

Outdoor Recreation Action Plan  
for South Armagh  
(Summary Document)  
June 2017

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI  
on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District  
Council and Ring of Gullion Partnership



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## FOREWORD

Please note that this report is not an exhaustive list of all current outdoor recreation within the South Armagh area. The results recorded are based on the information received through consultation with various organisations and local groups. Although every endeavour has been taken to ensure accuracy in mapping, some trails, sites, public land and activities may appear under-represented due to a lack of feedback or limited response.

This is a summary document of the main report which does provide a comprehensive picture of the status of current outdoor recreation and opportunities for future development which are incorporated into the final Action Plan.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) was commissioned by Newry Mourne and Down District Council (hereafter known as 'the Council') through the Ring of Gullion Partnership (ROGP) to develop an Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for South Armagh.

## 2. BACKGROUND

As stated in the project specification, the Ring of Gullion and the South Armagh area is lacking in recreation and access-related strategies compared to other parts of the Council area. Over the last few years a small community of outdoor recreation providers have developed and there is also a lot of potential for the development of new activities.

This study has been commissioned to:

- ensure that the area can maximise on the Council's plans to become the Outdoor Recreation Capital of Ireland
- spearhead action in the area to fit in with wider strategies
- recommend where notable investment in activity products should take place which would also be marketable for tourism
- assist the Council to deliver actions within the 'Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland – Our Great Outdoors' (2014) i.e.
  - Action 2C 'Ensure that full account is taken of outdoor recreation in any Management Plan for each AONB' – in this case the Ring of Gullion AONB Action Plan 2017 -2020
  - Action 3A 'Audit current hubs for outdoor recreation and identify geographical gaps and mechanisms to develop access and opportunities'

## 3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Plan is:

'To prepare a framework for the sustainable development, management and promotion of future outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities within the Ring of Gullion AONB and South Armagh region, accommodating both the needs of the local community and those visiting the area'.

In order to achieve the aim, ORNI was required to creatively engage with the outdoor recreation community to:

- Detail and GIS map the nature and extent of current outdoor recreation provision in the Ring of Gullion and South Armagh
- Identify the future opportunities for outdoor recreation in the Ring of Gullion and South Armagh
- Produce a 10-year Action Plan outlining delivery partners.

## 4. SCOPE

### 4.1 Study boundary

The study is defined as the Slieve Gullion DEA and the Ward of Fathom (See Figure 1). The area measures approximately 39,691 hectares and located within the jurisdiction of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.



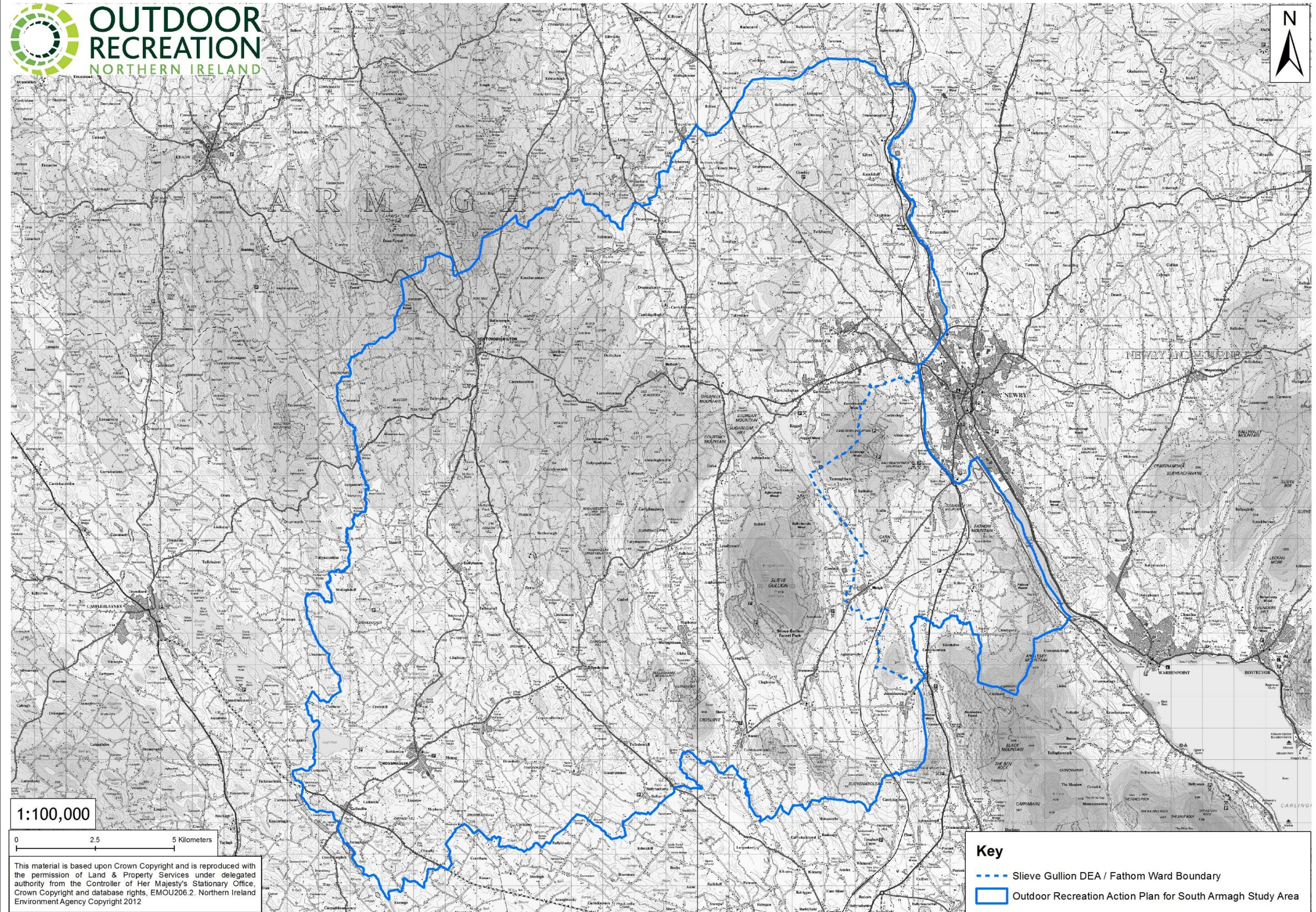


Figure 1: Study Area Boundary



## 4.2 Outdoor recreation activities

The following activities are covered within the scope of the study<sup>1</sup>. These activities are all dependent on sustainable access to the natural environment. In order to remain consistent with other outdoor recreation action plans developed within Northern Ireland, golf and hunting are not included.

Activities Covered		
Land	Water	Air
Adventure Racing	Angling	Aero-modelling
Archery	Boat charter & cruising	Gliding
Blokarting	Boat Trips	Hang Gliding/Paragliding
Bush Craft	Canoeing (including Kayaking and Slalom)	Micro-light Flying
Caving	Coasteering	Sky Diving / Parachuting
Clay Pigeon Shooting	Diving	
Climbing	Hovercrafting	
Cycling (On- and Off-Road)	Kite Surfing	
Fell Running	Jet – Skiing	
High Ropes/Ziplines	Rowing	
Horse riding	Sailing	
Kite Buggy	Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP)	
Mountain biking	Surfing	
Orienteering	Waterskiing/Wakeboarding	
Paintball & Combat	Windsurfing	
Rally & Off Road 4x4 Driving Schools		
Segway		
Walking		
Zorbing		

Table 1: Activities covered under the scope of the study

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<sup>1</sup> These activities were chosen as they are listed on OutdoorNI.com – the definitive guide to outdoor activities in Northern Ireland. This scope of activities has been utilised in the development of Outdoor Recreation Action Plans in other areas of Northern Ireland. It is recognised the ongoing development of outdoor recreation means this list is constantly evolving, therefore the study will reflect additional relevant activities as required.

The audit took into consideration both formal and informal activities, the definition of which can be seen in Table 2.

	<b>Formal</b>	<b>Informal</b>
<b>Walking</b>	Route signage in place and /or Interpretation panels present and / or Land manager encourage this activity	No route signage in place and /or No interpretation panels present and /or Land manager does not encourage this activity
<b>Cycling</b>	Route signage in place and /or Interpretation panels present and /or Land manager encourages this activity	No route signage in place and /or No interpretation panels present and /or Land manager does not encourage this activity
<b>Canoeing</b>	Part of a canoe trail and / or Formal access and egress and / or Land manager encourages this activity	Not part of a canoe trail and / or No formal access and egress and / or Land manager does not encourage this activity
<b>All other land based activities</b>	Formal facilities in place and / or Land manager encourages this activity	No formal facilities in place and / or Land manager does not encourage this activity
<b>All other water based activities</b>	Formal facilities in place and / or Land manager encourages this activity	No formal facilities in place and / or Land manager does not encourage this activity
<b>All other air based activities</b>	Formal facilities in place and / or Land manager encourages this activity	No formal facilities in place and / or Land manager does not encourage this activity

Table 2: Definition of formal and informal recreation

## 5. METHODOLOGY

This study was completed using the methodology outlined below:

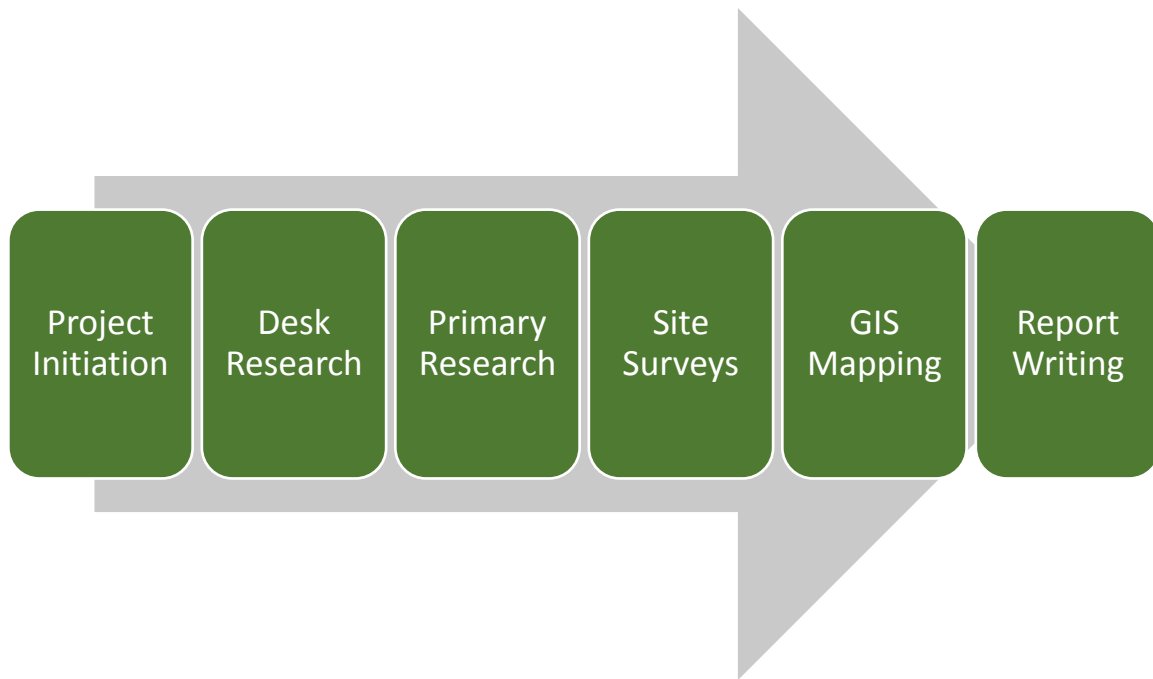


Figure 2: Methodology Overview

Detailed methodology is available within the main report.

## 6. CURRENT PROVISION

The following chapter summarises the current provision of all activities which take place in the study area. A brief outline of the current provision is detailed for each.

Desk and primary research did not identify current provision for the following activities previously listed within Section 4.2

Activities without current provision		
Land	Water	Air
Adventure Racing	Boat charter & cruising	Aero-modelling
Blokarting	Boat Trips	Gliding
Caving	Coasteering	Micro-light Flying
High Ropes/Ziplines	Diving	Sky Diving / Parachuting
Kite Buggy	Hovercrafting	
Segway	Jet – Skiing	
Zorbing	Kite Surfing	
	Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP)	
	Surfing	
	Windsurfing	

Table 3: Activities within the study without current provision

Both Triathlon and Open Water Swimming (including ICE Swimming) have been added to the original list as outlined within Section 4.2.



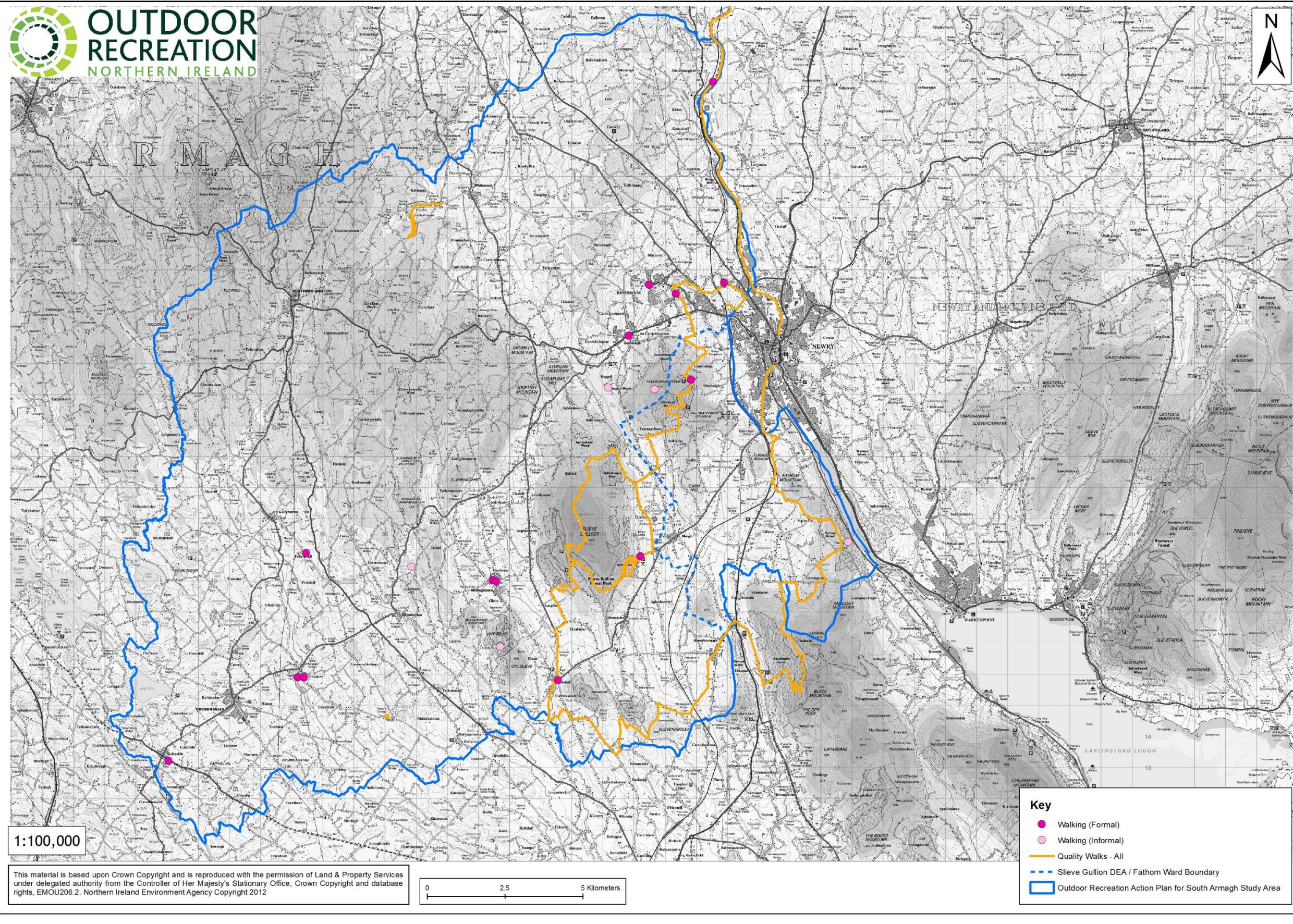


Figure 3: Current Provision Walking



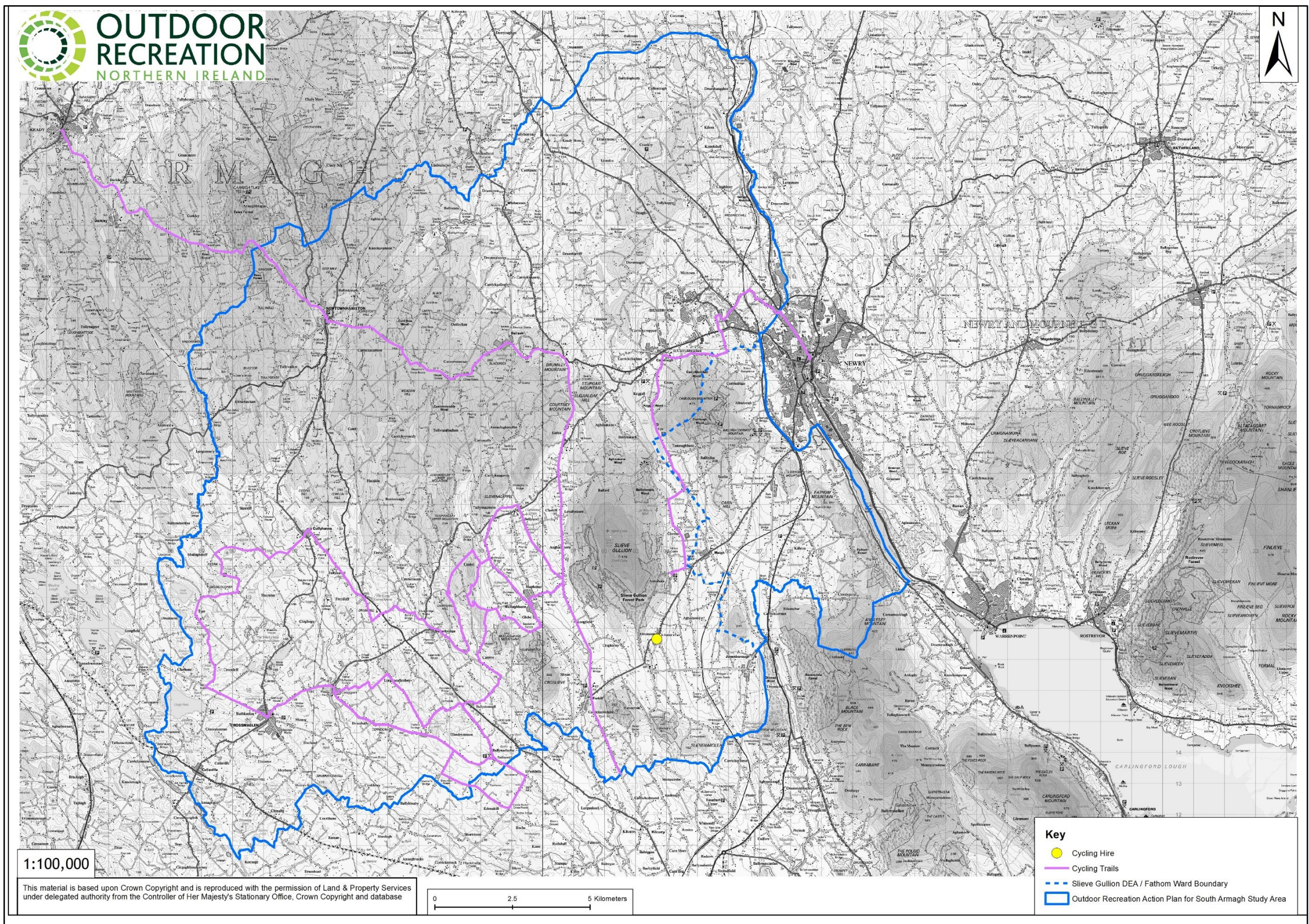


Figure 4: Current Provision Cycling



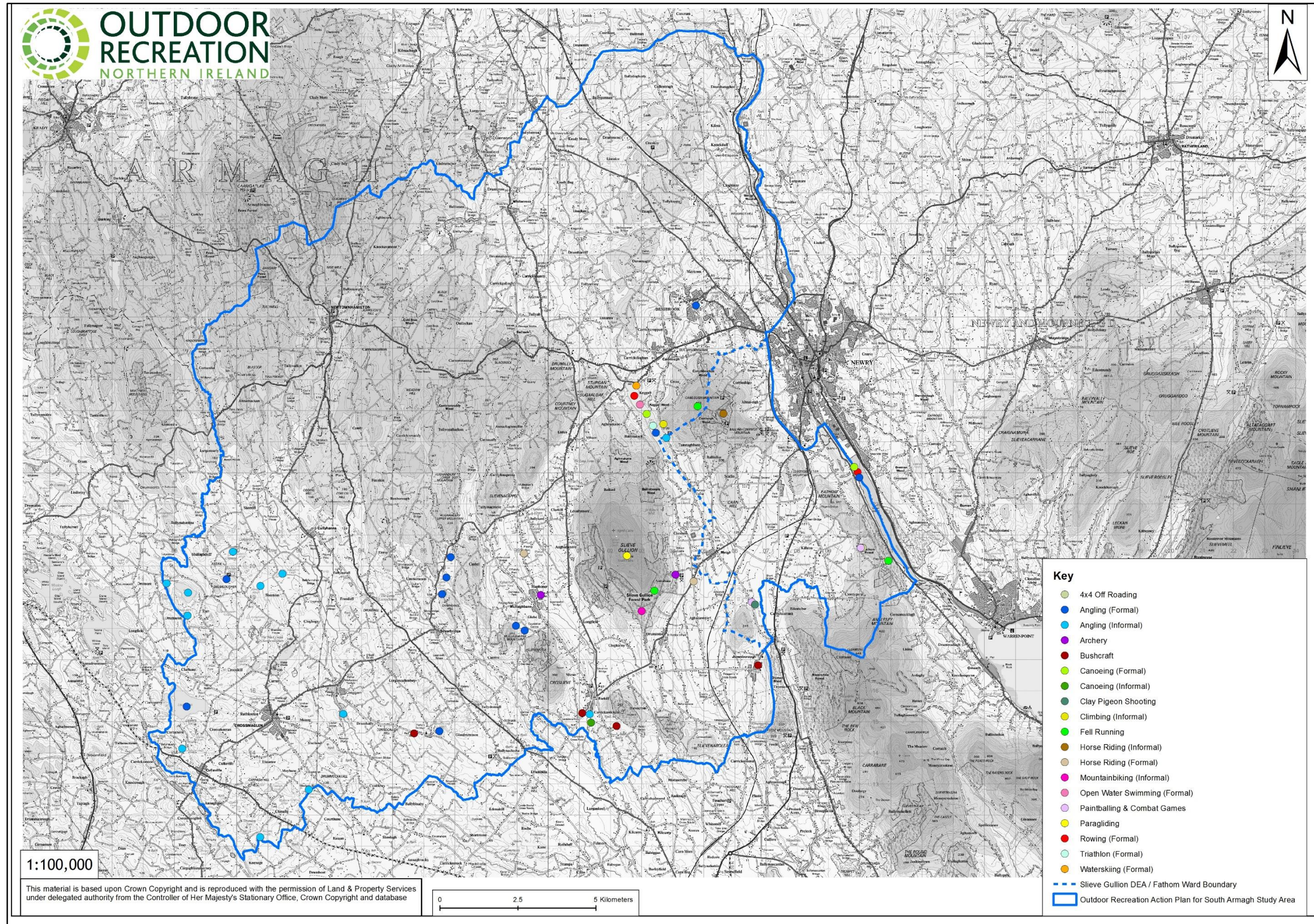


Figure 5: Current Provision Other Activities



## 7. KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section includes a general synopsis of some of the key findings followed by a SWOT analysis (Section 8) which details the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the current provision and future development of outdoor recreation in the study area. Recommendations are made where relevant and these are collated in the Action Plan (Section 9).

The key findings / recommendations are divided into four sections:

**Management / Structure:** refers to both the resources and structures that are required to ensure a high quality and consistent experience for all outdoor recreation users to the area.

**Development:** refers to both the outdoor recreation infrastructure required to do an activity e.g. trails, and the supporting visitor services and facilities which enhance the outdoor recreation offering.

**Promotion:** refers to the wide range of media required to heighten the awareness of the local population and visitors to the area of the opportunities that exist for taking part in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities.

**Issues & Barriers:** current issues and potential barriers that may affect future recreation development in the study area.

### 7.1 Management / Structure

There are several key organisations involved in the management, development and promotion of outdoor recreation within the study area.

**ROGP** has seven staff who are employed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. An AONB Officer (part funded by NIEA) is responsible for the management of the AONB which makes up c.38% of the study area. AONB management aims to enhance the built, cultural and natural heritage of the area and increase the opportunities for public enjoyment of the AONB.<sup>2</sup>

Four staff manage the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership 2014 - 2018, the boundary of which extends slightly beyond the AONB boundary to also include the villages of Camlough, Bessbrook and Dorsey which were identified as key villages which have played a significant role in shaping the Ring of Gullion.<sup>3</sup> The Heritage Lottery funded project has a c.£1.4 million budget encompassing 24 projects, which aims to engage people with the Ring of Gullion AONB and surrounding landscape. Actions range from trail construction to storytelling and from interpreting the history of Newry Canal to enhancing the area's rich biodiversity.

A further staff member works as project officer for the ASCENT project (funded by the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014 – 2020) and also is the Project Officer for the Bessbrook Model Village Project.

Despite these two distinct geographical remits it is evident that ROGP AONB staff have to a degree also engaged in projects / initiatives out with the area. For example, Crossmaglen (in which their office is

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<sup>2</sup> The Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Action Plan 2011-2016, Northern Ireland Environment Agency

<sup>3</sup> Ring of Gullion Landscape Conservation Action Plan, Newry and Mourne District Council (2014)

based), Cullyhanna and Cullaville. The Gullion's Green Woodlands and Hedgerows Scheme which aims to increase woodland cover throughout south Armagh also extends outside the AONB boundary.

### **Newry Mourne and Down District Council**

Outdoor recreation falls under two key departments within Council i.e. Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism and Active and Healthy Communities. Both departments have a remit across the wider Council area. Whilst there are some examples of proactive partnerships between the two departments and the ROGP, there is room for improvement in terms of joint working and communication. It is anticipated this Plan will help bring such cohesion.

### **Public Organisations**

Excluding private landowners and the Council, there are an additional 3 key landowners/ land managers involved in the provision of outdoor recreation within the study area namely FSNI, National Trust, and the Woodland Trust. In addition, there are several key organisations involved in the funding and delivery of outdoor recreation in the area namely Loughs Agency, Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport NI and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

This has resulted in:

- Confusion with regards to the geographic remit of the ROGP
- A lack of engagement with some communities outside the AONB e.g. Newtownhamilton, Whitecross
- Fragmented approach to outdoor recreation within Council meaning key issues are often not addressed
- Lack of clarity for outdoor recreation providers e.g. clubs, private businesses and community groups as to the most appropriate method or person for initial contact and liaison
- There is no champion or structure to unlock the untapped potential of angling

#### *7.1.1 Management / Structure Recommendations*

##### **7.1.1.1 Recommendation 1: Ring of Gullion Partnership**

ROGP's geographical remit should be extended to incorporate the entire study area i.e. Slieve Gullion DEA and Ward of Fathom. An increase in staff resource to include a dedicated Outdoor Recreation Officer would provide the necessary focus to oversee the management and delivery of this Plan, co-ordinate the proposed Strategic Outdoor Recreation Group (see 7.1.1.2 ) and the proposed Outdoor Recreation (see 7.1.1.3), Angling (see 7.1.1.4 ) and Forums, secure funding for development projects and be responsible for the Pilot Landowner Engagement Programme (see 7.4.2.1).

##### **7.1.1.2 Recommendation 2: Broaden current AONB Management Group / LPS Board**

ROGP has one board who operate as both the AONB Management Group and Landscape Partnership Scheme Board. It is recommended the scope of this board is broadened to incorporate major landowners / land manager and promoters of outdoor recreation.

This group would provide a medium for a strategic and joint up approach to the delivery of the actions with this Plan. Engagement with the South Armagh Outdoor Recreation Forum will be key as discussed further below.

#### **7.1.1.3 Recommendation 3: South Armagh Outdoor Recreation Forum**

This Forum should be led by ROGP to identify local issues, potential solutions and actions. The involvement of the Strategic Outdoor Recreation Group is important alongside activity providers, education staff, outdoor sports clubs and outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

It is envisaged that a large element of the Forum will be comprised of local clubs / associations and community groups, therefore it is important there is a close relationship with the South Armagh, Newry and Down Sports Association (SANDSA) to avail of support, funding and training opportunities.

However, consultation has also identified a growing cohort of entrepreneurial embryonic small businesses offering outdoor recreation related opportunities. The majority of these businesses have a limited background in outdoor recreation and tourism, therefore requiring further mentoring. Signposting to the initiatives of the Council's Tourism department is therefore important.

It is recognised that this Forum is currently in its infancy. It is anticipated that this plan will create a clear agenda for this group to focus on.

#### **7.1.1.4 Recommendation 4: South Armagh Angling Forum**

Given the possibility of significant untapped potential of angling in the area it is recommended a South Armagh Angling Forum is established to address the current fragmented approach and provide an agreed vision, mission and objectives for the development of angling. This could potentially be a sub group of the aforementioned South Armagh Outdoor Recreation Forum. It is suggested the Angling Forum should comprise of the following parties:

- ROGP (Lead)
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Loughs Agency
- Sport NI
- Local Angling Clubs
- Relevant National Governing Bodies e.g. Angling NI, Ulster Angling Federation, National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland

It is suggested that key actions would include:

- Collaborating Angling Product i.e. locations and events which are 'market ready' - compile into appropriate website
- Delivering a targeted marketing programme to angling enthusiasts in NI & ROI
- Delivering an awareness programme to local business and communities
- Agreeing priority sites for further development
- Identifying funding sources for development and promotion
- Establishing the South Armagh Fishing Festival

## 7.2 Development

From the consultation process it is evident that:

### 7.2.1 Weaknesses

- In overall terms, there is a lack of formal outdoor recreation opportunities
- There is a disparity in current or planned outdoor recreation development inside and out with the AONB.
- There is evidence of a lack of strategic planning in outdoor recreation site development. For example, the installation of a play park in Slieve Gullion Forest Park has presented a significant parking issue and displaced outdoor recreation visitors with other interests.
- Little to no adequate provision to allow those with a disability access to the outdoors. Key concerns are the lack of all ability trails for walking. Outdoor recreation provides the opportunity for those with a disability to participate in 'non mainstream' activities, however both infrastructure and tailored equipment provision is limited within the study area. See **Error! Reference source not found.** in the main report for guidance from Disability Sport NI on overcoming barriers to outdoor recreation for people with disabilities.
- Activity Specific weaknesses include:
  - Limited off road / family cycling opportunities
  - Lack of doorstep walking / cycling opportunities via community trails
  - Lack of 'All Ability' trails for walking and cycling
  - Lack of innovative natural adventure play
  - Orienteering: out of date maps
  - Lack of Quality Walks, PRoWs and permissive paths
  - Lack of horse riding trails and bridleways
  - Lack of 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map for the area<sup>4</sup>
  - Underutilisation of resources such as Lough Ross and Camlough Mountain / Forest
- Visitor Services and Facilities weaknesses include:
  - Lack of visitor services e.g. toilets, parking, changing facilities, equipment hire, etc
  - Several public facilities closed e.g. Camlough Mountain Forest Drive, Ballintemple Viewpoint
  - Poor public transport and lack of rambler services
  - Lack of high quality, consistent and informative visitor information e.g. walking trailhead information panels

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<sup>4</sup> There is currently a high-quality water resistant 1:25,000 Ring of Gullion Activity Map. However, this only covers the boundary of the AONB rather than the entire study area. As stocks of the 1:25,000 deplete a revised map encompassing south Armagh should be considered. 1:50,000 may be a more appropriate scale given the increased study area.

### 7.2.2 Opportunities

- Several initiatives currently being developed have the potential to create 'stand out' recreation products namely; Slieve Gullion Forest Park and the Newry to Carlingford Greenway including connection to Newry Canal Towpath
- Whilst the area already has a number of informal walking trails around villages and along river corridors, there is an overwhelming demand for a formal network of Community Trails to be developed across the area.
- There is a reasonable volume of public sites in particular forests which provide potential opportunities for development. The existence of a Memorandum of Understanding between Council and FSNI provides a mechanism for such development.

### 7.2.3 Development Recommendations

#### 7.2.3.1 Recommendation 5: Community Trail Plan

Developing a Community Trail network across the area featured significantly throughout the consultation exercise as well as being highlighted in many of the Council's Village Plans. Community Trails, either link communities to surrounding green space via a safe off-road route, or one community to another, for example, along a river corridor. These trails which provide 'doorstep' safe off-road walking/cycling trails at community level will require significant investment particularly in terms of staff time to negotiate access. This correlates with the wider Northern Ireland picture. As a first step a Community Trail Plan should be prepared to allow for any future network to be developed in a more strategic way. The Council has previously commissioned Community Trail Plans for both the Mourne and Slieve Croob DEAs.

The list in Table 4 and featured in Figure 7 has been identified through consultation, each of these would require further feasibility assessment. This is by no means exhaustive and could provide the catalyst for other opportunities to arise.

Further information on community trails is available in **Error! Reference source not found.** the main report. **Error! Reference source not found.**

Community Trail	Potential Development
Bessbrook Pond	Walking trail to circumnavigate the pond
Camelough Lake	Walking trail to circumnavigate the lake
Lough Ross	Walking trail to circumnavigate the lake. Boardwalk currently along one section, this could be extended.
Camelough / Bessbrook / Newry	A river walk from Bessbrook to Camelough & Bessbrook to Newry
Cashel Loughs	Walking trail to circumnavigate lakes
Crossmaglen	Possible walking link from Crossmaglen to Lough Ross. Also potential for Crossmaglen to Culloville along the Fane River and Crossmaglen to Creggan.
Forkhill River	Reinstate previous walking trail along the river

Meigh Village to Slieve Gullion	Walking link connecting the village to Slieve Gullion Forest Park
Newry Greenway to Meigh Village	Walking link connecting the newly developed greenway to Meigh Village
Newtownhamilton	Improve path around GAA pitch
Mullaghbane to Slievebrack Forest	Possible walking link between the forest and village
Dorsey	Rory Mc Gee Park / Dorsey Emmets GAA: Provision of a walking track around the GAA pitch
Mullaghbane	The current River Walk poses a potential threat due to its slippery nature therefore improvement works are needed to make it a viable community trail. Also possibility to extend it.
Dromintee	Link from Dromintee to Slieve Gullion
Glassdrummond School	Link from St Brigid's PS to the Glassdrummond Quality Walk
Jonesborough	Link from Jonesborough Wood to Ravensdale Forest. Link from Jonesborough to Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone and Moyry Castle.
Glendesha Woods	Potential to incorporate Glendesha Woods to Ballykeel Poets Trail
Kiltybane	Possibility to extend current boardwalk to create circular walk around the lake

Table 4: Potential Community Trails

### **7.2.3.2 Recommendation 6: Activity Hub Master planning**

For the purposes of this report the term 'Activity Hub' refers to the clustering of activities and supporting visitor services within a confined area providing the local/visitor ample opportunities to spend a single or multi-day trip. 'Activity hubs' will typically have a multitude of outdoor recreation activities with good connectivity between all resources, e.g. a path may be multi use or canoe steps may also provide access for anglers. These sites should have appropriately developed visitor facilities e.g. toilets and catering. It is recognised that where possible it is sustainable to focus investment and development on activities and visitor services occurring within 'activity hubs'.

Consultation identified a number of sites where there is a demand from a wide range of outdoor recreation stakeholders for current participation and further development. Given the scale of these sites, there will also be a tourism focus to their development.

In order to maximise the outdoor recreation / tourism potential of these sites it is important master planning is undertaken to:

- Engage relevant stakeholders
- Ensure environmental aspects are considered



- Identify connection to wider project such as Blueways, Greenway, Cycling Trails, Long Distance Walking Trails
- Identify appropriateness of specific activities for the hub
- Improve visitor flow and reduce potential for visitor conflict
- Reduce a siloed approach to development
- Identify ongoing management / maintenance responsibilities
- Consider disability access

See **Error! Reference source not found.** Case Study 1 Dalby Forest Park (within main report) for a best practice example of a site which has taken a strategic approach to masterplanning.

The following hubs were identified (See Table 5 & Figure 6)

Site	Landowner / Manager	Potential
Camlough Lake <sup>5</sup>	Council / Private Landowner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Camlough Lake Masterplan was developed on behalf of Council in 2011. Consultation with key stakeholders has identified that the majority of the recommendations are still valid and therefore there is a significant frustration regarding the lack of delivery. Key obstacles include the repair work to the dam (which at the time of writing is nearing completion) and uncertainty regarding land ownership.</li> <li>• Despite the lack of development there remains to be a significant growth in participation with open water swimming including ICE Swimming, triathlon and canoeing.</li> <li>• The Council and Camlough Lake Management Committee should create a prioritised action plan with SMART objectives and actions to re-invigorate the development of the site. Consideration should be given to the potential for the incorporation of rowing which is not included within the original recommendations.</li> </ul>
Camlough Mountain	Forest Service NI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This extensive forest and open mountain is currently only used for informal recreation.</li> <li>• A forest drive (closed since the 1980s) provides a high-quality road conduit through the site.</li> <li>• There is significant potential to offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a network of walking trails of varying lengths including all ability trails</li> <li>○ iconic viewpoints of the Ring of Gullion and towards Carlingford Lough</li> <li>○ incorporate horse riding trails</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing Council has issued an Invitation to Tender for Camlough Lake – Recreational Event Hub. The specification is split into two phases. Phase 1 includes an initial feasibility study and economical appraisal to agree the preferred option to provide a recreational event hub. Phase 2 is to develop the scheme to detailed design stage and obtain relevant statutory approvals to completion of RIBA Stage 3.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ visitor hub – car parking, toilets and opportunity for a mobile catering franchise</li> <li>○ orienteering</li> </ul>
Lough Ross	Council / Private Landowner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is currently a Council owned car park, toilet block (closed) and jetty.</li> <li>• Consultation has identified considerable potential for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of disabled friendly fishing pegs</li> <li>○ Walking trail around the lough with footbridges over the Fane and Clarebane Rivers and potential to link to the Monaghan Way.</li> <li>○ A walking trail north along the Clarebane River linking to Lough Muckno</li> <li>○ Incorporation of natural adventure play</li> <li>○ Flat water canoeing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Slieve Gullion Forest Park	Forest Service NI / Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Slieve Gullion Forest Park Economic Appraisal / Feasibility Study recommends the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved vehicle access to the site</li> <li>○ Improved car parking facilities</li> <li>○ Improved directional signage to and throughout the park</li> <li>○ Improved gateway signage and welcome signs along the entrance drive</li> <li>○ Repair of trails and features that have been damaged</li> <li>○ An amenity building to include toilet facilities and a shower block</li> <li>○ Somewhere to buy a memento</li> <li>○ A new path from Slieve Gullion North Cairn to the West to create a new circular walking route</li> <li>○ Running trails</li> <li>○ A highly interactive, augmented reality experience and visitor interpretation centre based within Chambre House.</li> <li>○ The provision of private sector operated Glamping and Outdoor Theatre / Cinema Space</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Family Outdoor Activities e.g. off road bike trails, low rope tree course licensed to a private sector operator</li> <li>• Consultation as part of this process also identified the following which should be taken into consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Orienteering mapping</li> <li>○ Horse riding provision</li> <li>○ Family cycling provision</li> <li>○ A network of waymarked walking trails including an All ability trail</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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Table 5: Potential Activity Hub

### 7.2.3.3 Recommendation 7: Community Hub Development

The weakness of the aforementioned Activity Hubs is that any visit still requires a considerable car journey for many South Armagh residents. A lack of regular public transport in the study area compounds this issue. It is therefore important that outdoor recreation opportunities are provided within rural communities to allow them to connect to local high quality green space. The primary focus for these hubs will be community walking, cycling or multi-use trails, natural adventure play or other innovative opportunities such as wildflower planting. The community hubs may connect with community trails discussed in Section 7.2.3.1.

A strong example of a Community Hub within the Council area is Bunkers Hill in Castlewellan see **Error! Reference source not found.** Case Study 2 (within main report).

The list in Table 6 and featured in Figure 6 has been identified through consultation, each of these would require further feasibility assessment. This is by no means exhaustive and could provide the catalyst for other opportunities to arise.

Community Hub	Potential Development
Forkhill	<p>The Council has recently completed the development of an 800 metre pathway together with a number of environmental features and complementary street furniture which follows the perimeter of the former military base site. The pathway has been designed in such a way that it does not compromise any future development on the site and protects several mature trees.</p> <p>The site has further potential for enhancement through incorporation of natural adventure play, wildflower planting and biodiversity education opportunities etc.</p>
Kiltybane Lough	<p>The Lough is in private ownership and is managed as a stocked trout fishing lake, and a Pike angling lake by the Fane Angling Club, but is also open to the public fishing on day licenses. The Council lease lands for a small car park, slipway and jetty. Numerous fishing stands are accessed along a grass surfaced trail.</p> <p>The site has further potential to develop a formal multi-use trail around the lake, providing access to an increased number of fishing stands / pegs.</p> <p>Adjacent to the car park there is scope for natural adventure play facilities and potentially a pump track to compliment the cycling element of the multi-use trail around the lake.</p> <p>A recent Biodiversity Management Plan<sup>6</sup> further recommends the development of pond dipping and bird feeding facilities and a flowery lawn in the picnic area.</p>
Derrymore House	<p>Derrymore is a 45 hectare site with 10 buildings including a centrepiece thatched cottage (Derrymore House) and walled garden. The site is currently free and open to the public.</p>

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<sup>6</sup> Biodiversity Management Plan: Kiltybane Lough, Co.Armagh, WM Associates for Newry, Mounre and Down District Council (March 2017)

	<p>A feasibility study conducted in 2014 identifies plans to further develop the site to make it more accessible to the public and increase its relevance and attractiveness to visitors.</p> <p>A 5 phase approach has been suggested with phase one including improvements to car park provision, a looped walking and family cycling trail around the perimeter of the site, upgrades to existing paths including the provision of natural play equipment, interpretation and seating as well as a playpark.</p> <p>It is understood that council are currently seeking funding for this project. The Council are the lead on the project in conjunction with The National Trust and 'Friends of Derrymore Wood'.</p>
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Table 6: Potential Community Hubs

#### **7.2.3.4 Recommendation 8: Visitor Signage Guidelines**

The 'Audit and recommendations for improvement of Tourism Signage in South Armagh'<sup>7</sup> identified key findings and recommendations which primarily focused on the improvement of directional signage to tourists sites and scheduled monuments. ORNI concurs with the findings of this report in relation to white-on-brown directional tourist signs.

Further emphasis is also required within outdoor recreation sites such as parks or forests, where it is essential to erect visitor information signage and where appropriate, trail waymarking. This is very important from a marketing perspective and of critical importance in terms of visitor enjoyment and risk management.

Visitor information signage will include welcome signage, information and interpretation, visitor safety, visitor orientation etc. Trail waymarking refers to signage relating to or located directly on trails and it includes trailhead signage, waymarker posts and disks, interpretation panels and safety signage.

As previously identified, there is a significant weakness in the provision and quality of onsite visitor information and signage in the study area. It is therefore recommended that 'Visitor Information and Signage Guidelines' are developed. These would take into account the significant differences in type and size of the outdoor recreation sites which range from local to regional multi-activity sites as well as the customer journey. Following the development of the guidelines, it is recommended that a review of the current portfolio of outdoor recreation sites is undertaken and the visitor information and signage rolled out as appropriate.

#### **7.2.3.5 Recommendation 9: Specific Product Development Walking**

As outlined in Figure 3 there is a lack of formal walking opportunities in the study area.

As outlined in Recommendation 5 i.e. Community Trail Plan, there is significant scope to improve doorstep walking opportunities in the area. Recommendation 6 i.e. Activity Hub Master planning will

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<sup>7</sup> Audit and recommendations for improvement of Tourism Signage in South Armagh, McCadam Consulting Services Ltd on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (2016)

provide further walking opportunities for both the local community and visitors. For example, consultation with a local walking club has identified that with minimal waymarking (something appropriate to the area) 2-3 alternative walking routes could be developed within Slieve Gullion providing an additional 4 hours walking.

Whilst it is recognised in consultation that the Ring of Gullion AONB landscape is indeed spectacular it was noted that it could and should not compete with the nearby mountain ranges of the Cooleys and Mourne but complement them instead. For example, by utilising cross border promotion Slieve Gullion could be promoted to the already large number of walkers enjoying the Cooleys as an addition to their itinerary. The area should also carry out the following walking specific actions to benefit from its unique selling points:

**Develop the Ring Dyke Way:** This is a project within the ROG Landscape Partnership to create a new 60km route, taking in the hills that were once dominated by military towers and providing access to all the peaks of the Ring Dyke mountains after which the area is named. It is understood progress on this project has been slow due to access issues.

**Enhance the Ring of Gullion Way:** The Ring of Gullion Way is a 60km route which forms part of the Ulster Way starting in Newry and finishing at Newry Train Station (north of Newry). Discussions with ROGP indicate their aspiration to deliver a 2-3 day high quality walking experience along the route.

Whilst the current route passes through a unique and attractive landscape the weaknesses include:

- A significant portion of the route (70%) is on road albeit utilising quieter rural roads
- Between departure from and return to Newry, the route only passes through the villages of Jonesborough, Forkhill and the outskirts Bessbrook. This reduces the opportunities for the visitor to:
  - spend on accommodation, food, drink and other services
  - experience local arts, culture and heritage – for example through traditional music, poetry and storytelling within local pubs

The fundamental action is to increase the off-road length and incorporate further villages such as Mullaghbane, Meigh, Bessbrook. Whilst a further in-depth technical feasibility study would be required, the following opportunities have been identified as key opportunities:

- Combine the opportunities provided by the Newry Carlingford Greenway and the ROG Landscape Partnership's – Newry Canal Project to develop a walking trail from Victoria Lock through Fathom Forest to the Flagstaff viewpoint.
- Formalise (potentially via a permissive path agreement) the current walking route which utilises farm lanes through private land which links Slieve Gullion Forest Park to the Killeavy Church
- Further investigate the potential of connecting between the Newry Canal Towpath (Blueway), Ring of Gullion Way and Newry to Carlingford Greenway. Any future development of The Albert Basin (outside the study area for this project) should provide the opportunity to provide an iconic trail head providing a connection between the three trails
- It is also recognised that the Ring Dyke Way may provide opportunities for route alterations

As the delivery of route improvements enhance the experience, further training for local communities and businesses would be required to improve the 'walker – friendly' offering. This can be delivered

through best practice workshops and potentially learning journeys to best practice such as the West Highland Way.

#### **Prioritise heritage sites and theme trails:**

There is an abundance of built heritage sites within the study area. However, formal access is limited and those with formal access are in some instances not well maintained. There is also a lack of interpretation / signage available for visitors and walkers.

The importance of capturing the interface between landscape, history and heritage came to the fore during consultation with a consensus that this would enhance and add value to the walking routes as well as the destination. Not only this, but it is also of great importance to the local community who take pride in their heritage and landscape and want to ensure it is sustained for future generations. The development of Community Trail Plans may assist with improving access to heritage sites.

The Council's Tourism Strategy highlights 'The area has striking geological, landscape and archaeological heritage, and has a stronger association with the 'story of Ireland' and its myths and legends than many other destinations within Newry, Mourne and Down...' The development of themed heritage trails would provide an excellent way of capitalising on such a unique selling point. Heritage trails can be driving trails with short walking trails providing access to and experiences at key heritage sites.<sup>8</sup>

It is recommended that a process of prioritisation takes place which cross references heritage significance with access potential to focus future resources.

#### **Ensure Infrastructure matches trail development:**

As walking product is developed, it is essential that adequate trail head infrastructure is developed in tandem incorporating both off-road car parking and signage. The costs for such development will vary with each project. An overview of costs is provided within **Error! Reference source not found.** (within main report).

#### **Support existing walking trail initiatives:**

Although it is understood that the following walking trail projects are at an advanced stage of planning it is important for consistency that they are included within this action plan. See Figure 7.

Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Walking Trail Projects (not previously mentioned in above)

- Wildlife Safari– a short walking trail in Glassdrummond Wood focusing on areas of endemic biodiversity
- Slieve Gullion Sensory Trails – established on forest roads utilising trailhead interpretation and waymarking
- Slieve Gullion summit to lake trail restoration – repair of degraded paths to accommodate a continue increase in use

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<sup>8</sup> This would provide the potential to enhance or add to the current driving audio guides developed by ROGP.



#### **7.2.3.6 Recommendation 10: Specific Product Development Angling**

As highlighted in Section 7.1.1.4, a South Armagh Angling Forum should be established to address the current fragmented approach. This Forum will help refine the development objectives moving forward.

Lough Muckno in nearby Castleblaney Co. Monaghan provides an excellent example of the benefits of a joined up approach to the development of angling facilities. See Appendix 12 Case Study 5 (within main report).

#### **7.2.3.7 Recommendation 11: Specific Product Development Orienteering**

Recent developments by the NI Orienteering Active Clubs Officer has shown the ability of orienteering as a powerful tool for community cohesion and social inclusion and therefore this work should be supported moving forward. Consultation has identified the following sites require mapping. See below and Figure 8:

- Slieve Gullion Forest Park (within Activity Hub Planning)
- Camlough Mountain (within Activity Hub Planning)
- Derrymore House

It is also acknowledged that Glassdrummond and Jonesborough Woods could work favourably as potential sites to develop orienteering in the area at a community and/or school level. This has worked particularly well within Gortin Forest Park (near Omagh, Co Tyrone), where there is now a popular and engaged community orienteering group. See **Error! Reference source not found.** Case Study 3. (within main report).

#### **7.2.3.8 Recommendation 12: Specific Product Development Horse riding**

Consultation with horse riders has identified both Camlough Mountain and Slieve Gullion Forest Park as potential off road horse riding sites. It is recommended that careful consideration is given to the development of horse riding trails with the master planning of these sites. It is important to consider car parking requirements, trail surface and potential for visitor conflict. It is not recommended to develop bespoke horse riding trails as previous projects developed by ORNI have demonstrated usage at a level below which would justify further investment. See Figure 8.

#### **7.2.3.9 Recommendation 13: Specific Product Development Climbing**

There are limited opportunities for climbing in the area due to both access and environmental constraints. However, the numerous community and sporting centres in the area could potentially provide the opportunity to incorporate artificial climbing walls. Such climbing walls can be retro-fitted to present buildings or incorporated within new builds, positioned either on internal or external walls.

A good example of this is Guildford Community Centre (Co.Down) which has installed an 110m<sup>2</sup> Indoor Climbing Wall incorporating 8 climbing lines and a 30m<sup>2</sup> Bouldering Area.

Artificial climbing walls provide an excellent introduction to the sport in a controlled and easily accessed environment. The scope of many current funding programmes require a multi-activity focus; climbing walls provide an ideal opportunity.

### **7.2.3.10      *Recommendation 14: Enhance Key Tourism Strategy Initiatives***

The Council's Tourism Strategy 2017 – 2021 identifies a number of catalyst projects and critical projects relevant to outdoor recreation in the study. This plan should therefore support and enhance these initiatives namely:

#### **UNESCO Global Geopark**

A revised application for UNESCO Global Geopark status should be submitted to the UK National Commission for UNESCO and establish a new management structure to allow fully coordinated and cohesive management.

#### **The Newry Canal Blueway opportunity**

Develop a memorandum of understanding between Council and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council to move forward with the restoration of the Newry Ship Canal as a Blueway navigable by canoes and small boats and support the local IWAI chapter in undertaking the project.

#### **Connecting with the Great Eastern Greenway**

Continue to work on developing the concept of the Great Eastern Greenway through building connectivity between the Newry Canal Towpath and Newry to Carlingford Greenway.



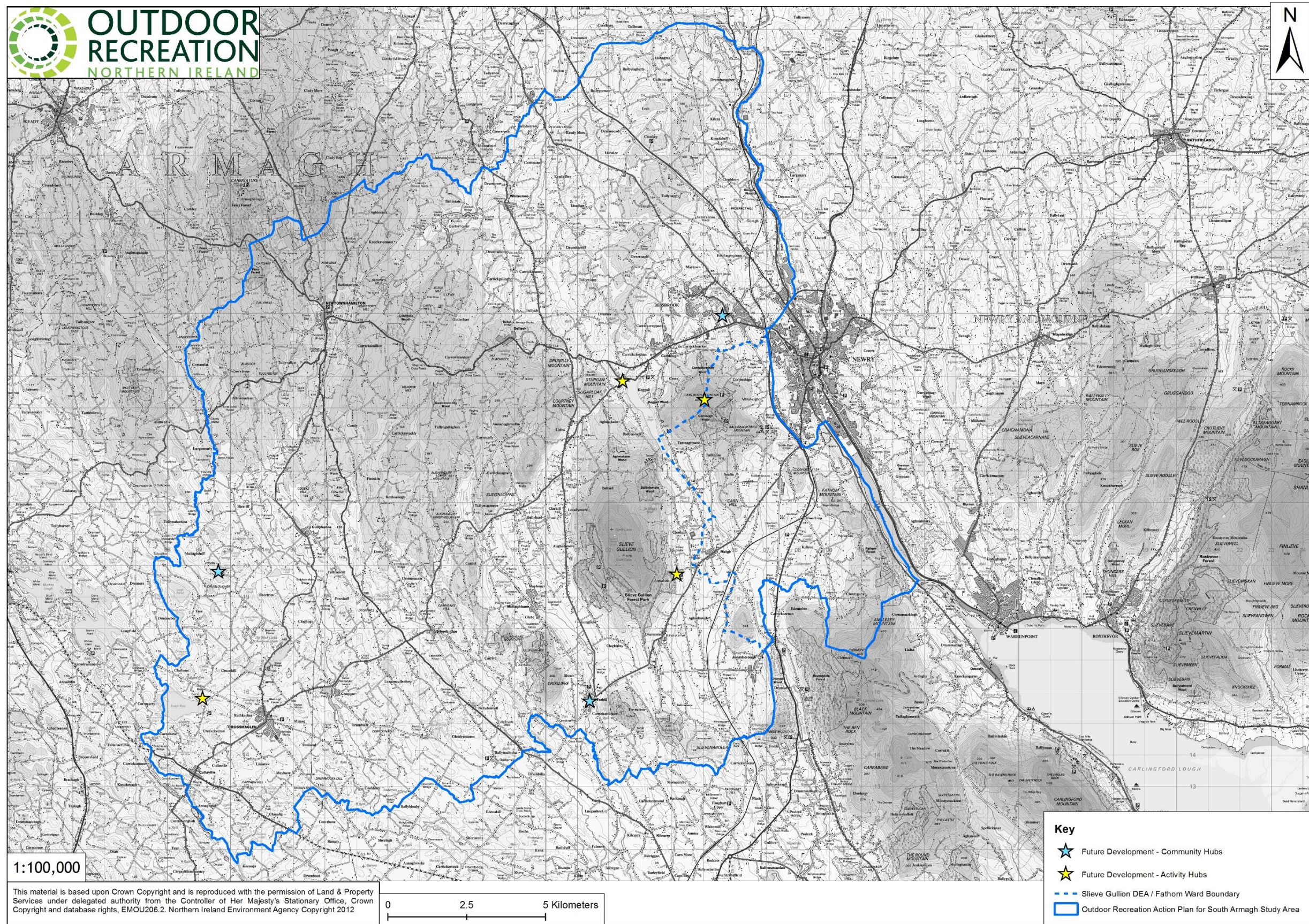


Figure 6: Future Development: Activity Hubs and Community Hubs



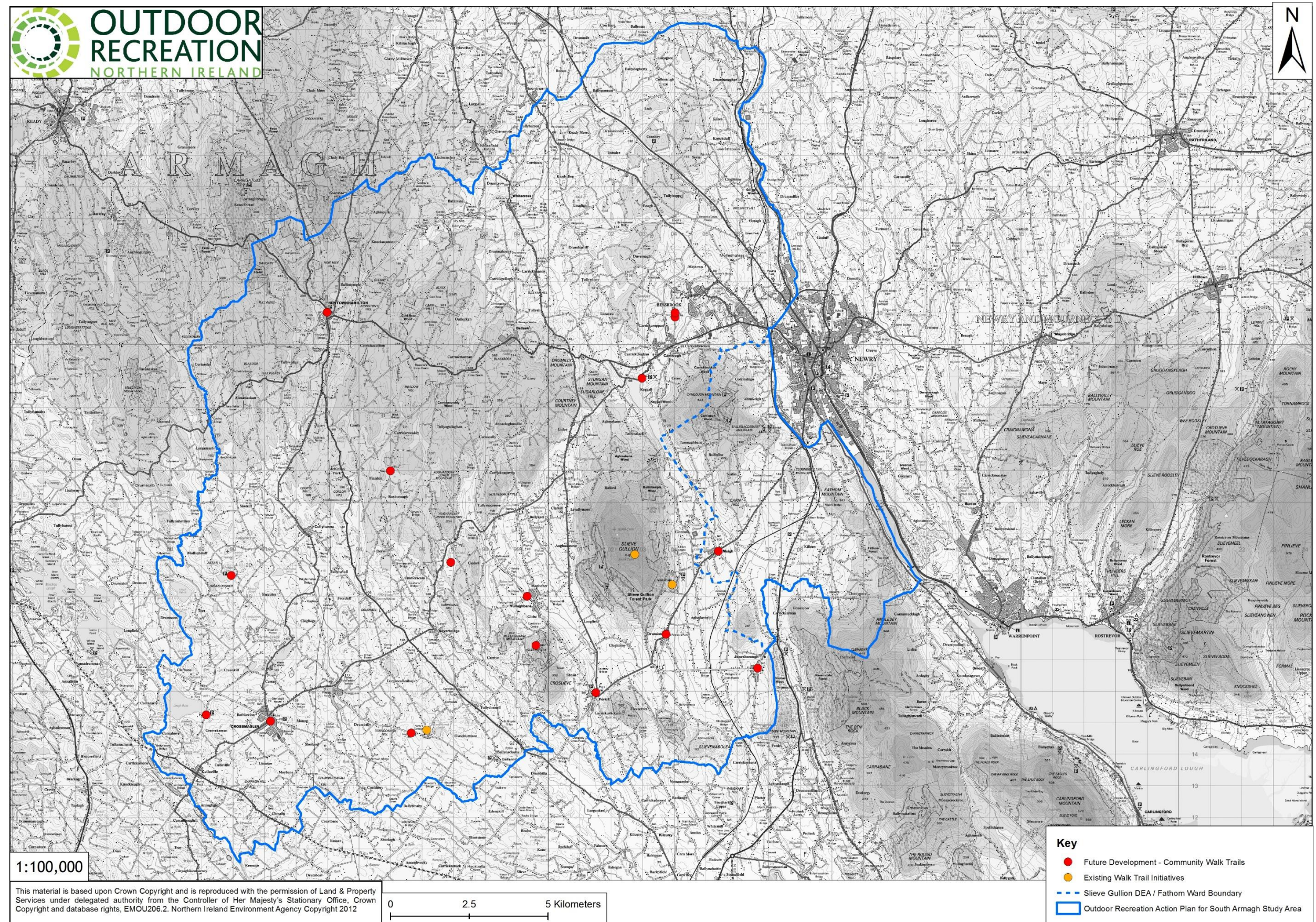


Figure 7: Future Development – Community Trails and Existing Walking Trail Projects



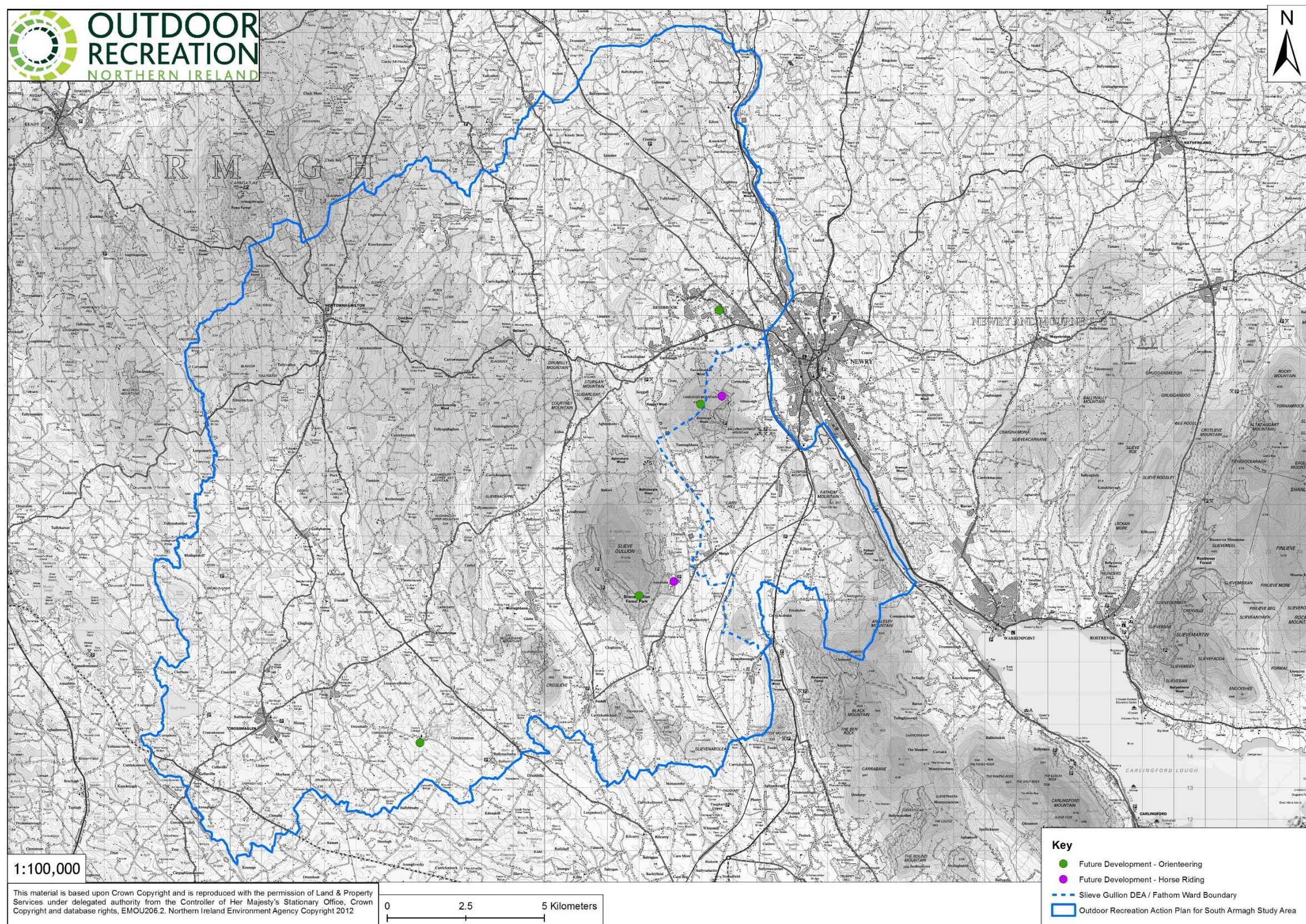


Figure 8: Future Development - Other Activities



## 7.3 Promotion

From the consultation process on the current and future promotion of outdoor recreation in the study area several key findings were identified:

- there is a lack of strategic approach to the communication and marketing of information on outdoor recreation
- there is currently a lack of high quality information available on the opportunities for outdoor recreation in the study area
- the integration between key areas of the Council, including Leisure and Tourism and ROGP to collate, disseminate and promote information on outdoor recreation in a meaningful way to local people and visitors is lacking
- there is no central record of key outdoor recreation related events
- there is a significant discrepancy between the sites of outdoor recreation in the area in the provision and quality of onsite visitor information and signage
- there is an expressed desire by the local people in the study area to have better access to high quality information on the outdoor recreation opportunities available
- key events and experiences (where relevant) have not recognised their potential to provide further bed nights

The issues above are not unique to the study area but rather the entire Council area and therefore many of the solutions should also be Council wide.

### **7.3.1.1 Recommendation 15: Enhance Events and Experiences**

The Council's Tourism Strategy identifies building '...experiences that highlight local arts, culture and heritage and identifying ways of raising the profile of South Armagh in the domestic market through innovative short breaks.'

As highlighted in Section 7.1.1, South Armagh has a growing cohort of entrepreneurial embryonic small businesses offering outdoor recreation related opportunities. The majority of these businesses have a limited background in outdoor recreation and tourism, therefore require further mentoring. Signposting to the initiatives of the Council's Tourism department is important, however given that South Armagh is perhaps the least experienced and developed area in terms of tourism a specific workshop and follow up mentoring scheme should be established for the area.

An experience workshop would provide examples of best practice but also fundamentally increase awareness of potential partners for experience development. Key accommodation providers from Newry should also be invited as they will initially provide the key accommodation stock for the area. A follow up mentoring programme for businesses (selected following an application process) would provide the further catalyst required for experience development and business growth.

The area hosts several outdoor recreation orientated events which attract significant participant numbers e.g. Crooked Lake Triathlon, CLWW etc. However, anecdotal evidence would suggest that the bed nights generated (both from domestic and out of state visitors) are limited. Further experiential

development such as combined entry accommodation packages, complementary events / activities to attract non participant family or group members. It is recognised that many events within the study area do not wish to have a tourism focus, however, for those that do further mentoring is required.

### **7.3.1.2 Recommendation 16: Websites**

The development of a revised website / web page can often provide an excellent catalyst to collate key information, therefore the following actions are recommended

#### **VisitMourneMountains.com**

It is recommended that this remains the key information hub for tourists visiting the Council area including South Armagh. However, the website is currently not fit for purpose as it is:

- lacking key information – particularly on South Armagh
- difficult to navigate
- out dated against current mobile technology requirements

It is anticipated a revision of the website will be required to not only address these practical issues but also to deliver on the objectives within the Councils' Tourism Strategy. ROGP should therefore be central to the revised websites brief to ensure South Armagh is adequately and accurately portrayed.

#### **NewryMourneandDown.org**

This website currently focuses on the operations and governance of the Council with any detail regarding outdoor recreation (within leisure and tourism sections) hosted on legacy council websites.

It is recommended that in order to provide outdoor recreation information for the citizens of the Council area a 'Things to do' section is created within the main Council website. It is recognised that some information will co-exist on both tourism and Council websites however this can be designed that only one update of content is required to feed both websites.

In terms of website content, Outdoor Recreation NI already has a significant proportion of the Council area's key outdoor recreation information hosted on its web platforms. There is potential to feed through the content from ORNI's platforms to the Council's websites. This would ease the burden on Council staff to create and maintain high quality and up to date content on the website.

In addition, ORNI will be launching in April 2017, an online mapping facility called OutmoreNI which will help local people find out what outdoor recreation opportunities are available on their doorstep and in their local area. There is potential that this technology could be hosted for the MUDC area within the MUDC website and would directly support the development of the proposed Community Trail Network.

#### **RingofGullion.org**

ROGP's website combines both corporate information about the organisation but also consumer focused content on Things to do, events and other key USPs of the area. This website should be retained and consideration should be given to the potential of creating a feed of the relevant consumer-focused information to the two aforementioned websites.

## 7.4 Issues & Barriers

### 7.4.1 Access Legislation

'Undoubtedly the greatest barrier to delivering meaningful improvement in opportunities for people to engage in outdoor recreation is the current access situation' (Mountaineering Ireland, 2014). Northern Ireland does not have a 'right to roam' policy like Scotland; rather it is governed by the 'Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983'. For many this legislation is confusing and unclear, making it a discouraging process to create and assert access. It was also noted that there is a lack of clarity in this legislation surrounding private landowner liability which is one of several disincentives for private landowners to develop public access on their land.

#### **7.4.1.1 Recommendation 17: Lobby for Access Legislation Change**

Access legislation is a critical issue; it affects the nature of how access and recreation is developed. However, lobbying for a review of/change in this legislation falls under the remit of the new National Outdoor Recreation Forum. ROGP should support NOF by acting as champion for access legislation change by collating views of key stakeholders within the study area.

### 7.4.2 Access over Private Land

Increasingly, private landowners (although favourable to the idea of farm diversification through recreation) are seeking economic incentives for developing public access for recreation over private land. It is not common practice for landowners to be paid financially for creating access to their land. The fear of litigation is another common disincentive cited by private landowners for refusing public access.

#### **7.4.2.1 Recommendation 18: Pilot Private Landowner Engagement Programme**

A concerted effort is required to raise awareness and inform private landowners of the potential access arrangements that can be entered into when creating public access (e.g. permissive path agreements) and the perception of liability versus the reality that no successful liability cases have been brought in Northern Ireland in the last 20 years<sup>9</sup>.

The ROGP with the assistance of the Council's Rights of Way Officers should establish a private landowner engagement programme. This pilot would be the first of its type in Northern Ireland and would require the following actions which would include:

- Establishing a Council position paper on Access to the Countryside – it is understood this is currently ongoing. The paper will focus on Public Rights of Way and Permissive Path Agreements.
- Organising a workshop to:
  - Debunk the myth of liability
  - Outline the current options for access agreements on private land
  - Showcase best practice from elsewhere
  - Listen to and address landowner concerns

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<sup>9</sup> From the study, 'The Impact of Current Occupiers' Liability Legislation, 2011'



- Identify pilot projects to deliver – perhaps via community trail plan process
- Incorporate woodland regeneration opportunities

#### *7.4.3 Over-development / Visitor Pressure*

Concern was expressed by some consultees that 'development' could lead to the creation of public access to every site and that less-visited sites would become overdeveloped. The Plan does not advocate complete pedestrianisation of the countryside but aims to improve opportunities for people to participate in sustainable outdoor recreation activities. Ultimately, any development should not be at the cost of the natural environment and therefore any project should consider its impact on the surrounding landscape.

#### *7.4.4 Monitoring and maintenance provision*

It is recognised that the current outdoor recreation infrastructure in the study area is maintained to a high standard. However, should the additional outdoor recreation product be developed or additional sites be added to the Council / ROGPs remit then careful consideration should be given of the additional revenue costs e.g. staff, maintenance.

#### *7.4.5 Fly tipping*

Both site visits and consultation has revealed significant issues with fly tipping. In some circumstances this has caused recreation sites such as Ballintemple Viewpoint to be closed to the public.

##### **7.4.5.1 Recommendation 19: Innovative Anti-Flying Campaign**

Further development of recreation and therefore increased regular footfall has the potential to reduce such anti-social behaviour. However, a concerted innovative cross border campaign would also assist in alleviating the issue. Inspiration should be taken from Hubbub UK's recent 'Love your Forest' campaign (See **Error! Reference source not found.** Case Study 2 within main report).

#### *7.4.6 Youth Engagement*

Consultation has identified a lack of outdoor recreation opportunities for teenagers in the area for three key reasons i.e. lack of:

- infrastructure to support the activities
- focus towards this age group for clubs and organisations
- knowledge of what opportunities are currently available

It is envisaged the issue regarding infrastructure will be addressed by many of the aforementioned recommendations.

##### **7.4.6.1 Recommendation 20: Youth Engagement Programme**

It was recognised from the consultation process that one of the area's greatest assets moving forward is the enthusiasm and competencies of local community groups and clubs. They have significant potential to promote the outdoor recreation offering to their local community. In order to assist these groups, it is recommended further support / guidance is provided to allow them access relevant Council and third-party funding programmes. This would allow clubs and organisations to develop bespoke events to act as a hook with follow up programmes providing opportunities for sustained participation.

## 8. SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis outlines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the current provision and future development of outdoor recreation at a local level in the study area.

The information contained in the SWOT analysis is a summary of feedback gained through consultation, site visits and desk research. The points are grouped together under headings according to the theme that they relate to, e.g. weaknesses associated with activities, or strengths associated with future development, etc.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><b>Strategic Vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong emphasis on activity tourism, health and well-being, natural and built environment within Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2019</li> <li>• Prominence of rural community empowerment and activity tourism within Council's Economic Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015-2020</li> <li>• Prominence of outdoor adventure, cultural heritage, myths and unique stories with vision of Council's Tourism Strategy 2017-2021</li> <li>• Defined outdoor recreation outcomes and actions within Ring of Gullion AONB Management Plan 2017 – 2020 (Draft)</li> </ul> <p><b>Management Structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated Ring of Gullion AONB Staff Resource</li> <li>• MOU in place between Council and Forest Service NI</li> </ul> <p><b>Location / Image</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Gateway into Newry, Mourne and Down</li> <li>• Located on key corridor between mass populations of Dublin and Belfast</li> <li>• Proximity to large local population within Newry City</li> </ul> <p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Designation</li> <li>• Rich heritage, archaeology and geology</li> <li>• Variety of habitats, e.g. mountain, valleys, grassland, forests, river etc.</li> <li>• Protection provided by natural and built heritage designations</li> <li>• Unique biodiversity e.g. Red Squirrels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Management Structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of permanent staff resource focus on area outside the Ring of Gullion AONB</li> <li>• Lack of strategic planning to outdoor recreation development at key sites leading to congestion and visitor conflict e.g. Slieve Gullion Forest Park</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation development divided amongst several departments within council i.e. leisure, tourism and ROGP</li> <li>• Silo approach to developing managing and promoting outdoor recreation</li> <li>• No strategic plan in place to develop, manage and promote outdoor recreation</li> </ul> <p><b>Landownership / Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High percentage of private land is unregistered</li> <li>• Perception that landowners are unwilling to allow people across their land unless landowners are indemnified against any claims arising from accident or injury</li> <li>• Uncertainty regarding ownership of Camlough Lake</li> <li>• Poor access and car parking at archaeological / built heritage sites</li> <li>• Reactive approach to PRoWs</li> </ul> <p><b>Location / Image</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Image remains negatively tainted from the legacy of 'the Troubles'</li> <li>• Perception of remote areas being 'unsafe'</li> </ul>

<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense of community especially in rural villages / hamlets</li> <li>• Well established and proactive community groups</li> <li>• Well established and proactive clubs e.g. Newry Wheelers, Camlough Cycling Club, Newry Triathlon Club</li> <li>• Community driven events e.g. Camlough Lake Water Festival, Crooked Lake Triathlon</li> <li>• Community engagement within Ring of Gullion AONB e.g. Ring of Gullion Ambassadors Programme</li> <li>• Rich cultural tradition</li> </ul> <p><b>Outdoor Recreation Product / Experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent growth in entrepreneurial outdoor activity operators</li> <li>• Ongoing development of Carlingford Lough Greenway</li> <li>• Long Distance Walks - Ring of Gullion Way and Newry Canal Way</li> <li>• Ongoing masterplan development for Slieve Gullion Forest Park – driven by high volume visitor numbers</li> <li>• Integration of outdoor recreation with GAA e.g. walking / running trails around pitches, health and well-being initiatives</li> <li>• Abundance of lakes with high stock levels for angling</li> <li>• Unique open water / ICE Swimming at Camlough Lake</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitor Services &amp; Facilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Signage Project</li> </ul>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor connectivity between communities and green space</li> <li>• Majority of outdoor recreation opportunities require a car journey to access</li> <li>• High volume of litter and fly tipping</li> <li>• Tree felling due to tree disease has removed 'atmosphere and character' of some landscapes</li> </ul> <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parochial nature of community groups</li> <li>• Lack of partnership approach</li> <li>• Over bureaucratic funding initiatives</li> <li>• Lack of club engagement with National Governing Bodies of Sport</li> </ul> <p><b>Outdoor Recreation Product / Experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited off road / family cycling opportunities</li> <li>• Lack of doorstep walking / cycling opportunities via community trails</li> <li>• Lack of 'All Ability' trails for walking and cycling</li> <li>• Lack of innovative natural adventure play</li> <li>• Orienteering: out of date maps</li> <li>• Lack of Quality Walks, PRoWs and permissive paths</li> <li>• Lack of horse riding trails and bridleways</li> <li>• Lack of 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map for the area</li> <li>• Fragmented approach by angling stakeholders</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underutilisation of resources such as Lough Ross and Camlough Mountain / Forest</li> <li>• Lack of opportunities for teenagers to partake in outdoor recreation</li> </ul> <p><b>Tourism Market</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist market is dominated by day visitors with limited spend in the area</li> <li>• Less developed than other areas within Council from the perspective of road network, signage, mobile coverage</li> <li>• Lack of accommodation stock</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitor Services &amp; Facilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of visitor services e.g. toilets, parking, changing facilities, equipment hire, etc</li> <li>• Several public facilities closed e.g. Camlough Mountain Forest Drive, Ballintemple Viewpoint</li> <li>• Poor public transport and lack of rambler services</li> <li>• Lack of high quality, consistent and informative visitor information e.g. walking trailhead information panels</li> </ul> <p><b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor dissemination of information about current activities</li> <li>• No central resource (e.g. website) containing information on outdoor recreation opportunities for local community</li> </ul> <p><b>Engagement / Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of engagement with communities out with the AONB e.g. Newtownhamilton, Belleek, Whitecross</li> </ul>
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Opportunities	Threats
<p><b>Management Structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embryonic South Armagh Outdoor Recreation Forum</li> <li>• Embryonic South Armagh, Newry and Down Sports Association (SANDSA)</li> <li>• Ability for Council to avail of licences with FSNI in order to manage forests to provide additional/new outdoor recreation facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Tourism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased market awareness provided by Killeavy Castle development</li> <li>• Potential to combine arts, culture and heritage with innovative short activity breaks</li> <li>• Potential to build on partnerships with both Monaghan and Louth County Councils</li> </ul> <p><b>Outdoor Recreation Product / Experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catalyst Projects within Council's Tourism Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ UNESCO Global Geopark</li> <li>○ Newry Canal Blueway</li> <li>○ Great Eastern Greenway – Connection from Newry to Carlingford</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Activity Hubs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Camlough Lake</li> <li>○ Camlough Mountain / Forest</li> <li>○ Lough Ross</li> <li>○ Slieve Gullion Forest Park</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Management Structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme (HLF Funded) due to conclude in August 2018</li> </ul> <p><b>Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrialisation may negatively impact upon permissive path agreements, scenic landscape, existing access and future development</li> <li>• Private land owners concerns over liability restricting access / development on private land</li> </ul> <p><b>Outdoor Recreation Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued silo product development overtaking a strategic approach</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tree disease</li> <li>• Wild Fires</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Poor planning / development could lead to further path erosion, parking congestion</li> </ul> <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for increased apathy due to slow delivery of outdoor recreation development</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clarity due to current NI Assembly impasse and Brexit</li> <li>• Difficulty in securing match funding</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ See Table 4</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ring of Gullion Way – increase % of off-road walking</li> <li>○ Ring Dyke Way</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated website to promote outdoor recreation provision for local community</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of relevant funding programmes – e.g. RDP, HLF, Sport NI</li> </ul>	
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## 9. ACTION PLAN 2017 – 2027

Code	Site / Trail / Area	Action	Delivery Partners	Timescale
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A.	MANAGEMENT / STRUCTURE			
A1	Area Wide	<b>Ring of Gullion Partnership's</b> geographical remit should be extended to incorporate the entire study area i.e. Slieve Gullion DEA and Ward of Fathom.  Details at 7.1.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> </ul>	Year 1
A2	Area Wide	<b>Ring of Gullion Partnership</b> increase in staff resource to include a dedicated Outdoor Recreation Officer.  Details at 7.1.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> </ul>	Year 1
A3	Area Wide	<b>Broaden Current AONB Management Group / LPS Board</b> to including major landowners / land manager and promoters of outdoor recreation.  Details at 7.1.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Forest Service NI</li> <li>• The National Trust</li> <li>• Woodland Trust</li> <li>• NIEA</li> <li>• Loughs Agency</li> <li>• Sport NI</li> </ul>	Year 1



A4	Area Wide	<b>South Armagh Outdoor Recreation Forum</b> – utilise this plan to create a clear agenda for the Forum. Meet at least twice a year  Details at 7.1.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>	Year 1
A5	Area Wide	<b>South Armagh Angling Forum</b> – Establish a Forum to address the current fragmented approach and provide an agreed vision, mission and objectives for the development of angling.  Details at 7.1.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Loughs Agency</li> <li>• Local Angling Clubs</li> <li>• Relevant National Governing Bodies e.g. Angling NI, Ulster Angling Federation, National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland</li> </ul>	Year 2
<b>B.</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>			
B1	Area Wide	<b>Community Trail Plan</b> – Commission a trail plan to allow strategic development of trails  Details at 7.2.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> </ul>	Year 2
B2	Site Specific	<b>Activity Hub Master Planning</b> – undertake master planning for the following sites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various see Section 7.2.3.2</li> </ul>	Year 1 – 2  Year 5 -7  Year 3-4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camlough Lake (update 2011 masterplan)<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Camlough Mountain</li> <li>• Lough Ross</li> <li>• Slieve Gullion Forest Park (ongoing)</li> </ul> <p>See details in Section 7.2.3.2</p>		Year 1 - 2
B3	Site Specific	<p><b>Community Hub Development</b> – undertake feasibility studies to develop the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kiltybane</li> <li>• Derrymore House (Ongoing)</li> <li>• Forkhill</li> </ul> <p>See details in Section 7.2.3.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>	<p>Year 3-4</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Year 2</p>
B4	Area Wide	<p><b>Develop ‘Visitor Information and Signage Guidelines’</b> – to encompass welcome signage, information and interpretation, visitor safety, visitor orientation and trail waymarking</p> <p>See details in Section 7.2.3.4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> </ul>	Year 1 -2

<sup>10</sup> At the time of writing Council has issued an Invitation to Tender for Camlough Lake – Recreational Event Hub. The specification is split into two phases. Phase 1 includes an initial feasibility study and economical appraisal to agree the preferred option to provide a recreational event hub. Phase 2 is to develop the scheme to detailed design stage and obtain relevant statutory approvals to completion of RIBA Stage 3

<b>C. SPECIFIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT - WALKING</b>				
C1	Trail Specific	<b>Develop Ring Dyke Way</b> – 60km route between all the peaks of ring dyke mountains See details in Section 7.2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROG Landscape Partnership (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>	Year 1-2
C2	Trail Specific	<b>Enhance Ring of Gullion Way Experience</b> to create a high quality 2 day walking experience by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing % of off road walking</li> <li>• increasing number of villages / communities incorporated within route</li> <li>• enhancing the experience through tourism workshops</li> </ul> See details in 7.2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>	Year 3-6  Year 7-10
C3	Area Wide	<b>Prioritise Heritage Sites and theme trails</b> - a process of prioritisation should take place which cross references heritage significance with access potential to focus future resources See details in 7.2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• NIEA (Historic Environment Department)</li> <li>• Local Community</li> <li>• Private Landowners</li> </ul>	Year 3-6
C4	Site Specific	<b>Enhance Trail Head Infrastructure</b> – ensure development of trail head infrastructure i.e. signage, car parking, mobile catering (where applicable) matches trail development See details in 7.2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Landowner / Land manager (various)</li> </ul>	Ongoing
C5	Trail Specific	<b>Support existing walking trail initiatives i.e.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildlife Safari (Glassdrummond Wood)</li> <li>• Slieve Gullion Sensory Trails</li> <li>• Slieve Gullion summit to lake trail restoration</li> </ul> See details in 7.2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROG Landscape Partnership (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>	Ongoing



<b>D. SPECIFIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT – ANGLING</b>				
D1	Area Wide	<b>Deliver the objectives from South Armagh Angling Forum</b> – see Action A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Loughs Agency</li> <li>• Local Angling Clubs</li> <li>• Relevant National Governing Bodies e.g. Angling NI, Ulster Angling Federation, National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>E. SPECIFIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT – ORIENTEERING</b>				
E1	Site Specific	<b>Develop Orienteering Maps</b> for the following sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slieve Gullion Forest Park (within Activity Hub Planning)</li> <li>• Camlough Mountain (within Activity Hub Planning)</li> <li>• Derrymore House (with Community Hub Planning)</li> <li>• Community Orienteering Forests e.g. Glassdrummond Wood</li> </ul> <p>See details in 7.2.3.7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• NI Orienteering</li> <li>• FSNI</li> </ul>	Year 1 -2 Year 5-7 Year 2-3
<b>F. SPECIFIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT – HORSE RIDING</b>				
F1	Site Specific	<b>Consider Horse riding trail development</b> – within master planning of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slieve Gullion Forest Park</li> <li>• Camlough Mountain</li> </ul> <p>See details in 7.2.3.7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• FSNI</li> </ul>	Ongoing

G. SPECIFIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT - CLIMBING				
G1	Site Specific	<p><b>Encourage development of artificial climbing walls</b> within Community Centres and Multi-sports facilities<sup>11</sup></p> <p>See details in 7.2.3.9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Mountaineering Ireland</li> </ul>	Ongoing
H. ENHANCE KEY TOURISM STRATEGY INITIATIVES				
H1	Area Wide	<p><b>UNESCO Global Geopark</b> – support a revised application for UNESCO Global Geopark status which should be submitted to the UK National Commission for UNESCO and establish a new management structure to allow fully coordinated and cohesive management.</p> <p>See details in 7.2.3.10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> <li>• Mourne Heritage Trust</li> </ul>	Year 1-5
H2	Newry Canal	<p><b>The Newry Canal Blueway</b> - move forward with the restoration of the Newry Ship Canal as a Blueway navigable by canoes and small boats and support the local IWAI chapter in undertaking the project.</p> <p>See details in 7.2.3.10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council</li> <li>• ROGP</li> <li>• Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (Lead)</li> </ul>	Year 1-5
H3	Newry	<p><b>Connecting with the Great Eastern Greenway</b> - Continue to work on developing the concept of the Great Eastern Greenway through building connectivity between the Newry Canal Towpath and Newry to Carlingford Greenway</p> <p>See details in 7.2.3.10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• DfI / Transport NI</li> </ul>	Year 1-5

<sup>11</sup>Capital cost for professionally installed artificial climbing walls range between £75 per square metre - £450 per square metres depending on spec required.  
Reference <http://www.epusa.com/download/technicaldata/6/ClimbingWallBudgetGuidelines.pdf>

<b>I. PROMOTION</b>				
I1	Area Wide	<b>Experience Workshop and Mentoring Programme</b> – to act as a catalyst for experience development See details in 7.3.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> <li>• Tourism NI</li> </ul>	Year 1
I2	Event Specific	<b>Events Mentoring Programme</b> – to increase bed nights for key events See details in 7.3.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> <li>• Tourism NI</li> </ul>	Year 1
I3	Area Wide	<b>Improve Websites</b> – in order to provide a high quality source of outdoor recreation information to Visitors and Local Community See details in 7.3.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council (Lead)</li> <li>• ROGP</li> </ul>	Year 2-3
<b>J. ADDRESSING ISSUES AND BARRIERS</b>				
J1	Area Wide	<b>Lobby for Access Legislation Change</b> – support NOF’s campaign for access change by collating views of stakeholders within South Armagh See details in 7.4.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP</li> </ul>	Ongoing
J2	Area Wide	<b>Pilot Private Landowner Engagement Programme</b> - This pilot would be the first of its type in Northern Ireland and would require the following actions which would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a Council position paper of Private Landowner Agreement – it is understood this process is underway</li> <li>• Organising a workshop to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Debunk the myth of liability</li> <li>○ Outline the current options for access agreements on private land</li> <li>○ Showcase best practice from elsewhere</li> <li>○ Listen to and address landowner concerns</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify pilot projects to deliver – perhaps via community trail plan process</li> </ul> See details in 7.4.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP</li> <li>• Council</li> <li>• UFU</li> </ul>	Year 2 – 3
J3	Area Wide	<b>Innovative Anti-Fly tipping Campaign</b> – establish a cross border campaign to highlight issues around fly tipping See details in 7.4.5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP</li> <li>• Monaghan &amp; Louth</li> </ul>	Year 3-5



			County Councils	
J4	Area Wide	<b>Youth Engagement Programme</b> – provide further support / guidance to allow local community groups and clubs access relevant Council and third-party funding programmes. This would allow clubs and organisations to develop bespoke events to act as a hook with follow up programmes providing opportunities for sustained participation. See details in 7.4.6.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROGP (Lead)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>	Ongoing

