

# Living Laboratory Study Visit Report



The ASCENT Site

## Slieve Donard & Slieve Gullion, Northern Ireland

**T1.3 Sharing Path Management Knowledge, Exchange of Experience and Learning, T2.2 Upskilling & Toolkits and, T3.4 Engagement with Key Users & Stakeholders**

by Newry Mourne and Down District Council and Mourne Heritage Trust



**ASCENT**  
Promoting Sustainable Access  
to Uplands & Natural Environments



**Northern Periphery and  
Arctic Programme**  
2014–2020



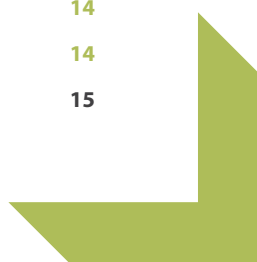
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# Northern Ireland Living Laboratory Study Visit Report: A Practitioners Perspective and Steering Group Meeting 23 - 27 April, 2018

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# Introduction

ASCENT partners and sub-partners, including lead partner Donegal County Council in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), as well as Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) and the Mourne Heritage Trust (MHT) in Northern Ireland (NI); Metsähallitus Park and Wildlife in Finland; Hordaland County Council in Norway; and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland; along with associated partners including Katla Geo-Park, Sjálfböðaliðar Umhverfisstofnunar (Iceland Conservation Volunteers); and Mossfellsbær Municipality and Skaftárhreppur met in Northern Ireland from 22nd-27th April 2018 both for the Steering Group 3 meeting, and to share knowledge and experience through site visits and a thematic workshop. Activities during the week were also delivered under the Living Laboratory study visit programme. A full list of attendees is included in the appendix.

The trip was hosted by the Northern Ireland ASCENT partner, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC), and sub-partner Mourne Heritage Trust, and included visits to key sites within the Slieve Gullion and Slieve Donard areas. The theme of the trip was the necessity for, and practical application of, upland path maintenance and pressure for route development in response to increasing use. Within this theme several issues were explored, such as the benefits and issues of hired contractors and plant machinery work as opposed to in-house and hand work, revenue versus capital funding, and proactive and reactive approaches. Additionally, the study trip also aimed to demonstrate Northern Ireland's current approach to addressing the increasing use of upland areas and sought to explore the rationale for not only having consistent resources available for path maintenance, but for how that capacity can be developed in areas of need.

The trip provided an invaluable opportunity for practical knowledge-sharing activities. ASCENT team participants from Iceland, Finland, Norway, Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland engaged in practical path repair on two separate sites in the spirit of sharing experience and learning new skills.



## Chapter 2

# Steering Group Meeting and Ring of Gullion Visit

On Monday 23rd April 2018, there was a third Steering Group meeting of ASCENT project partners held at Ti Chulainn Cultural Activity Centre, which is situated in the Ring of Gullion (RoG) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). ASCENT project partners not involved in the meeting visited key areas within the Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in order to view the tourist infrastructure in place and how the area is managed.

The Ring of Gullion (RoG) is an area of deep environmental and cultural significance, which has become an increasingly popular tourism spot due to the numerous points of interest in the area's geology, and the related fields of archaeology, mythology and heritage. ASCENT partners spent two days in this area in order to gain insight into the approaches implemented by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as part of the 2017–2021 tourism strategy for Newry, Mourne and Down. The site visit provided examples of how this strategy is currently being implemented, and the associated effects on sensitive upland areas within the AONB.

The first site visited was Moyry Castle: an example of a lowland tourism attraction within the wider draw of the Ring of Gullion area. The historic connection with the castle provides cultural interest for visitors, and establishes a visual context of 'The Gap of the North' and the Ring of Gullion landscape. This visit helped to provide context and background information for the study trip, such as the strengths and complications for sustaining upland areas in Northern Ireland for the purpose of environmental conservation, while also anticipating and encouraging an increase in visitor growth and economic activity in the area. A discussion on the potential implication of Brexit was also introduced, with particular regard given to the uncertainty of the future border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and how this may impact the area.

The next site was located within Slieve Gullion Forest Park, an area jointly managed by the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Forest Service NI and The Clanrye Group, providing free visitor access and recreational activities for a range of visitor demographics. The 'Giant's Lair' Story Trail was showcased as a highly accessible trail suitable for young families and visitors with limited mobility. The mile-long circular route's key feature is a 'storybook theme', with interactive artwork and play areas based on popular Irish myths and legends. The trail is also close to public amenities, such as restroom facilities, a play park, café and picnic areas. The Story Trail gave a good example of delivering alternative forms of outdoor recreation, with the key bonus of providing low-land activities at the foot of Slieve Gullion. This can offset damage to upland trails, which are more sensitive to footfall erosion, by diverting users to more sustainable facilities. The visit invoked a discussion among project partners, who compared the Story Trail to the accessible national park paths witnessed in Riisitunturi, Finland. Although generally perceived as a unique and interesting walk, the point was made that accessible trails are mainly children/family orientated, but often ignore a demographic of people with limited mobility, who may wish to experience more natural and remote settings offered by outdoor areas.



ASCENT partners at Moyry Castle



## Chapter 3

# Slieve Gullion Site Visit

Project partners visited Slieve Gullion (c.573m) on Tuesday 24th April 2018 in order to review the proposed repair of the mountain summit trail, and inspect the current condition of the path and surrounding habitat. The trail currently has approx. 30,000 visits per year. The group was joined by representatives from McGowan Ltd, who are contracted to repair the mountain top path. The trail begins from the top car park (c.380m), which is located at the crest of the Slieve Gullion scenic driving route.

It was noted that the path repairs in 2013 had done much to restore damage caused by the original lines and braids, with heathland restoration apparent in old erosion scars. However, the path has been subjected to rising pressures due to the increasing popularity of the site. The influx of visitors may have caused rapid deterioration of the repaired path and has caused damage to the adjacent heathland habitats that were beginning to show signs of recovery in an area not built to accommodate large volumes of visitors. In particular, the narrowness of the trail (c.1m width) was cited as a cause of the erosion alongside much of the path. The limited demarcation and landscaping of the trail was a leading cause of line braiding, as walkers bypass the trail line in order to traverse to the next contour. Natural weathering effects were also accelerated due to unfit runoff management structures.

A key subject for discussion was the potential consequences of repairing or building pathways to mitigate footfall erosion in sensitive upland areas. Comparisons between Slieve Gullion and Cuilcagh Mountain in County Fermanagh were drawn as, at both sites, managers either repaired or built paths as a tool to conserve sensitive habitats from user impact. The increased tourism brought about by these developments has, however, been both unexpected and un-catered for. (This can be exacerbated by the presence of other nearby tourist infrastructure as is the case at Slieve Gullion Forest Park). Path repair can often be inappropriate if trail design has been shaped by what is most suited to preserve the area, but does not anticipate or cater for increasing tourism and a more varied visitor demographic. At Slieve Gullion, for example, the path

rapidly changes from a mild, moderately steep, yet straightforward path to a challenging rocky scramble. Project partners from Iceland noted similarities in the conflict between tourism plans and conservation stakeholders with their own experiences. Moreover, Northern Ireland is a relatively small country with limited resources.

At the summit of Gullion, project partners were led through the proposed line of repair, which guides visitors from the Passage Cairn along the summit plateau towards Calliagh Berra's Lough (approx. 800m). The path repair, which is to be carried out by upland path contractor McGowan Ltd, aims to reduce damage caused by footfall erosion to the sensitive montane heathland habitat present along the area and to improve visitor capacity in anticipation of growing visitor numbers over the next five years.



ASCENT Partners at Slieve Gullion

Path erosion caused by increasing visitor numbers, footfall erosion and natural weathering is apparent at Slieve Gullion



## Chapter 4

# ASCENT Thematic Seminar at Tory Bush Cottages

On Tuesday 24th April 2018, a seminar was held with ASCENT partners and wider stakeholders at Tory Bush cottages, with the underlying theme of innovation in path work and valuing volunteers. The seminar was opened by Mourne Heritage Trust Chair, Desmond Patterson, and included talks from McGowan Ltd and the Mourne Heritage Trust.

### 4.1

## McGowan Presentation

The first presentation gave project partners an insight into path work from the perspective of a private contractor. McGowan Ltd representatives described the civil engineering company's ethos, past work, and current plans for the Slieve Gullion mountain top trail.

McGowan Ltd has worked on several upland projects similar to Slieve Gullion across the UK and Ireland and has built up experience working on sensitive and designated land. For example, the company repaired an upland pathway within the Sliabh League Special Area of Conservation site in west Donegal using local stone to complete pitching, and also using geotextile and geogrid materials as required.

The company also explained how they added value as part of a contract for interested parties by providing tailored training events, which demonstrated upland path work principles and techniques, including a 'Hands-On' practical session..

The presentation concluded with an outline of the current Slieve Gullion upland path project, which McGowan will be undertaking in 2019.

### 4.2

## Mourne Heritage Trust Presentation

The Mourne Heritage Trust ASCENT path team and volunteer path team delivered a joint presentation on path work and upland habitat maintenance from the perspective of a public sector/ charitable organisation. The presentation focused on the Glen River path repair project, and invoked a discussion on the use of volunteer involvement for path projects. Three volunteers presented their own experiences of being part of the path team and cited the benefits of volunteer involvement for the purpose of gaining work experience; providing opportunities for upskilling; providing social opportunities; and enabling members of the public to make lasting contributions to culturally- important areas.

The presentation also documented new techniques being trialled through the ASCENT project. The use of multimedia was demonstrated as a valuable means of documenting project progress, and path work techniques, such as creating branch and aggregate steps, while using sheep's wool as a membrane to create 'floating paths' over boggy areas was also reported on.

MHT Chairperson, Desmond Patterson, welcoming ASCENT partners to the seminar





## Chapter 5

# Path Work Demonstration: Slieve Gullion and Slieve Donard

Path work demonstrations at Slieve Gullion and Slieve Donard were provided as part of the NI study visit as an opportunity to review the techniques used by the Mourne Heritage Trust ASCENT Path Team and Mourne Heritage Trust Volunteer Path Team, and to get an idea of the benefits and challenges of this methodology.

### 5.1

## Slieve Gullion

On Slieve Gullion on Monday 23rd April 2018, path work was carried out with a focus on landscaping and path redesign. Project partners were introduced to the challenges of this area, as natural path-making materials, such as loose stone and aggregate, are scarce and often unusable due to the protected nature of the site. Path team members demonstrated how they repair path sections through the use of hand tools, native materials and volunteer effort.

The site chosen for the work displayed a common path problem: the curved path and rocky design become neglected by visitors, who prefer to traverse a straighter line where possible, thereby creating a visible line of erosion, which becomes more widely used over time. The solution was to relay the original path to make the trail more apparent and desirable to walk on, in this case by shifting rocks to make stone steps less steep and more obvious for walkers, and by using crowbars and straps to reposition the stones, and shovels and hand tools to demarcate the area being worked on.

In addition to the path reconstruction work, efforts were also made to demarcate the false trail by using a 'mound and dip technique', where peat is sourced and extracted from one area of the false trail and transported to the trail entrance. The mound provides a physical block to deter walkers, while the dip makes the terrain more uneven and undesirable to walk on. The area is then landscaped with turf and vegetation to blend the work back into the landscape.



Mound and dip technique used to demarcate a false trail at Slieve Gullion

## 5.2

### Slieve Donard

On Thursday 25th April 2018, the Slieve Donard site at the Glen River was chosen to show the diversity of issues, which can arise with path work projects. At this site, natural materials were abundant, with plenty of loose granite, aggregate till deposits and native turf to utilise for path building. However, the main issue on this site is managing the excessive drainage which filters into the path due to the topography of the Glen River valley. In addition, the popularity of this path, which is cited as the 'honey pot' of the Mournes, means that it is necessary to widen the existing path to cope with increasing visitor numbers.

The ASCENT path work was carried out on a c.5 section of path, which was subject to water damage and braiding. The agreed solution was to realign a series of steps to account for a sudden gradient increase in the path; to reconstruct and fortify an old water bar to increase its effectiveness; to improve the path linearity; and to demarcate braided lines and the surrounding landscape using a variety of different methods.

The ASCENT partners used hand tools and teamwork to shift significant quantities of aggregate and move large stones, including a locally-made slipe, in order to complete the job. Several key path work techniques were demonstrated, such as boulder extraction using a pinch bar, stone laying, water bar construction and water-based demarcation.



Natural aggregate was extracted from pits and used to create a firm path surface on the Glen River path at Slieve Donard. To the rear, stone steps were realigned to improve the path line and account for changing gradients



## Chapter 6

# Site Visits: Slieve Donard and Slieve Binnian

Site visits to Slieve Donard and Slieve Binnian allowed ASCENT project partners time to study previous work completed by the Mourne Heritage Trust and The National Trust

### 6.1

## Slieve Donard

The trip to Slieve Donard on Wednesday 24th April 2018 followed the Glen River trail, which is currently being maintained by the ASCENT path team and volunteers. The trail begins in the busy holiday town of Newcastle, County Down. As a result, the path has a high visitor density, with approximately 90,000 visitors per year. Walker demographics are highly varied, and, despite the strenuous nature of the route, families, inexperienced walkers and fundraising events attracting novice mountain users are common. Land ownership is complex, with local council, NI Water, Forest Service NI, the National Trust and Trustee grazers all having jurisdiction over parts of Slieve Donard.

At the beginning of the walk, littering and vandalism were discussed. The local authority has a duty to ensure that the public right of way is not obstructed, but has only a discretionary remit to repair and manage promotion of the route and deal with littering at the site, with limited resources to maintain regular litter collection duties. Charities and local walking groups have organised litter-picking events on site in the past, but the upkeep of these activities can be difficult to maintain. Several suggestions from ASCENT project partners were noted, including invoking social responsibility through anti-littering signage.

The varying land use impacts on the path were also apparent further up the path, where forestry clear-felling operations in winter 2017 obstructed parts of the trail between the second and third bridges causing users to create new desire lines.

Path work carried out by the ASCENT path team and volunteers was inspected from the third bridge onwards, where the path begins to leave the forest and becomes a direct route to Slieve Donard and the rest of the Mournes. ASCENT partners displayed interest in the stone/aggregate mix of the path composition, as well as the use of tree branches to retain aggregate steps over rough terrain.



Using Diggers for path repair in the Mourne Mountains

The role of livestock grazing on the Mourne Mountains was also explained to project partners, where appropriate sheep grazing is imperative to maintain the heathland habitats, which cover the mountain landscapes. On Slieve Donard, grazing is monitored by the National Trust in order to ensure that it maintains the wet and dry heath in favourable conditions as required under Natura 2000 designation.

At the 'saddle' of Slieve Donard, the group was met by MHT's Area Ranger, Dave Farnan, who talked about recently-finished contractor path work that he designed and supervised on Slieve Donard, and the Brandy Pad, which utilised a 5-tonne excavator and hand work. Repairs to the Mourne Wall were also inspected at this site, which have been conducted under the management of NI Water contractor, GEDA Construction, with additional advice and guidance from Mourne Heritage Trust. This project is part of NI Water's commitment to the 'Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estates'.

The ASCENT group was then led to the top of Slieve Donard in order to view current damage to the trail, which has been subject to heavy footfall traffic, leading to a large amount of braiding and erosion of the surrounding peatland habitats.

The trail descent took project partners past Thompson's Quarry: the proposed site for the Mourne Gondola development, which is one option being considered in the Mourne Mountain Gateway Study to enhance visitor attractions within the Newry, Mourne and Down area. There was a broad discussion of the various government drivers behind the proposal, and the need for departments to coordinate to mitigate potential problems: an issue highlighted at the ASCENT workshop in 2017: 'Upland Pathwork – Are Good Principles Enough?'



Footfall erosion damage is apparent along the final ascent to the peak of Slieve Donard



## 6.2

### Slieve Binnian

The ASCENT project partners visited Slieve Binnian on Friday, 26th April 2018 – the final day of the study trip. This gave the group additional opportunities to review wider path work and heathland restoration work undertaken by the Mourne Heritage Trust. The group was joined by representatives from Mountaineering Ireland, who have an interest in upland recreation management, and, in 2014, facilitated the development of the Helping the Hills Principles; a code of ethics to guide the management of upland paths.

ASCENT partners reviewed work including that undertaken by a contracted path team comprised of temporary/seasonal staff with experience of working or volunteering with the ASCENT path work team. The squad was trained and supervised by the ASCENT path team and other MHT staff. The work was completed in March 2018 and included sections of the Ben Crom Reservoir path, the Slieve Binnian-Lamagan col path and the summit path to Slieve Binnian North Tor. This work, which dated from 2011, was funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Sport NI and Tourism NI, with matched funding provided by NI Water.

Heathland restoration was also inspected at the Binnian-Lamagan col. Work at this site was carried out in 2017 and 2018 by the Mourne Mountains Landscape Partnership Scheme and Mourne Heritage Trust, and funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Techniques for heathland restoration are also used in upland path maintenance and encompass a multi-faceted approach to upland landscape management.

Path contractor work, including use of 3- and 5-tonne excavators, was also inspected. Comments were made regarding the high-quality work completed by the contract team, as well as the attentive landscaping that blended the work with the natural surroundings. It is important to note that the contractors had been supervised on a daily basis by MHT Ranger, Dave Farnan.



ASCENT partners at Slieve Binnian discussing heathland restoration work at Binnian Lough

At several sections, project partners observed the outcome of the use of Geotextile (terram) to line parts of the Slieve Binnian summit trail in 2011. The textile was intended to 'float' the path over more saturated areas of land, by laying the material in the path trench before covering with aggregate and rock (a man-made version of the sheep wool technique). However, path weathering and erosion have caused the textile to become exposed in some areas. This not only becomes unsightly, but could hinder walkers on the path. Moreover, questions were raised about using a man-made material in a natural and remote environment, when natural alternatives such as sheep wool could be used instead.

The conclusion of this site visit was lunch at the Carrick Café as an example of the effective entrepreneurship of landowners in the area. Many local residents within the Mourne AONB have taken advantage of their proximity to key access routes (which are mostly in isolated areas), in order to financially benefit from the increasing popularity of the Mourne Mountains. Other examples include the development of private car parks, camp sites, B&Bs and 'glamping pods', which have grown to accommodate rising visitor numbers to the area. However, this can, in turn, stimulate increased user numbers and 'loading' on the natural and sensitive landscape.



## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

The Northern Ireland study trip provided ASCENT partners with an opportunity to explore several key issues in upland path management:

### 7.1

## Valuing upland and remote sensitive landscapes

An overarching theme was the concern that upland and remote sensitive landscapes were not valued enough by governments. This has resulted in a 'piecemeal' approach to management and challenges to the area caused by conflicting government agendas.

### 7.2

## Contractors vs. In-House

One key discussion point, which arose during the study trip, was the debate about using contractors to deliver upland conservation projects as opposed to using in-house staff. Contract work is primarily the way capital expenditure is delivered and has to follow strict procurement rules. This can be a highly-desirable solution for land managers, particularly those with tight time and funding pressures, and the project itself is large in scale. Contractors can quickly mobilise significant resources to allow a land manager to address problems in a thorough way, whereas use of in-house resources sometimes offers a more limited option due to wider demands on staff.

In Northern Ireland, the use of contractors for upland projects has yielded positive results, however there are several limitations that have been noted during the course of the ASCENT project. Cost is a primary factor, as contractor-led projects can be highly expensive, particularly if specialised tools, machinery or plant are needed for the job (for example, helicopter lifts for materials). This means that contractor use is often reserved for large capital projects as opposed to small-scale or maintenance jobs.



Mourne Heritage Trust volunteer path team at work at the Glen River, Slieve Donard

Finding skilled contractors can also be difficult. Upland path work often requires highly-specialised workers, who can deliver effective projects in terrain that is usually challenging, exposed and consisting of highly-sensitive habitats. Contractors such as McGowan Ltd have proven to be effective and well adapted in delivering path work projects in sensitive areas. However, contractors with the skills and experience needed for this work are often limited in NI and ROI, and inappropriate work has been carried out in a number of upland sites, with remedial work often required to fix the errors. In response to this risk, MHT has supervised all contractors they work with, and has, in effect, 'upskilled' them on site. This can be very effective and can help build capacity within the industry, but it is a major staff resource commitment for land managers and non-governmental organisations, such as MHT.

In comparison, skilled, in-house staff are often more suited to manage 'stitch in time' or 'constant effort' adaptations to upland management, and can be an effective solution to sites which require ongoing management, or where unforeseen impacts, such as path damage due to storm flooding, can occur. In addition, volunteer groups are also an effective, low-cost solution, which can bring a variety of skills and local knowledge to path maintenance projects. However, maintaining volunteer effort and enthusiasm often require staff presence and key personnel who are able to recruit and motivate consistent effort on paths.

### 7.3

## Proactive vs Reactive Approaches

A consistent theme of the Northern Ireland visit and subsequent discussions was the comparison between proactive maintenance and repairs on upland sites with reactive repair projects.

The former can be 'stitch in time', such as keeping drains clear, or more substantial work, such as fixing wash-out caused by a storm event. This is routinely revenue funded and usually involves in-house staff and volunteers or a contract team. The latter tends to be a larger-scale project, often dealing with more substantial damage, and responding to significant visitor increases, resulting in path/habitat damage. It is often capital funded and for this reason is a one-off hit, tendered out to a contractor. There is also usually no ongoing maintenance

money. If poorly planned and delivered, the latter can inadvertently cause further problems by making the site more accessible, or by changing the experience, such as by introducing an overtly engineered solution in a previously wild landscape. This can increase the use beyond the carrying capacity of the improved path etc., causing new and often more significant damage than that which the repair work had originally fixed. It can also affect safety dynamics by making it easier for unskilled people to access remote landscapes, or by giving users a false sense of safety. It can also result in requests for way marking in remote areas (a contentious issue in both UK and the Republic of Ireland), as more people without the ability to use a map and compass access the site.

This was apparent on Slieve Gullion, where the summit access path had been planned in order to deal with heathland erosion along the original path line. The subsequent path was effective at repairing damage caused by the original path, however, unanticipated visitor number increases within the forest park were reflected in more journeys to the top of Slieve Gullion. This rise in journeys from 4,000 before site redevelopment in 2016, to over 30,000 in 2018 (750% increase) contributed to large amounts of damage and heathland erosion along the summit of the mountain, and reduced the ability of the path to accommodate visitor impact on site. Ultimately, the path was unfit to manage such an increase, which demonstrates the need for effective foresight and proactive thinking when managing future projects, as well as the need for contingency plans and available resources for when unexpected situations do arise. Although the trail network on Gullion is part of a more strategic plan to repair the SAC habitat, a delay between funding for contract work is seen as detrimental, as it can result in a vulnerability in the site since improved sections may 'too quickly' result in increased use before the full site can be made robust.

Land managers and practitioners are often dealing with a range of management issues and not simply a single agenda, e.g., user impact could be assessed on routes used by land management bodies such as farmers, water utilities, foresters and emergency services, and the land could be designated for its habitat, but could also serve as an agricultural resource. Moreover, land managers in Northern Ireland (and within partner countries) are often working within a narrow remit looking at specific sites, and often in isolation from other managers and practitioners and wider knowledge. Pressures to do something - often following the knee-jerk reaction of a land owner or government body, where very short-term funds become available to 'fix' the problem - can result in real or perceived inappropriate intervention, and, as above, often exacerbates the problem. For example, with hindsight, the problems associated with the boardwalk and stairway development at Cuilcagh could possibly have been avoided - or at least reduced - if managers and rangers there had access to a wider support network. Participants therefore felt that giving land managers and practitioners faced with difficult issues access to knowledgeable support and practical advice was important, particularly in light of the findings from the ASCENT Thematic Workshop on Ethics, Standards & Guiding Principles: Managing Upland Paths – Are Good Principles Enough? on 22nd and 23rd November 2017 (T1.2), which recommended setting up an Upland Path Advisory Network to this end.

#### 7.4

### Final Remarks

The Northern Ireland ASCENT steering group meeting and Living Laboratory study visit provided an invaluable opportunity for partners to share knowledge and discuss upland management issues affecting NI and the wider Northern Arctic Periphery countries. The Thematic Seminar provided context for NI's contribution to ASCENT by exploring the feasibility of 'Constant Effort' through use of a path team on the Mourne Mountains and Slieve Gullion, which was supported by ASCENT partners. The work of contractors used with in-house supervision from the Mourne Heritage Trust was also deemed appropriate by partners.

The 'Living Lab' hands-on site work undertaken at Slieve Donard and Slieve Gullion continues to develop understanding and a shared commitment that optimises the value of the project.

The value of building links between European land authorities for the purposes of sharing knowledge, providing expertise and support has been a particularly successful element of the ASCENT project so far. In particular, the ASCENT project has provided momentum in order to inspire, motivate and instigate practical upland management strategies, in the hope of developing legacy plans in preparation for the project end.

#### Chapter 8

## Funding Details

ASCENT (Apply Skills and Conserve our Environment with New Tools) receives European funding through INTERREG VB under the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA) 2014-2020, to address the environmental challenges in seven upland areas, all of which face challenges associated with increased visitor numbers and unregulated access

#### Chapter 9

## More Information

The above information was gained and interpreted through ASCENT project documentation conducted by the Mourne Heritage Trust (MHT) on behalf of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Video interviews and further visit documentation linking to this report are available for this report by contacting Matthew Bushby at [matthew.bushby@mourne.co.uk](mailto:matthew.bushby@mourne.co.uk), or by contacting our offices at Silent Valley Gate Lodge, 74 Head Road, Kilkeel, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, BT344PU, 028417 65489.



# Appendix 1

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