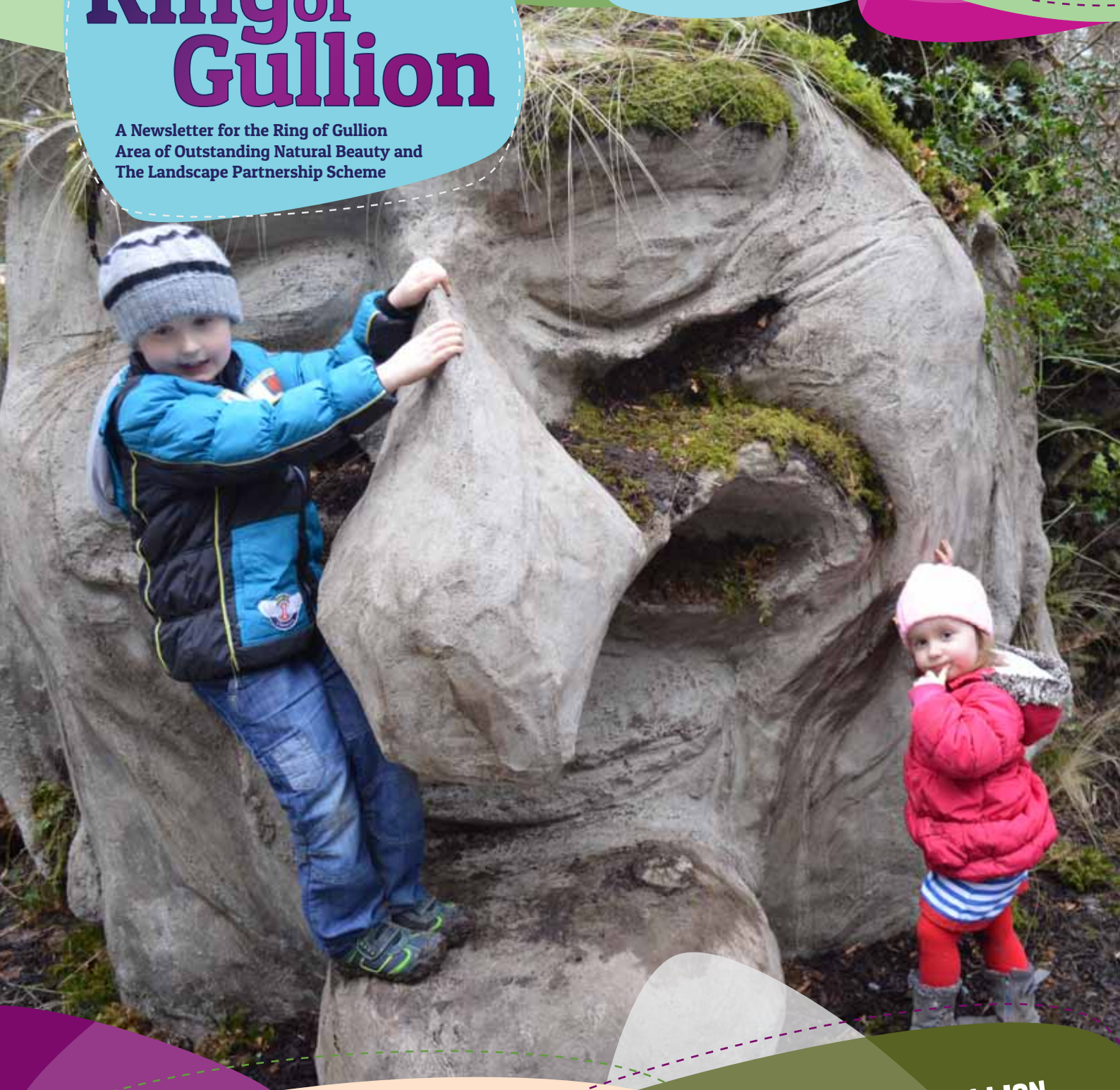


The Ring of Gullion

A Newsletter for the Ring of Gullion
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and
The Landscape Partnership Scheme

ISSUE 7
Spring 2015



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BECOME A RING OF GULLION AMBASSADOR.
SPRING SERIES FARM TALKS.**

Walking Historic Trails

With walking in the news as the best way to a healthy old age, a conversation with Eddie Quinn, 91 years young, was bound to turn to the way people travelled over the years.



Eddie Quinn

Our favourite tale tells of the three men who held the title of Lock-keeper at Victoria Locks over the last century, Jimmy O'Neil, Terry O'Hanlon and Micky Fearon, all farmers on Flagstaff, as was Eddie. Traditionally Flagstaff was used as a signalling point for boats approaching Carlingford telling them if the tide was right to get to Newry and this tradition continued after the building of the sea canal and Victoria Locks with the lock-keepers checking the state of the tide from Flagstaff and walking down twice each 24 hours to manually operate the gates. This walk took them down the vertiginous, 1:5 forested slopes along a zig zag trail that became known as the Lock Keepers' Pad and as the tide could as easily be right in the middle of the night as during daylight hours, this walk often took place in the pitch black.

Eddie also shared other amazing stories: the route worked by Joey Sullivan the Cloghogue postman whose round took him, by sit up and beg bike, the whole way through Fathom, through the woods to Flagstaff, Clontygora and Killeen. And finally the most poignant route, that traversed by coffins up and down the hills to the church at Killeen carried on the back of a relay of pall bearers led by a man with a rope over his shoulder tied to the coffin so it did not slip as they climbed the hills.

Paths such as the Lock Keepers' Pad and the routes of the pall-bearers all but disappeared when the need for them disappeared. But new needs are arising: the need for fitness, the need for tourism and leisure facilities and these old routes could be the key to a new network of footpaths and trails with visitors and locals alike walking through history to fitness and fun. Keeping alive the old stories in the names of the new trails we are hoping to reinstate the Old Lock keepers' Pad up from Victoria Lock to Flagstaff viewpoint and plan for work to start shortly.



Building Peace Through the Arts Bessbrook Pond Public Arts Commission

Know ye the fame of the
brilliant little river,
Which floweth through Bessbrook
from moorland and lea,
Between blue waving flax-flowers
and rushes which quiver,
He runs his short course
from the lake to the sea.



Photo:
Laurentia McVerry

DEVELOPING DERRYMORE FOR THE COMMUNITY

A partnership between Friends of Derrymore, National Trust, and Newry and Mourne District Council are looking for your views on any future development proposals for the Derrymore Estate.

On Wednesday 25th March in Bessbrook Community Centre Edward Mason from the National Trust will give a short talk on the history of the house and the estate, followed by a facilitated discussion on proposals for developments of the house and estate for the local community.

The partners encourage everyone to come along and have their say.

For further information contact: enterprisedevelopment@newryandmourne.gov.uk

This is the opening verse of "The Ballad of Camlough River", by James N Richardson, which was used as inspiration when designing the sculpture for the mill pond.



This opening verse sets the scene of the origins of Camlough river. The river that flows from Camlough lake, born of fire and ice, to be harnessed at Bessbrook pond to power the mill in Bessbrook, which in turn drove the local economy, forging communities and a social scene that survives to this day.

Key to this all is the flax plant. Without it, the river may have ran its course to the sea largely unmentioned. The production,

processing and eventual weaving of the fibre from this plant is why the river rose to fame. The geography of the area, the quality of the water and the ability to grow flax locally, conspired to grow the linen industry in the locality of Bessbrook.

The flax plant and flower is the form used in the design of the proposed sculpture for Beesbrook pond. It will consist of a single stem of flax rising up 6 meters from the water, to be produced in stainless steel. The flower is to be mirror finished in a blue PVD coating to resemble the actual colour of a flax flower; which would have been common place in the local area in times past.

The artwork will also have a woven pattern fabricated into its structure representative of the linen industry which used the flax as its raw material. This will also be used to form the basis of a community project to be undertaken with local schools that highlights the woven and intertwined nature of different communities within the area. Reminding each other of the common ground of a shared history and heritage.

Camlough Public Arts Commission

The element of water is one of Camlough's key assets which will be marked through a new public sculpture, entitled Conflux, outside the village. The 4m high artwork expresses the dynamic energy and complexity of the natural water cycle from cloud to lough, from river to mill pond and its eventual evaporation. The starting point for this concept was taken from a children's drawing made during an initial community engagement workshop. The work will use a spectacular visual effect created by shaping and layering of stainless steel mesh into the form of an evolving cloud that represents the water cycle. Placed within a rectangular mesh container, it is mounted onto a stainless steel base with lines of Richardson's Ballad of Camlough. The upper surface of the base, like an additional in-ground element, is forged into rippled water texture. For passing traffic, the mesh creates a moiré effect of the cloud during daytime, while internal lighting creates spectacular illuminations of the cloud at night. The work was designed by West Cork-based sculptor Holger Lonze and is currently being fabricated by Graepel Ltd. together with sculptor Don Cronin in Co. Cork to be installed in June.



GIANT'S LAIR

The most ambitious children's arts project commissioned in Northern Ireland has almost completed at Slieve Gullion and is set to become a landmark cultural attraction for the island of Ireland.

The Giant's Lair, is an innovative magical living storybook devised through a trail of intertwined fairy house and arts features creating a childhood land with dragons, giants and fairies inspired by legend and mythical folklore on over a mile of woodlands at Slieve Gullion forest park.

As an enhancement to the project, a collection of children's storybooks is being developed that will tell of the adventures of some of the many little people that live on the mountain.



The project, which is led by Sticky Fingers Arts, in partnership with Newry and Mourne District Council, is been funded by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and NMDC and is the largest investment for a childrens arts project in Northern Ireland.

"The Giant's Lair is the combination of a number of different projects that have been devised at Slieve Gullion over the years by Sticky Fingers working with local children and Newry and Mourne District Council. The combination of using the arts and the woodlands to create a high quality play facility for children is a perfect and natural combination. The project also is a way of promoting the mythology and natural heritage of Slieve Gullion and south Armagh in a positive way and will open the area to a new generation of visitors creating much needed revenue to the local business community. The Giant's Lair is a natural addition to Sticky Fingers portfolio and the interpretation of magical children's fairytales are a natural medium for Sticky Fingers to work with, providing plenty of material to create a very special and enchanted environment for children to play"

Grainne Powell, Chief Executive - Sticky Fingers Arts.

It is hoped that the Giants Lair will officially open to the public in time for the Easter Holidays 2015. It will, no doubt, be a very popular experience for local people and tourists alike and will help to put Slieve Gullion firmly on the Irish tourist map as a must visit destination for young and old alike.

BARN OWL PROJECT

You can help halt the decline of this important species

With a current estimate of fewer than 50 breeding pairs across the country, the Northern Ireland population of this fascinating farmland bird has been in steady decline since the 1960's. With so few known nest sites in NI a vital component of barn owl conservation is discovering barn owl nest sites.

Monitoring young barn owls and the parent birds can help us assess how the population is doing and make changes to our landscape that can help bring this iconic bird back from the brink.

Signs you may have a barn owl ...

Apart from actually seeing or hearing a barn owl you can tell they are present through other signs:

- Droppings - barn owl droppings are mainly white. When they dry, they leave a white chalky substance similar to white-wash.
- Pellets - barn owls regurgitate the undigested remains (mainly bones, fur and teeth) of their prey in the form of a dark coloured pellet that is often the size of your thumb.
- Feathers - the presence of barn owl feathers indicates that the site was visited between May and November which is usually when barn owls moult.
- Barn Owl Nest Sites
Barn owls can nest in buildings (usually derelict and 2-storey), mature trees with hollow cavities and rock crevices on quarry faces.

If you see or hear a barn owl, or see any of the above evidence of barn owls, please get in touch with Ulster Wildlife.

Telephone: **028 4483 0282**

Email: barnowls@ulsterwildlife.org



BESSBROOK TRAM

The restoration of the Bessbrook tram is the first of many projects which will be undertaken through the £1.4million Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), NIEA and Newry and Mourne Council. Bessbrook used to have its own hydro-electrically powered tramway which was only the second such tramway in all of Ireland. It opened in 1885 and it was used to transport workers, as well as raw materials and finished goods, between the mill and Newry.

It was cleverly designed, because the wheels of the tramway could run on both road and rail, so it wasn't necessary to build a line through Newry. The tramway remained in operation until 1948

The tram above has spent its last 60 years in a field at Sturgan Brae hiding behind a bus shelter. Now, it is set to receive some much needed attention as it is diligently restored over the next 18 months in partnership with Southern Regional College at Greenbank. The first milestone in this challenging project was moving the tram to the college for the restoration work to begin. It was a dramatic site as the tram was lifted from the field and loaded up for its journey to the college.

Martin McDonald from the HLF Committee was on hand to watch the proceedings. "HLF were delighted to fund the ambitious Landscape Partnership in the Ring of Gullion so it's great to see the projects starting to happen. Using local skills and expertise to restore an important piece of local heritage seems an excellent way to get moving."

Once restored, the tram will be displayed publicly. People can follow the restoration project online at www.ringofgullion.org.

RING OF GULLION TAKES ON LONDON

Trad on the Tube!

The Ring of Gullion Traditional Arts Partnership took part in a Musical and Cultural Exchange in London in January, through the £1.4million Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), NIEA and Newry and Mourne District Council.

Teenagers from the Ring of Gullion Traditional Arts Partnership performed traditional Irish music in a series of impromptu gigs that included the London Tube, Big Ben, the top deck of a bus and Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square. St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace in Bishopsgate, also staged a concert: Women in Unison.

Des Murphy chair of the Landscape Partnership Scheme said, "We seized the opportunity given to us from our visit to the St. Ethelburgas Peace & Reconciliation Centre, London, to showcase our outstanding talented young musicians from the Ring of Gullion. The response from the surprised audience to our young musicians on the London tube, an open top tour bus, and also at Big Ben and Trafalgar Square was priceless!"

The project aims to enable young musicians to visit other music groups in order to: develop their repertoire of tunes from different areas; be exposed to a variety of musical styles so as to enhance the development of their own musical style; meet and forge relationships with other young musicians; experience and foster respect for music from the other traditions and cultures of Northern Ireland as well as other cultures from different countries and equip them with the skills and personal capabilities to deal with the challenges of living in an increasingly diverse and complex society.

Aislinn Fegan, a student from the Sacred Heart in Newry said, "An extraordinary musical experience and opportunity shared with kind and optimistic individuals! Definitely a trip that I will remember all my life due to the impromptu sessions all over London with the tunes on the tube being my highlight of the weekend!"



 [Ring_of_Gullion](https://twitter.com/Ring_of_Gullion)

 [RingOfGullion](https://www.youtube.com/RingOfGullion)

L to R;
Niamh Downey,
Bridín Ní Shuilleabháin,
Elaine O'Sullivan,
Aislinn Fegan and
Alana Flynn

RED SQUIRREL FEEDERS

The red squirrel group are using specially-designed and made feeders which are Northern Ireland Red Squirrel Forum (NIRSF) approved.

Feeders enable the group to set up new feeding points in the forests in the Ring of Gullion area.

The feeders enable controlled hygiene, which minimises the risk of spreading diseases, such as the deadly pox virus. This disease can blight the Red Squirrel species, wiping out a population. The metal feeders combat against attacks, by bigger animals trying to get the food. Wooden feeders would be destroyed by these animals, and also help the spread of disease, if contaminated.



A big thank you to the Southern Regional College Engineering Department students who made and donated two feeders and Myrddin Ruddock from Unicorn Containers Limited and Cathal Smyth who made the rest.

We would ask members of the public to not get too close to the feeders and keep children away from the feeders and the food inside. The feeders are quite heavy and if disturbed can fall off the tree. The food for the red squirrels does include peanuts but they are not suitable for human consumption.

To find out more about the Red Squirrel Group visit www.ringofgullion.org.

TRAIN TO BE A RING OF GULLION AMBASSADOR

The Ring of Gullion needs more Ambassadors and now you can get free training and lots of support to share your interest in our natural, built and cultural heritage and perhaps set up a part-time business.

Even if you would just like to give tours and presentations for your community, your school or other groups, this short Ring of Gullion Ambassador course will help you to build up your knowledge and stories and also give you the techniques, confidence and practical skills to lead a group as well as entertain them. The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership has commissioned specialist trainers, to deliver the courses in south Armagh and participants from this community are particularly welcome.

The Ambassador classes and site visits will run from 11th April until 9th June over a combination of Saturdays and weekday evenings). This course is open to everyone from young people hoping to improve their CV's and tourism businesses to retirees and people just wanting to try

something different. No previous qualifications or experience is required. On completion you will receive a First Aid Certificate, a Ring of Gullion Ambassador Certificate and have insurance to lead walks for your community. These can be a first step to further qualifications.

To find out more visit www.ringofgullion.org

Places will be limited so please register your interest as soon as possible, a £50 deposit is required, non-refundable if three or more classes are missed.

The Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 sets out growth targets to increase our visitor numbers to 4.5 million, the employment supported by tourism to 50,000 jobs, and the revenue generated by tourism to £1 billion for the Northern Ireland economy. This is a growth industry and there are many opportunities for guiding visitors, especially for anyone with a second language skill.

Knowing more about our heritage and passing on that knowledge is also of vital importance to communities and our sense of place. This course will help you to explore your heritage, build up a collection of stories and share them with your own community as well as visitors.

Slieve Gullion receives 4 Stars in NITB visitor grading scheme.

Slieve Gullion Forest Park has recently received a four star quality grading by NITB as a visitor attraction. A 4 star rating indicates an excellent standard of facilities and service and the grades are based on the standard of facilities and service provided to the visitor. Slieve Gullion was assessed on the play park, tourist information office, walks, café area, toilets as well as signage on the roads to the facility.

Research has shown there are benefits to having a good rating. Consumers value good star rating provided by tourist boards as they provide 1) reassurance to potential visitors from a recognised and respected organisation 2) an independent quality endorsement.

Work is already underway by council officials, staff at the courtyard, grounded and other voluntary groups to try and take the recommendations made by NITB on board to try and gain a five star rating over the next number of years.

Mayor Daire Hughes congratulated all the people involved with keeping Slieve Gullion to such a high standard and with the new Giant's Lair project opening in early 2015 he anticipates that the numbers visiting the area should keep on growing.



Volunteer Profile

What's your name?

Niall McAuley

Where are you from?

Killeen



Niall McAuley

How long have you been involved in volunteering in the Ring of Gullion?

2 years

Why did you choose to volunteer within the Ring of Gullion?

I enjoy working outdoors and wanted to help out in conserving our environment and history.

Can you tell us your favourite memory of volunteering?

The day we cleared the path along the river in Ravensdale. The path was overgrown and access wasn't great, we had removed a lot of Cherry Laurel and Rhododendron along the path and at the foot bridge. The path leads up to two waterfalls and is fantastic to see when they're in full flow! It was hard work but it was definitely worth it.

What do you like to do when you're not volunteering?

I enjoy photography and walking with the Gap o' The North Hill Walking Club.

If this sounds like you, get involved as a volunteer with the Ring of Gullion and Cooley AONBs!

Volunteering offers you a chance to make a real and visible difference to the wildlife and landscape; learn new skills, meet like minded people, discover habitats and heritage, and enjoy the outdoors. So, whether you have a skill you would like to share, or wish to learn something new, get in touch and we'll find a place for you or your group. All we ask in return is enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

Register with Alison Henderson at the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme on **028 308 61949** or info@ringofgullion.org.

You can also get in touch through



Ring.Of.Gullion



Ring_of_Gullion

TREE PLANTING OFFERS TO BRIGHTEN THE LANDSCAPE

Schoolchildren, youth groups and community groups throughout the country can apply online now for free trees for planting this November.

The offer is part of the Woodland Trust's Centenary Woods project – an ambitious UK-wide campaign to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War. The trees planted will be a lasting and peaceful tribute to the countless individuals who played a part in, or were affected by, the war.

Gregor Fulton, operations manager with the Woodland Trust, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for people to come together and create a peaceful and flourishing legacy to ancestors and communities who lived and died during the war.

"At the same time, the trees planted will help make schools and neighbourhoods greener and healthier, while providing much-needed homes for wildlife. We really hope that groups in the South Armagh area – from sports clubs to Scouts – will make the most of this unmissable offer and prepare to get planting this autumn."

Groups can choose between packs of 30, 105 or 420 saplings, depending on how much space they have to plant. There are different mixes of tree species to choose from too, including packs themed for autumn colour, wood fuel and wildlife.

Planting trees is the perfect way to help children and young people connect with and learn about nature, helping them become future guardians of the environment. And, according to the Woodland Trust, collective tree-planting efforts are particularly welcome in Northern Ireland, which ranks as one of the least wooded regions in Europe. The country has a mere 8 per cent woodland cover, compared to the European average of 44 per cent.

Find out more and apply online now for your pack at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/freetrees

Please apply as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. The packs will be delivered to successful applicants this November.

The tree packs have been generously funded by lead partners Sainsbury's, IKEA FAMILY, Yorkshire Tea, People's Postcode Lottery and Biffa Award; with funding also from WHSmith and Wilko.



Farmer Information Evenings

Events are open to all and include tea, coffee and biscuits. To make sure we have enough please let us know you are coming.

Register with Alison Henderson at the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme on **028 308 61949** or **info@ringofgullion.org**.

These events are in Partnership with DARDNI, HSENI, Woodland Trust, and Leitrim Development Company

24th March 7.30pm - 9.30pm **Farm Safety** **Camilla Mackay - HSE**
Crossmaglen - Community Centre

This workshop will address key areas to consider when setting up a farm diversification business; accessing grant aid i.e. Rural Development Programmes; alternative support available to advance farm diversification; and training programmes from CAFRE/DARD which could help farmers.

26th March 7.30pm - 9.30pm **Farm Diversification** **Siobhán Sheppard - DARD**
Forkhill Community Centre

This workshop will address key areas to consider when setting up a farm diversification business; accessing grant aid i.e. Rural Development Programmes; alternative support available to advance farm diversification; and training programmes from CAFRE/DARD which could help farmers.

30th March 8pm - 10pm **Renewables on the Farm** **David Trimble - DARD**
Newtownhamilton - Football Club Dundalk Road

This informal workshop will look at the economics of renewable energy on the farm and in the home.

31st March 7pm-9pm **Common Agricultural Policy Changes** **DARD**
Courtrooms Markethill

Find out more about the Common Agricultural Policy Changes from Roadshow DARD representatives.

14th April **Woodland Creation and Woodland Grants** **Gregor Fulton - Woodland Trust**

7.30pm - 9.30pm **Camlough - The Yellow Heifer**

Did you know 6 - 7 acres of trees will provide enough timber to heat the average farmhouse permanently? Come along if you are interested in advice relating to planting areas of your farm and timber harvesting skills.

21st April 7.30pm - 9.30pm **Social Farming** **Brian Smith - Leitrim Development Company**
Jonesborough - Carrickdale Hotel **Matthew McGreehan - Farmer**

Learn what 'Social Farming' is and hear first hand from one of the pilot farmers about the farm family experience of social farming.

What's on!

When	What & Where	Who
25th March 7.30pm - 9.30pm	Developing Derrymore House and Estate for the Community Bessbrook Community Centre	Friends of Derramore, National Trust and Newry and Mourne DC
9th April 10.30am - 4.30pm	Explore the Ring of Gullion by Coach Meet at Bagenal's Castle	Guided by Una Walsh
10th April 11.30am - 1.30pm	Explore the Ring of Gullion by Bike Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard	Guided by Pat Kilroy
11th April - 9th May	Ring of Gullion Ambassador Training	Check www.ringofgullion.org for further details
11th April 10.30am - 3.30pm	Explore the Ring of Gullion by Foot Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard	Guided by Lisa Mulkerns and Therese Hamill
16th April 11am - 3pm	Photography Workshop Slieve Gullion Courtyard	Enda Flynn
18th April 11am - 3pm	The Big Spring Clean Check www.ringofgullion.org for further details	Alison Henderson
Saturday 25th April 11.30am	The Big Garden Bird Survey Slieve Gullion Forest Park	The British Trust for Ornithology
Saturday 25th April 11.35am - 1.30pm	Barn Owl Talk Slieve Gullion Forest Park	Ulster Wildlife
2nd May 5am - 7am	Dawn Chorus Walk Creggan Church of Ireland	Breffni Martin
2nd May - 31st July	Natural Heritage Training	Check www.ringofgullion.org for further details
Sunday 3rd May 10.30am	South Armagh Giro revisited Cycle Starts in Newtownhamilton	Newry and Mourne District Council
Sunday 3rd May 12pm	The Gullion Gallup - 10k Road Run Slieve Gullion Courtyard	Slieve Gullion Runners
Saturday June 6th	Crooked Lake Triathlon Camlough	Crooked Lake Triathlon Camlough
Every Saturday from 18th July until 5th September 10.30am - 4.30pm	Ring of Gullion Historical Coach Tours Meet at Bagenal's Castle	Guided by Una Walsh
1st August - 31st August	Ring of Gullion Lúnasa Festival	Check www.ringofgullion.org for further details

For even more events, to book and for more information check

www.ringofgullion.org



Ring of Gullion
Landscape Partnership



Northern Ireland
Environment
Agency

