coordinate the input of the other stakeholders and will report progress on this action to the AONB Management Group. Those playing a

*“People have lived in the area for over 6,000 years and have expressed their feelings about the landscape through the ages in local literature, poetry, music, folk history and art. This tradition still survives today”*

providing more opportunities to visit the area by public transport.

### *Gníomhartha agus Freagrachtaí*

#### **Actions and Responsibilities**

The next section of this report sets out the Action Plan to manage the AONB over the next 5yrs. There is no one organisation or individual that can implement this action plan as a whole. Action will be required by all stakeholders, individually and collectively, if the targets are to be achieved. For some proposed actions, implementation will be the responsibility of only one agency.

supporting role are shown in italics. For one or two of the actions, the relevant stakeholder will be identified during the implementation process.

### *Feidhmiú*

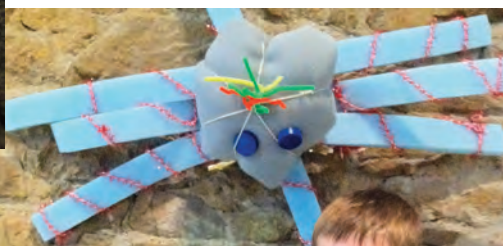
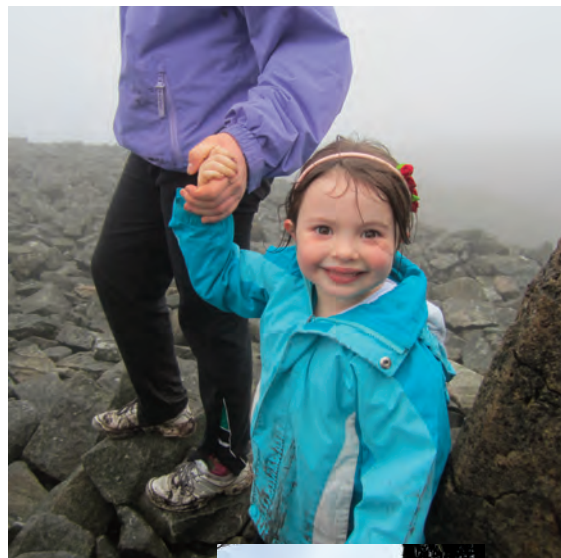
#### **Implementation**

Work on the implementation of the plan has begun with many actions completed, ahead of schedule or ongoing. Full details on the progress of projects against the AONB Management Plan can be found at: [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org).



*Imeachtaí agus Gníomhaíochtaí*  
*Events and Activities*

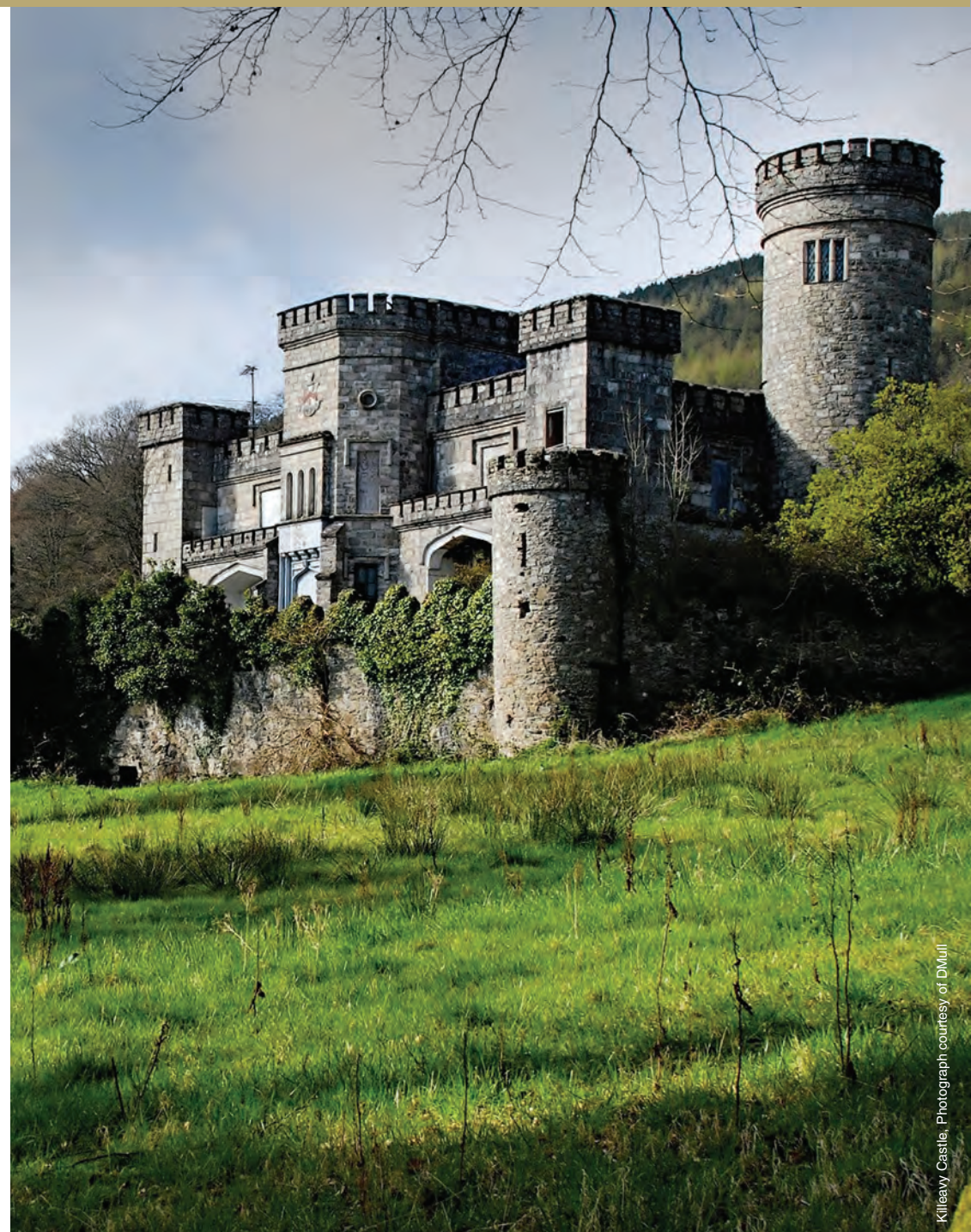
*"...very happy 6 year old, it's a great family day out.  
 Making tombs and cairns was our favourite."*





## *Appendix - Members of the Ring of Gullion AONB Management Plan Working Group.*

| <b>Organisation</b>  | <b>Name</b>  |
|--|--|
| Clanrye Group  | Liam Devine  |
| Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN)                                   | Caro-lynn Ferris   |
| DARD Forest Service<br>DARD Rural Development (South Branch)                       | Mark Parker<br>John McDermot   |
| Department of the Environment (DOE), Northern Ireland<br>Environment Agency (NIEA) | Sandi Howie<br>Colum McDaid<br>Ken Neill                                       |
| Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)<br>Countryside Management   | Anne McKeown<br>Aidan Kerr   |
| Department of the Environment, Planning Service                                    | Tony Donnelly  |
| Department for Regional Development (DRD), Roads Service                           | Ned Shannon<br>Ivor Johnston   |
| Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI)                                       | Patrick McKeever<br>Kirstin Lemon  |
| Newry and Mourne District Council (NMDC), Members                                  | Colman Burns<br>Geraldine Donnelly<br>Anthony Flynn                            |
| Newry and Mourne District Council, Officers  | Jonathan McGilly<br>Michelle Boyle<br>Darren Rice<br>(Ring of Gullion Officer) |
| Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association                                | Lawrence Nugent  |
| Northern Ireland Housing Executive   | Jim Bagnall  |
| Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)  | Stephen Bill   |
| South Armagh Farmers Group   | Sean Quinn   |
| Ulster Farmers Union   | Robert Cummings  |



Killeavy Castle, Photograph courtesy of DMull





View of Slieve Gullion, Photograph courtesy of DMull

*Teagmhálacha*  
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