

The Ring of Gullion

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

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Winter 2018

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Ring of Gullion Partnership Extended

The Ring of Gullion Partnership is pleased to announce that the Scheme has been given a 13-month extension until September 2019 to complete some key work.

Over the next 13 months the Partnership will be concentrating on the delivery of the Slieve Gullion path repairs from the south cairn to the lake; rolling out the townland stones to your communities; producing the Schools Heritage Guidebook and associated training, and carrying out one last archaeological dig.

The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Chairperson, Des Murphy, said, "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have granted the Scheme an extension. The extra time will allow us to deliver quality projects for us all to enjoy. The team are also hard at work planning the legacy phase, and we hope to secure enough funding to allow us to develop and deliver more exciting and much-needed projects for South Armagh."

To keep up to date with the delivery of the projects visit www.ringofgullion.org/projects

Summer Successes

We have had the most successful Lúnasa Festival yet, bringing in over double the number of visitors we had last year. We had singer/songwriter John Spillane enchanting attendees at his concert; we were visited by dinosaurs and invaded by Celts, not to mention the many guided walks and other hands-on events.

Check out the images below for just a few of the highlights. For even more pictures visit the Lúnasa Festival 2018 gallery on the website (www.ringofgullion.org/gallery).

You can even watch videos of the John Spillane Concert, an entertaining sword fight and falconry flying.



**John Spillane
in Concert**




**Pond
Dipping**



**Geotastic
Extravaganza**



**Cultured
Celts**



**Gap o' the North
Walk**

Ring of Gullion Winter Solstice Festival

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the Ring of Gullion Partnership will be kicking off the Winter Solstice Festival on Wednesday 1st November, traditionally known as Samhain. In Celtic Ireland, about 2,000 years ago, Samhain was the division of the year between the lighter half (summer) and the darker half (winter).



For the next two months, the Ring of Gullion Partnership is providing a magical programme of events showcasing all that is great about the area with a range of lectures, music and craft workshops. This area reflects the mix of cultures from the Neolithic Era to the present day.

The Festival will be showcasing one of the area's greatest storytellers Michael J Murphy with a Winter School in his honour. This year will be highlighting the rich cultural language of the local area.

If you want to save money on Christmas presents and create something with your very own hands, then sign up for some of the craft workshops from straw craft to Carrickmacross Lace.

Check out the Ring of Gullion website:

www.ringofgullion.org/events or call (028) 3082 8590

for the full programme of events over the next two months and book your spaces early!

Michael J Murphy Schools' Project

Four local primary schools, all nestling at the foot of Slieve Gullion, have come together to work in the spirit of Michael J Murphy, while using the technology of today, to record stories of pawning, smuggling and an arrest from the altar!

The schools, St. Mary's PS, Mullaghbane; St Oliver Plunkett's PS, Forkhill; Dromintee PS and St. Joseph's PS, Meigh, have joined forces with Scoil Eoin Pol, Loch an Iúir to undertake the project. The group has successfully secured funding from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, to work with their local communities in collecting and recording stories from around the "Foot of Slieve Gullion and the Shores of Loch an Iúir".

These stories will be showcased at the launch of this year's Michael J Murphy Winter School, where local journalist and compère Eamonn Mallie, will introduce the short films as well as tell some stories of his own!



In addition, the P6 pupils from each school are working on a dramatisation of the story "Fionn Mac Cumhaill and the Calliagh Berra". The script, initially written by local teacher and Irish Language enthusiast, Master Seamus Keating, has been specially adapted by Anne Garvey, for the group. Each school will take a section of the story to dramatise and film, these will then be edited together to create one short film, which can be seen over the weekend of the Winter School.

Finally, artists from the local ROGHA group will work with pupils to create pieces for a schools' display entitled "Slieve Gullion... Loch an Iúir... the View from our School". These pieces of work will feature in an exhibition planned for the weekend of events, which starts on Thursday 15th November and runs to Sunday 18th November.

Getting Woolly in Norway

ASCENT (Apply Skills and Conserve our Environment with New Tools) Project Partners came together in Odda, Norway in September 2018 to share knowledge and discuss the common challenges for upland management faced across all countries within the Northern Periphery and Arctic Circle.

Our Norwegian hosts, from Hordaland County Council, were particularly keen to learn about Irish 'sheep's wool' paths, which were traditionally used to 'float' pathways over bogs and deep peat. This trip formed part of a broader aspiration to share knowledge and engage more closely with land management bodies on an international level.



Lining path base with sheep's wool

The collaboration will help develop strategic solutions for the conservation of upland areas in the face of widespread challenges such as habitat decline, increased tourism and climate change. The ASCENT Project includes partners from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Iceland, Norway and Finland.

Closer to home, horticulture students from Clanrye Group have taken on the new challenge of assisting the ASCENT Slieve Gullion Upland Path Team. They will repair sections of erosion along the Slieve Gullion Summit Path using hand tools and traditional techniques.

In 2019 we hope to create a regular Thursday 'path day' for volunteers, with a training course in February to incentivise participants. Watch this space!



Youth Rangers carrying out path maintenance

New Sensory Trail in Slieve Gullion Forest Park

Forest bathing, instant poetry, tree hugging, Japanese sound sculptures and blind rope challenges are just some of the features of the soon to be launched Sensory Trail in Slieve Gullion Forest Park.

The trail will wind its way along an existing forest drive in the quieter part of the woodland, linking pockets of sensory experience inspired by the natural environment. It will be mainly constructed using local materials and aims to provide a peaceful, calm opportunity for visitors to explore the area using all of their senses. It will offer time out from the hurley-burley of the rest of the park, with plenty of mindfulness practice and relaxation built in.

We designed this trail with children and young people with sensory processing disorders (including those with autism), in mind, and we received a great deal of feedback and help in the design stage from Autism Families, Newry. In building the trail around these particular users, we believe we will have created areas which will provide calm and meaningful sensory experiences for everyone.

Brilliant Trails, an interpretive company based in Galgorm Castle, helped design the trail and are installing the 11 activity points spread over the 1.2km walk. The route will link up with the Squirrel Safari, and it can be enjoyed as either a linear walk or as a loop, returning on the forest drive to the playpark.



Tree-tastic

Autumn is here, and the trees are going to sleep for the winter; it's the perfect time to start planting new ones. We are once again teaming up with "Trees on the Land" to facilitate the 7th annual "Trees on the Land" Planting Day (9th February 2019). Since the partnership between the two organisations began, over 160,000 trees have been planted in the Ring of Gullion.

"Trees on the Land" have a range of native Irish tree packs available to enable you to develop a:

- **Woodland;**
- **Hedge;**
- **Coppice;**
- **Shelter belt or**
- **Orchard (although these are extremely limited).**

Each pack contains 50 bare root trees, ready for immediate planting; though smaller sets of 15 trees are available. A maximum of 40 packs (2,000) trees can be ordered for a single planting project.

A small application fee applies of £19/€21 for a 50-tree pack or £29/€32 for an apple tree pack. For further information and to order your trees, visit www.treesontheland.com/plant-trees/

The Ring of Gullion tree nursery has a few oak, crab apple, willow and some other species freely available to good homes in the Ring of Gullion. If you would be interested in a few free trees, up to a maximum of 10 per person or school, please contact Alison at volunteer@ringofgullion.org. Trees will be allocated on a first come first served basis.



Walkers Flying High at Fathom

A new trail will open this autumn that will link the beautiful Flagstaff Viewpoint, which offers unparalleled vistas over counties Down, Armagh and Louth, with the Carlingford Lough Greenway.

This new route means that walkers will be able to start in Newry City, wander along the Middle Bank with its unique mix of saltwater and freshwater habitats on either side, before crossing the main road at Victoria Locks.

Using the kissing gates to access the zig-zag of the new Lock-keepers' Pad, up through Fathom Forest, ending up at Flagstaff picnic site, overlooking lough and mountains. The trail then links into the Ring of Gullion Way.

Traditionally generations of Lock-keepers worked as part-time farmers on Fathom and ran down trails in the woods to open the gates of Victoria Locks, when the tides were right, to allow ships into Newry Canal. Stories of the Lock, its history and workers, along with the wildlife of lough and mountain are told in a new Trail Guide, available from the Newry VIC.

Please note that the trail passes by a private home, we are grateful for the co-operation of the family; please respect their privacy when walking this route.



Tram Nearly Back on the Rails



One of the very first projects for the fledgeling Landscape Partnership was the lifting of the derelict tram body from behind the bus stop at Sturgan Brae. The dramatic image of the crane lift featured on the front cover of our Spring 2015 newsletter. Since then updates have kept readers informed about the renovation of the carriage by the students of the Southern Regional College.

Now, finally, a new permanent home for the project has been agreed. The tram, that ran using hydro-electric power along the short track linking Newry to Bessbrook, will be sharing space with its big brothers, the Enterprise and Intercity trains, at the Newry Translink Rail Station.

The renovated tram is unrecognisable from the rotting hulk that was mouldering in the brambles near Camlough Lake. The students have lovingly restored as many of the original wooden fittings as possible with other parts replaced by local joiner Tommy Hughes. The tram is now resplendent in the burgundy and cream livery of the Bessbrook Tram Company. The final touch is the superbly handpainted sign, using Victorian-style lettering, that will welcome Translink travellers at Newry Station, to the Ring of Gullion.

Although our renovated carriage is not part of the original rolling stock of the Bessbrook tramway, an interpretive panel placed next to it, will tell the stories of the life and work of the Linen Mills and the unique tale of one of the first ever hydro-electric trams. We hope that one of the original carriages from the line will be refurbished soon and will find a home in the heart of Bessbrook Village.

Vital Volunteers

Much of the work the Landscape Partnership carries out would be impossible without the varied team of vital volunteers that work alongside Partnership staff. From the Ambassadors and event volunteers, who make the Lúnasa Festival possible each year, to the tree nursery and conservation volunteers, who help us grow new trees and improve the biodiversity of the area.

Volunteering with the Landscape Partnership is a fantastic opportunity to try something new, learn new skills and make new friends, all while making a difference to the local community and environment. So if you'd like to try your hand at volunteering with us, why not come along to one of the Saturday conservation volunteering sessions, during November, and see what you think?

Alternatively, contact Alison on 028 3082 8594 or volunteer@ringofgullion.org for more detailed information on the various volunteering opportunities available during the winter months.



What's On!

When?	What?	Where?
November		
Friday – Saturday 16th – 17th 12pm to late	Michael J Murphy Winter School	Tí Chulainn, Mullaghbane
Saturday 17th 11am – 3pm	Volunteer Opportunity – Cher- ry Laurel Clearance	Slieve Gullion Forest Park
Saturday 24th 10.30am – 4pm	Carrickmacross Lace Workshop	Culloville Community Centre
Saturday 24th 2pm – 4pm	Children's Christmas Crafts (7+)	Slieve Gullion Forest Park
Friday 30th November 7.30pm – 10pm	At Slieve Gullion's Foot presents 'A Night of Nostalgia'	Dromintee Community Centre
December		
Saturday 1st 9am	Bookings open for Winter Solstice Walks	www.ringofgullion. org/events
Saturday 1st 11am – 3pm	Volunteer Opportunity – Vegetation Clearance	Slieve Gullion Forest Park
Thursday 8th 7.30pm – 10.30pm	Women in South Armagh	Culloville Community Centre
Mon 17th – Thurs 20th 3pm – 5pm	Winter Solstice Walks	Slieve Gullion Mountain
Friday 21st 3pm – 5pm	Winter Solstice Walk as Gaeilge	Slieve Gullion Mountain
Saturday 22nd 2.30pm – 5pm	Immersive Winter Solstice Experience	Slieve Gullion Mountain
January		
Saturday 12th 11am – 3pm	Volunteer Oppor- tunity – Vegetation Clearance	Jonesborough Forest
Saturday 26th 11am – 3pm	Volunteer Oppor- tunity – Vegetation Clearance	Slieve Gullion Forest Park

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

News in Brief

1. The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Manager, Darren Rice, presented the work of the Ring of Gullion, with particular attention on woodland recreation, to the Productive Woodlands Conference in Glenarm Estate in September.
2. During the summer the Landscape Partnership was very proud to be nominated as a finalist in the National Lottery Awards; which is a competition to select the people's favourite Lottery-funded project.

We were overwhelmed as over 1,500 people voted for us. We did not win first place, this honour went to the fantastic Poli-nation project, but the organisers were impressed by our campaign, and we would like to thank everyone who voted.

3. If your community would like to help us install townland stones in your area, please get in touch on 028 3082 8594 or email volunteer@ringofgullion.org



Crossmaglen Community Centre
O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9HG
E: info@ringofgullion.org
T - 028 3082 8590



Ring of Gullion
Landscape Partnership



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and Down
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