













Become a Ring of Gullion Youth Ranger

Applications are now open for the final Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Youth Ranger Programme; this is a fantastic opportunity for 14–17 year-olds, to explore and learn about the Ring of Gullion during the summer holidays.

The Youth Ranger programme is running from 16th – 27th July, excluding the weekend, and applications are open from now until 5pm on Thursday 31st May 2018. As a Youth Ranger, you will spend two weeks exploring the Ring of Gullion, learning about the landscape and heritage of the area as you go on outdoor adventures. You will also help Partnership staff look after our wonderful and unique habitats through hands-on practical conservation.





By participating in the programme, you have the opportunity to gain valuable skills such as first aid, navigation and survival skills (useful for general camping and should the zombie apocalypse ever occur!). At the end of the programme, you will receive a bronze 50-hour Millennium Volunteer Award as well as an Explorer-level John Muir Award – great additions to your CV.

To participate in the programme you need to have a reasonable level of fitness, enthusiasm, willingness to have-a-go and of course, complete an application form. An application pack and full details about the programme is available for download from www.ringofgullion.org/jobs/

Alternatively, scan the QR code to download the pack directly to your phone or tablet. Applications are open from 1st March until 5pm on 31st May 2018.





Outdoor Recreation Development in Ring of Gullion – Opening of Infinity Swim Academy

A local family, immersed in water sports and open water swimming for generations, recently saw the realisation of a dream with the official opening of its swim school. Three brothers, Padraig, Martin and Sean Mallon, are behind the brand new Infinity Swim Academy on the Camlough Road in Bessbrook. The academy is set to provide a whole range of water-based activities, classes and swimming lessons for all ages and abilities.

With lots of collaboration with local schools and groups, the Infinity Swim Academy looks set to be an innovative swim centre with an emphasis on fun and nurturing a love of swimming and water-based activities for the entire community. The Ring of Gullion Partnership would like to send their warmest congratulations to the new Swim Academy.

If you have an outdoor recreation group or business in the Ring of Gullion that you would like to tell everyone about, contact the Ring of Gullion Partnership to get into the next Newsletter.

Ring of Gullion Cultural Funding Success in 2017

In 2017, three projects in South Armagh were successful in their funding applications to the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Co-operation with Northern Ireland Scheme. This scheme offers funding support for small, self-contained projects, which seek to enhance, celebrate or commemorate the artistic, cultural, musical, film or heritage of the Island of Ireland on a North/South basis.

The Co-operation with Northern Ireland Scheme provides a platform for cultural exchanges and joint projects from organisations on both sides of the border and has produced some fascinating and valuable projects over the years. The three South Armagh projects were:

Castleblayney Community Enterprise CLG and Cullyhanna Community Association – Received €10,000 to establish and enhance the shared culture of Castleblayney and Cullyhanna through music, heritage and folklore over the summer of 2017.

St Mary's Primary School, Mullaghbane and Scoil Eoin Pól, Loch an Iúir Donegal — Received €4,500 for a Digital History Project which has brought both communities together while exchanging skills between the generations. The multigenerational, cross-community group worked together to produce a series of six short films based on historical sites in the area.

The films were showcased at the Michael J Murphy Winter School in November. The stories can be viewed by scanning the QR codes placed at each historic site.

The Old Irish Goat Society – Received €1,700 to survey the feral goat population of Slieve Gullion. For full details of the survey, please read the 'Wild Goats of South Armagh' article on page 4.

The area also benefited from the Gallery of Photography Reframing the Border, a cross-border community-based arts initiative that had a workshop in Tí Chulainn, during the summer.

Camp Gullion

Camp Gullion is the first international summer camp to come to South Armagh. Running from the 1st–13th July 2018 (inclusive), Camp Gullion will bring fifty primary and first-year secondary school children from Barcelona to the Mullaghbane area where, with fifty local children of the same age, they will participate in a two-week language exchange programme.

The camp is based between Tí Chulainn and the new Blue Bell Lane Glamping Centre, *Tullymacreeve*, Mullaghbane, where the Catalan children will stay. Activities will take place in Mullaghbane village and the wider Ring of Gullion area. The goal of the camp is to provide a safe, secure environment for all the children to learn from each other, including each other's languages, and to showcase the local culture, history, traditions, sports, music and dance to an international audience.

The local children will be proud ambassadors of the area as they interact with the Catalan children, sending them back to Barcelona with new friendships and with a vision of South Armagh as vibrant, dynamic and deeply proud of its history.

Camp Gullion invites all children from the South Armagh area (aged 10–13) to be part of this innovative experience. Local children will be able to teach the visitors English while learning Spanish and Catalan from native speakers, all without having to leave home! For more information on how to sign up to join the camp, please email Ryan Hamill on rhamill3@icloud.com and visit the website on www.campgullion.com

Calling all tourism providers, tour guides and Ambassadors

In partnership with Newry, Mourne and District Council, we are organising a Mountains, Myths and Maritime Tourism Industry day, on 9th April, in the Canal Court Hotel and Spa, Newry. The purpose of the day, which runs from 9.30am – 4.30pm, is to bring together the various aspects of the tourism industry from across the council region to network and learn about how to develop "experience" holidays.

There will be a chance to hear from and talk to experts from across Ireland who have already developed successful tourism experiences as well as to hear from our more local Ambassadors, who have used their training to advance or augment tourism businesses. There will also be an opportunity for local Ambassadors and tourism providers to have their say in what future training or support they would like from the Council.

For more information, contact Newry Visitor Information Centre on 028 3031 3170 or email newryvic@nmandd.org.





Photo credit © Linda Thompson

Gardening with Wildlife Course

Put the pesticide down and leave a few dandelions be. Come along to our Gardening with Wildlife course and learn how you can use native wildlife to your advantage.

On this 10-week practical course, you can learn how to:

- Feed your soil to feed your plants,
- Make free organic plant food,
- Create a successful compost heap,
- Make small, pretty wild patches to bring in all the gardener's wild friends
- Companion plant your vegetables with other helpful plants.

There will be plenty of goodies to take home to use in your garden.

The course will run on Tuesdays from 10th April to 12th June, at the polytunnel in Tí Chulainn, *Maphoner*, Mullaghbane. The cost of the course is just £50; however, volunteers who have built up over 75 hours volunteering with the Landscape Partnership will be offered this training for free, while those who have completed 35 hours will qualify for a 50 % reduction in fees.

Please visit the website www.ringofgullion.org/jobs/ or phone the office on +4428 3082 8594 for further information.



New Oriel Arts website orielarts.com

Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin's most recent project has been the establishment of the Oriel Arts website www.orielarts.com. The website is a rich source of information and performance and a thing of rare beauty. It took its own time to gestate.

"It arose out of research I published in 'A Hidden Ulster' 13 years ago," she says. "I'm an independent scholar, and it's the culmination of a process to reclaim and renew the tradition in Oriel, which had been forgotten. I felt I was the only person who could do it. It was a systematic programme of work to bring this material back to the mainstream tradition, so the musicians and singers could go to the sources and sing and play music from the Oriel tradition, which had been forgotten."

Oriel is a region that straddles the borders of Armagh and Louth, and unlike Sliabh Luachra or Donegal, its music has existed below the radar for too long, Ní Uallacháin believes.

One local group, the Ring of Gullion Traditional Arts Partnership, have been very lucky to be able to access the "Oriel Arts Project" and in particular tunes from the Donnellan and McGahon collections and have been actively sharing these tunes with the musicians in their classes. Their singing tutor is one of the artists involved in the Oriel Arts Project and is teaching some of the songs from the project in her classes.

The Ring of Gullion Partnership also sends its warmest congratulations to Pádraigín Ní Uallachaín on being awarded the Outstanding Contribution to Traditional Music Award at the 2018 TG4 Gradam Ceoil Awards.

Wild Goats of South Armagh

The Old Irish Goat Society, based in Mayo, were brought in to survey the feral goat population of Slieve Gullion to find out if they are descended from the Old Irish Goats and to determine how many goats are living there.

The Old Irish Goat is Ireland's indigenous, landrace breed of goat. The term 'landrace' refers to the fact that the kind has been naturally shaped by the Irish landscape and climate since its arrival, approximately 5,000 years ago, in the Neolithic Age.

The survey found that a proportion of our feral goats are descended from the original Old Irish stock; determined by their build, features, coat length and colouring patterns. The Slieve Gullion goats are therefore a vital part of the remaining native, landrace population on the island of Ireland and as such, deserve to be conserved and used locally for the valuable heritage resource that they are.

To that end, we are working with the Old Irish Goat Society to find out how the area can make the most of these amazing animals and their heritage. The Old Irish Goat Society is working

with historians in the Ring of Gullion to add to the rich cultural heritage tapestry of the Old Irish Goat and the people who have managed them over the years. Some of this research was shared by Ray Werner, an expert on rare breeds from the Old Irish Goat Society, at the Michael J. Murphy Winter School. Attendees were treated to tales of how goats were collected, on foot, from Connemara and West Mayo, and brought to Slieve Gullion before being taken on to Scotland, Wales and even the south coast of England, accompanied the whole way by their herders! For the full presentation and further information on the Wild Goats of South Armagh project visit www.ringofgullion.org/projects/the-old-irish-goats-of-south-armagh/.



What is a UNESCO Global Geopark?

Some local residents may be aware that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is moving forward with plans to establish a UNESCO Global Geopark in the three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the Newry, Mourne and Down District; these are the Mourne Mountains, the Ring of Gullion and Strangford & Lecale. However, many people will be wondering what is a UNESCO Global Geopark?

UNESCO Global Geopark

'Geopark' is not short for 'geological park'. 'Geo' comes from the Greek word for earth. A Geopark is about all the aspects of an area's heritage — wildlife, history, archaeology, the built environment, and the intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular.

At present, there are 127 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 35 countries.

Why is UNESCO accreditation important?

UNESCO Global Geoparks promote sites of international heritage value and are the basis of local sustainable development. The purpose of a UNESCO Global Geopark is to explore, develop and celebrate the links between that geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritage.

Proposed UNESCO Global Geopark Sites

The Geopark is made up of a series of existing sites within the AONBs. These sites already have public access and facilities eg Slieve Gullion Forest park. The Geopark status will enable us to market these sites together under one label and should help us to get funding to improve them.

Why set up a UNESCO Global Geopark here?

The area has an outstanding heritage, and several organisations, communities and individuals wish to make the most of this asset. In the dramatic volcanic landscapes of the Ring of Gullion, the high granite peaks of the Mournes and the rolling drumlins of Strangford Lough there is so much to explore.

The UNESCO Global Geopark brand does not impose any restrictions on planning or development. It works with local landowners, businesses and communities to use the natural heritage as a tool for sustainable tourism, economic development and better involve its people in their landscape.

One aim is to increase the prosperity of the area, not least through the promotion of sustainable tourism opportunities based on an improved understanding both by residents and visitors of the natural and cultural heritage.



Benefits

The proposed UNESCO Global Geopark has the potential to make a significant difference to the people living in the district. The UK sites are part of a growing international network of UNESCO Global Geoparks.

If successful, the UNESCO Global Geopark brand will develop sustainable tourism that generates economic benefits, while providing recreational opportunities and increased awareness of the area's natural assets.

Typical activities in a global geopark include the development of walking and cycling trails, the training of local people to act as guides, provision of information signage, and the development of visitor centres. The ultimate aim of a UNESCO Global Geopark is to enhance the economy and bring enhanced employment opportunities for the people who live, work and visit there.

What is Geotourism?

'Geotourism' is defined as landscape-based tourism that sustains or enhances the natural character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents. It builds on a destination's 'sense of place', to emphasise the distinctiveness of its locale and benefit visitors and residents alike.

Is there any legal status attached to the label UNESCO Global Geopark?

'UNESCO Global Geopark' is not a legislative accreditation. UNESCO Global Geopark accreditation does not imply restrictions on any activity inside a UNESCO Global Geopark where that activity complies with existing legislation.

While Geoparks have a role to play in the protection of geological heritage; they do this by working with existing designations, and place no restrictions on economic activity and development. Geoparks have no town and country planning functions and are mostly based in smaller defined sites, for example, the Silent Valley.

Is it a case of once a UNESCO Global Geopark, always a UNESCO Global Geopark?

A UNESCO Global Geopark is given this accreditation for a period of four years after which the functioning and quality of each UNESCO Global Geopark is thoroughly re-examined during a revalidation process.

What next?

The programme of work towards developing a functioning UNESCO Global Geopark has been initiated with a plan to submit a successful bid to UNESCO by November 2019.



Footsteps of the Celts New Coach Tours Launched

In 2018 Una Walsh, our local guide, will be providing two new coach tours to celebrate the turning of the seasons, marking the start and finish of the traditional Celtic summer. The tours will take place on 1st May and 1st November.

The first tour celebrates Lá Bealtaine, the official beginning of summer in the Celtic Calendar, it is a cross-quarter day, halfway between the spring equinox and the summer solstice. The celebration of Beltaine is a rural pre-Christian tradition which saw communities come together to revel in the passing of a long winter of isolation and to prepare for the hard work of the rest of the year. The word's origin is in the old Irish 'Bel Taine' meaning bright fire. Celts believed the sun was held prisoner during winter months only to be released each spring to rule the summer sky, and they celebrated this mythic release with fire ceremonies and a huge feast to mark the occasion. Rituals were performed to protect the cattle, crops and people, and to encourage growth.

The second tour takes place on Samhain which is the Celtic New Year and literally translates as "the end of summer" It was a time for reflection and was the opening of the dark half of the year. It predates the tradition of Halloween but has links with death as it was the time when animals were slaughtered and the meat preserved to feed the community through the long winter.

Both tours will visit Dorsey, Gates of Ulster to the royal seat of Ulaid and will journey through the breath-taking landscape tracing the pagan story as it is absorbed into a Christian setting. Every peak and valley carries a story, and our Celtic Roots are near the surface influencing the human dramas that soak the hills of South Armagh.

Tours will include interactive workshops in Libby's Tearoom in Silverbridge. In May the workshop will be an exploration of the Celtic Wheel, a beautiful themed garden which links traditional plantings and herbal lore in a lovely calm atmosphere. In November the workshop will be a demonstration of traditional Irish food preparation. Libby's is part of Finnegan's garden centre and serves tasty lunches and afternoon teas, time will be set aside to enjoy some delicious food here, but this is not provided as part of the cost of the tour. Please go to www.finnegansnursery.com/libbys-tearoom/ for menus, pricing etc.

Tickets Booking is essential through the Ring of Gullion website. Please note that these tours will start and finish in Crossmaglen.

Adults - £15 adult per tour

Concession - £12 per tour (16 & under, 60 & over and students with a valid student card)

Digging into our Past at 'The Gates of Ulster'

In partnership with Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), from Queen's University, Belfast, the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership is planning to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation at the site of the Dorsey, some say the true home of Ireland's most celebrated warrior; Cú Chulainn. There are going to be plenty of opportunities for the local community to be involved in "digging into our past"!

It has been suggested by some, that Dorsey may have been a fortified frontier post – the chief frontier post – of the Ulster kingdom whose capital was Emain Macha (Navan Fort). The Dorsey's peculiar plan and its actual position were due to the double purpose of controlling the Beala Mór an Feadha (Great Road of the Fews) and a second route over the ford at Drummil Bridge. This would have been during the period of Conor Mac Nessa and Cú Chulainn.

Our new project now aims to uncover hidden stories of the Dorsey; 'The Gates of Ulster' and learn about how people lived in Iron Age Ireland.

Work will start in April 2018 with a geophysical survey and then CAF will start the actual dig which will take two weeks, and it's at that point that we will want your help with the work! We want the local schools to sign up and come along, participate in the excavation, and help us uncover the past at this important local monument. We want your local community groups, your historical society, your friends, family or anyone who has an interest in the history of our area to come along and lend a hand as volunteers, or just to watch as the archaeologists uncover secrets that have remained a mystery for thousands of years. Get in touch to book a place for you or your school.

After the excavation is complete we will be rolling out a series of events to showcase how Iron Age people lived in Ireland. Watch out for 'Gates of Ulster' project updates.

Work to Start on Slieve Gullion Path

A contractor has been appointed to carry out the repair work on Slieve Gullion plateau path where the erosion scar has reached up to 10 metres in width in some places. Local stone will be excavated and bagged for transport by helicopter to the summit of the mountain. Some maintenance work on the lower paths is also due to start, and will be carried out by the ASCENT project path team.

The work should be complete by August 2018, and at no point will the paths on Slieve Gullion be closed. We just ask that walkers take extra care around the work areas, which will be clearly marked.

The path from the passage tomb to the lake is extremely wet and boggy, and damage to the protected surrounding habitat is getting worse. This project will mitigate erosion of Slieve Gullion Special Area of Conservation caused by recreational use, and raise awareness of sustainable repair techniques to profile best practice landscape management.

The project will repair degraded paths by using sustainable techniques to accommodate the existing high level of use and to provide for a predicted increase in footfall. This will allow restoration of the damaged habitat and will prevent future damage.

The works will be carried out to the high standards described in the Upland Pathwork Manual created by Scottish Natural Heritage. We will also be using local sheep fleece as a base to lay the path on, which will be made from glacial aggregate and stones from Slieve Gullion.

McGowan Ltd, the chosen contractors, have an impressive history of building sustainable upland paths in remote and sensitive areas, most recently on Slieve Liag.

You can follow the progress of the trail by visiting www. ringofgullion.org, signing up to our monthly email updates or by liking us on Facebook and Twitter, just search for Ring of Gullion AONB.





Newry, Mourne and Down set to host international ASCENT Partners

Every six months all the members of the ASCENT programme, with partners from five European countries, come together to review completed work and plan out the next six months; this April it's South Armagh and the Mournes turn to play host. The partners will first stay with Padraig and Sharon Carragher at Bluebell Lane, and Mary Toal at Tí Chulainn, before they move on to David Maginn's, Tory Bush Cottages in the Mournes.

Overall the ASCENT project is delivering at lightning speed:

- habitat surveys have been carried out on Slieve Gullion and Slieve Donard;
- a Strategic Path Review on Slieve Gullion is now complete;
- plans have been drawn for Slieve Gullion Path repairs;
- learning trips to Errigal and the Cuilcagh Boardwalk are finished and:
- repairs to the Glen River Path and the Mourne Wall have begun

One of the most significant actions to be carried out in this past six months was an Upland Management Ethics conference and workshop. The conference and workshop were held in November at the Tollymore National Outdoor Centre. It was attended by stakeholders from the ASCENT partner projects, as well as Mountaineering Ireland, Outdoor Recreation NI and representatives from local councils across Ireland, to name a few. The conference covered vital issues within upland recreation, such as the Cuilcagh Boardwalk and the sustainability of current principles of applied conservation.

What's on!

Uhan	Ula mila	Uhana
When	What	Where
March		
1st March = 31st May	Ring of Gullion Youth Rangers	Applications open www.ringofgullion.org/jobs
Tuesday 10th April - Tuesday 12th June 10am - 1pm	Gardening with Wildlife course www.ringofgullion.org/jobs	Tree nursery, Tí Chulainn, Maphoner, Mullaghbane
April		
Thursday 5th 10.30am - 16.30pm	Easter Heritage Coach Tour	Departs Bagenal's Castle, Ballynacraig, Newry
Saturday 7th 11.30am - 3pm	Easter Guided walking tour	Departs Tí Chulainn, Maphoner, Mullaghbane
Saturday 17th 10.00am - 2pm	Geopark Community Roadshow	Bessbrook
Saturday 17th 4pm -8pm	Geopark Community Roadshow	Crossmaglen
Saturday 21st 11am = 3pm	Volunteering Opportunity - Big Spring Clean	Slieve Gullion Mountain, Slieve Gullion Forest Park
May		
Tuesday 1st 10.30am = 4.30pm	Tracing the footsteps of the Celts – Beltaine Guided bus tour	Departs Crossmaglen Community Centre, Crossmaglen
Wednesday 9th, 16th and 23rd sign on from 6.15pm for start at 7pm	NTC Aquathlon Series, 750m swim and 5K run.	Camlough Lake, for details go to www.newrytriathlon.com
Saturday 12th 11am - 3pm	Volunteering Opportunity	Location to be confirmed
Saturday 26th 11am - 3pm	Volunteering Opportunity	Location to be confirmed
Every Saturday 19th May to 7th July	Back to Basics - Natural Skills Course	Red Branch Bushcraft, 163 Longfield Rd, Carrickastickan, Forkhill, BT35 9SE
Sunday 20th sign on from 9.15am, race start at 10.00am	Golden Ticket Tri-a-Tri , for details go to www.newrytriathlon.com	Camlough Lake
Saturday 26th - Tuesday 29th	HITtheWALL2018 - Open water swimming weekend, night-swimming and short and long course swims	https://www.active.com/ newry-down/water-sports/ swimming/hitthewall- 2018?int
June		
Saturday 2nd 10.30am = 4.30pm	Historical coach tours of the Ring of Gullion	Departs Bagenal's Castle, Ballynacraig, Newry
Saturday 9th 10.30am = 4.30pm	Historical coach tours of the Ring of Gullion	Departs Bagenal's Castle, Ballynacraig, Newry
Saturday 9th 11am - 3pm	Volunteering opportunity	Location to be confirmed
Saturday 9th	Crooked Lake Triathlon 2018 Entries open on 01/04/2018	Details on www.crookedlake.
Saturday 23rd 11am - 3pm	Volunteering Opportunity	Location to be confirmed
Saturday 30th June	Ceilidh at the Crossroads	Camlough

These details are correct at the time of printing, however changes can occur; please check the website for up to date information.

Crossmaglen Community Centre, O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9HG

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T - 028 308 28590

News in Brief

- HLF Consultation runs until 22nd March have your say here www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/news-features/wewant-hear-you-hlfs-future-direction-and-funding
- Lock-keepers' Pad work will start shortly on a new crossing point from Victoria Locks to the bottom of the Fathom forest leading to a sign-posted trail to the top of the forest. This trail will link up the new Greenway (opening in March) from Newry and enable walkers to link into the Ring of Gullion Way and the viewpoint and picnic site at Flagstaff.
- Newry Mourne and Down Council, in partnership with the National Trust and Friends of Derrymore continue to progress plans to regenerate Derrymore Demense and deliver a range of recreational improvements to the historic park. It is hoped to secure a financial package that will deliver a range of trails across the site, along with a new play facility, additional car packing and other site improvements. The project partners have strong aspirations to ensure the asset of Derrymore Demense is developed as a recreational facility, open and accessible to local communities, residents, families and groups.
- Two Ring of Gullion Youth Rangers, Divij and Ria Prajapati, recently received their 200-hour Millennium Volunteer Award at a glamorous award ceremony in Titanic Belfast on Wednesday 28th February. Both Divij and Ria have volunteered over 270 hours with the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership and Cancer Research UK. We are sure you join us in thanking them for their amazing contribution to the local community.
- Planning for this year's Lúnasa Festival is well under way; keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for updates.
- A Licence has been applied for to develop a new sensory trail at Slieve Gullion. The trail will link the walled garden with the Red Squirrel Safari and will consider all the senses and aim to create pockets or features of sensory experiences along the trail.
- Are you a local business in the Newry, Mourne and Down District area? Sign up today for the latest business support and funding information. Visit www. newrymournedown.org/business-support and click on the link to the NMD Business E-zine. This e-zine is currently sent out to over 2300 businesses within the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area.
- Do you run a local business? Or a community group with facilities like rooms to hire? Are you an artist, a selfemployed consultant or a food provider? If so, and you want to be paid to do work or provide services for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council you need to be registered on the council's electronic procurement service. Don't miss out on council contracts, this is a really simple process, see www.newrymournedown.org/ procurement-and-tenders for details on registration.













