

Slí 2040

County Carlow's Outdoor Recreation Vision for 2040, and our Plan for 2023.



County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2020-2023

Developed in partnership with



River Barrow with permission from 'Carlow Weather'.

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Executive Summary

National and local sport, health, tourism and economic policy recognises the value of outdoor recreation in physical health, mental wellbeing, social interaction and in supporting the local economy.

‘Outdoor Recreation includes all self-propelled sports and physical activities undertaken either formally or socially in natural outdoor settings.’

The outdoors includes all green and blue spaces such as urban parks, village hinterlands, urban riverbanks, local forests and the green and blue gaps between buildings. The format of outdoor recreation in County Carlow is primarily low risk, ‘slow and soft’, and this can provide a deep experience of nature and is especially appropriate for the novice participant.

This 2020 to 2023 strategy is part of a longer-term 2040 pathway to realise the next stage of outdoor recreation development in the county.

The vision for Slí 2040 is

‘Sustainable, Local, Inclusive outdoor recreation’.

Our residents are our priority outdoor recreation participants and they along with visitors to County Carlow deserve more opportunities to benefit from quality outdoor experiences, especially where these opportunities support our wellbeing, health or our local economy.

A partnership model is central to achieving our vision and to make sure that we respect and sustain the host environments, the landowners and our communities. This partnership will be structured under the Carlow Outdoor Recreation Partnership (CORP), which will include the various communities, clubs, voluntary sector, commercial providers and state agencies who animate our outdoors.

Outdoor recreation participation in County Carlow is possible due to the generosity of private and state landowners and this strategy is dependent on their future generosity and the reasonable actions and expectations of outdoor recreation participants.

This partnership structure and our strategic projects cannot be realised by volunteers and goodwill alone. While County Carlow has benefited from the generous and capable support of the County Kilkenny Rural Recreation

Officer, County Carlow lacks its own Rural Recreation Officer who can dedicate their focus to the specific needs of this County. An RRO staff position is required if the potential of outdoor recreation in the county, and this strategy, are to be realised.

We will collaborate with our neighbouring counties to realise the potential of our shared natural resources such as the River Barrow and Blackstairs Mountains. Outdoor recreation development in these collaborative corridors includes not just additional physical infrastructure, but most importantly participation programmes and a well-resourced promotion process.

The River Barrow and the Blackstairs Mountains are the cornerstone natural outdoor recreation resources in County Carlow and they are complemented by a variety of forests, rivers, farmland and urban green and blue spaces throughout the county. Other sites such as the proposed adventure hub in Carlow town and the five outdoor recreation nodes are also valuable outdoor recreation development opportunities.

Local training and education in outdoor recreation trail development and participation will grow the capacity of our communities to develop and use their outdoors. Similarly, the ‘Local Outdoors’ initiative will stimulate community creativity and trail development in the outdoors.

The actions required to deliver County Carlow’s outdoor recreation potential have been grouped under the pillars of:

1. **Integrated Structures:** a partnership, public forum and steering group structure to guide the further outdoor recreation development in the county.
2. **More Participants and a Stronger Network:** supporting clubs, commercial, community, education and voluntary sector provision.
3. **Great Locations:** Developing outdoor recreation locations and facilities.
4. **Increased Awareness:** research and insight, social and environmental awareness, market positioning and effective communications.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.



Figure 1: Strategic Plan Pillars.

To deliver this strategy we will first create the partnership and secure the key resources, then we will pursue our priorities and deliver on our key objectives.

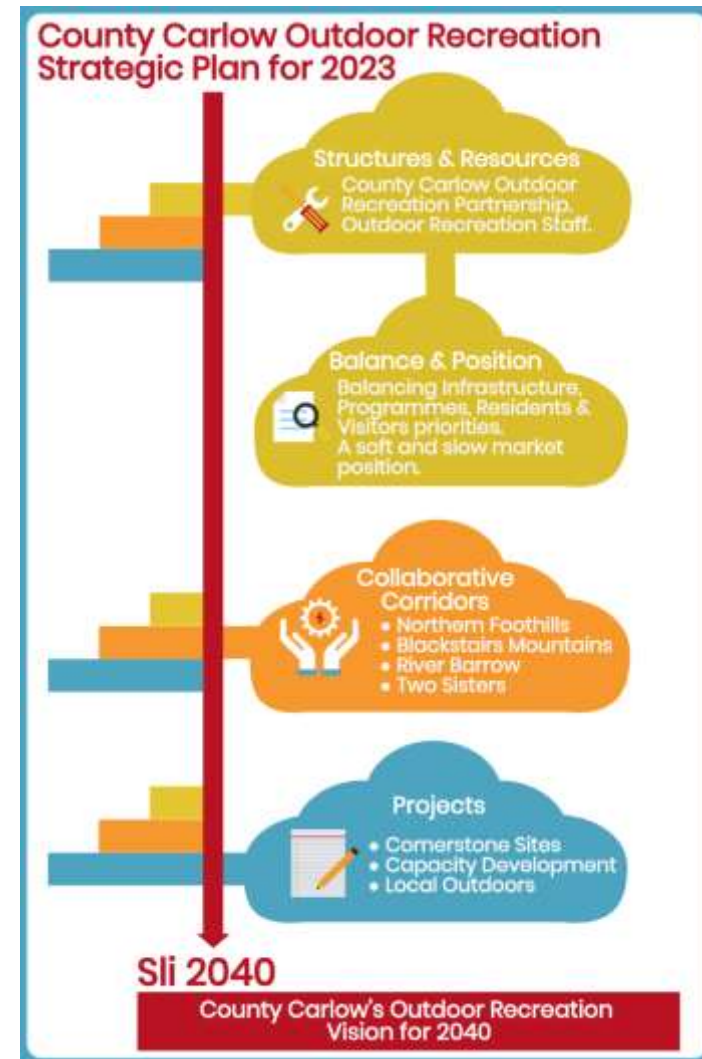


Figure 2: Strategy Components.

Strategy Terms of Reference

The County Carlow Recreation Strategy will focus on the key objectives to be achieved during the period of 2019-2023 with a vision for further developments to 2040.

The stated aims for this strategy are:

- to provide an effective and sustainable framework to maximise current and future opportunities for the participation of outdoor recreational activities in Carlow, whilst striving for the conservation and protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage;
- to reflect the vision and objectives of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy and the Sport Ireland Trails Strategy;
- to recognise the economic potential of recreation from a Tourism viewpoint and separate projects which have an economic benefit from local amenity benefit in the strategy document in line with the accreditation of requirements of the National Trails Office taking consideration of the Fáilte Ireland guidelines.
- to identify the required infrastructure for recreation (signage, parking, trail furniture etc.).
- identify cross-cutting themes i.e. Rivers & Walks.

This strategy is also required to:

- develop detailed implementation plans for cycling and walking trails which are designed to leverage funding in the short to medium term.
- support shared development;
- provide detailed mapping of existing officially and unofficially recognised recreation experiences and facilities and propose an approach to the development of infrastructure to enhance the outdoor recreational user experience.
- provide commentary and recommendations around inter-county potential collaboration and development in outdoor recreation;
- provide recommendations for the development of an outdoor recreation forum which include the development and management process for an initial 5 year period;
- provide detailed costings and implementation plans for cycling and walking trails and associated infrastructure (signage, parking, trail furniture etc.).

Outdoor Recreation Context

The County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategy supports Comhairle na Tuaithe's¹ principles and vision for countryside recreation in Ireland, which welcomes all visitors who practise responsible use of the outdoor resource, and where the rights and responsibilities of both landowners and recreational users are respected. The definition of outdoor recreation in County Carlow is:

'all self-propelled sports and physical activities are undertaken either formally or socially in natural outdoor settings.'

While adhering to the spirit of this definition, the County Carlow Outdoor Recreation strategy also acknowledges the central value of urban parklands and outdoor play areas in outdoor recreation and the contribution of small motorised craft on the river Barrow as part of the outdoor recreation space.

This definition does not include outdoor sports which take place in formal or contrived outdoor settings such as football pitches or golf courses. The following is an example of typical outdoor recreation activities which take place in County Carlow.

Adventure Races	Mountain biking	Rowing
Angling	Off-road cycling	Running
Archery	On-road cycling	Sub Aqua
Dragon Boating	Open water swimming	SUP
Equestrian activities	Orienteering	Trail running
Hill and trail walking.	Paragliding/Hang-gliding	Triathlon

The outdoors includes all green and blue spaces such as urban parks, village hinterlands, urban riverbanks, local forests and the green and blue gaps between buildings. There are further opportunities to create awareness and stimulate the use of these spaces.

¹ Comhairle na Tuaithe was established in January 2004, and comprises representatives of farming organisations, recreational users of the countryside and state bodies with an interest in the countryside. It has three priority areas of: access to the countryside, developing a countryside code and developing a countryside recreation strategy.

Geography

County Carlow is bounded on the West by the river Barrow and on the East by Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains. These two natural resources dominate the outdoor recreation landscape of the county and provide the natural boundaries with its neighbouring counties. Other outdoor recreation resources include the River Slaney, the South Leinster Way, the Wicklow Way, numerous Coillte and private forests, low level walking routes as well as a variety of urban and rural green spaces.

Access

Participation in the outdoors fundamentally requires access to land or watercourses and outdoor recreation in County Carlow is possible due to the generosity of private, semi-state and state landowners who permit this access across a range of activities. The realisation of this strategy is dependent on the future generosity of these landowners and the reasonable actions and expectations of outdoor recreation participants.

Policy and Planning Context

There are several national and local contexts which 'frame' this strategy.

The **Healthy Ireland Framework** identifies a key role for sports and physical activity as a way to support physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The **National Sport Policy 2018 – 2027** emphasises the role of sports and physical activity so that: "People will be inspired, their lives enriched, their enjoyment enhanced, and their quality of life improved as a result of their own active or social participation in sport."

The **Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy** highlights the important role of the outdoors as a venue for sports and physical activity and the importance of an inclusive and fair culture and realising 'sport for life for everyone'.

Fáilte Ireland emphasises the importance of experiential tourism as 'something which one does, sees or feels which is (ideally) unique and

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

certainly distinctive to a particular place.’ County Carlow is located within the **‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ tourism proposition**, and our outdoor recreation environment and activities, are a valuable contribution to this Ancient East tourism experience.

The **Carlow County Development Plan 2015 – 2021** identifies the opportunity for the outdoors in the county.

‘The countryside of Carlow holds vast potential to develop outdoor recreation activities to benefit both tourism and residents²’.

Specific outdoor recreation developments include:

- Potential significant and local walking trails.
- The interconnecting network of river routes along watercourses along the River Barrow, River Slaney and River Burren.
- Local outdoor recreation spaces and opportunities supporting life-long communities.

Proposed outdoor recreation developments are to be permitted within the following (abbreviated) criteria:

- It will not result in damage to sites of nature conservation importance or features of the archaeological and built heritage
- It will not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land
- It will not cause harm to the appearance and character of the local landscape
- The amenity of the people living nearby or the enjoyment of other countryside users is not adversely affected
- Any ancillary built development is small in scale, designed to a high standard and sympathetic to the surrounding environment
- Consideration is given to access to the proposed facility by means of transport other than the private car
- The local road network can safely handle the extra traffic the proposal would generate.

The County Carlow **Children and Young People’s Plan 2017 – 2019** undertaken by the County Carlow Children and Young People’s Services Committee, noted that ‘a need was identified for provision of non-sporting physical activities and encouraging families to enjoy the natural environment and outdoor play.’

County Carlow Local Sports Partnership Strategic Plan.

Founding in 2007, the partnership works with clubs, schools and community groups to increase participation in physical activity & sport in County Carlow. The 3 main functions of the Local Sports Partnership are:

1. Provide information and support.
2. Provide quality opportunities for education and access to sports specific courses through the National Governing Bodies of Sport.
3. Support participation programmes for target groups.

County Carlow Local Sports Partnership recognises the valuable role of outdoor recreation in providing a venue and a means for physical activity and sport.

Carlow Regional Youth Services encourages young people from disadvantaged areas to participate in sport and physical activity. Some of the targeted programmes on offer include Get Going, Get Rowing, Fit for Life for Teens, Tag Rugby, initiatives focused on wellbeing and resilience, adventure sports and specific actions targeting young women.

Carlow County Development (LEADER) Programme 2014 - 2020

The Carlow Rural Development (LEADER) Programme 2014 - 2020 is overseen by the Carlow Local Community Development Committee via the Carlow County Development Partnership. The Development Programme vision for County Carlow is a commitment to work with and enlist the energy and resources of people, agencies and the community of County Carlow through local empowerment and engagement to deliver quality services and projects that promote economic, social, cultural and sustainable environmental development and protection for present and future generations. This programme’s seven-element framework has three outdoor recreation relevant objectives:

² National Experience Development Framework A guide to understanding and developing memorable tourism experiences.

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1. Rural Economic Development: enterprise development and job creation, via rural tourism.
2. Social Inclusion: for hard to reach communities and rural youth.
3. Rural Environment: protecting and sustaining biodiversity, water conservation and protection.

The **Healthy Carlow County Plan 2018 – 2021** identifies the role of outdoor recreation in the county and in particular notes in its Physical Health Priority 1.2 Objective to: 'Develop and Coordinate programmes that provide families with opportunities to be active together in collaboration with key stakeholders - with a particular focus on outdoor recreation.'

County Carlow Social Enterprise Network and the Social Enterprise Development Fund.

Social Enterprises are businesses whose core objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact. Like other businesses, social enterprises trade in goods or services on an ongoing basis. However, any surpluses they generate are re-invested into achieving a social impact.

This fund is aligned with the three key objectives of the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022:

1. Building Awareness of Social Enterprise;
2. Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise;
3. Achieving Better Policy Alignment.

There are several potential outdoor recreation social enterprise opportunities in County Carlow.

Reports

Several outdoor recreation-related reports were also referenced including:

- Barrow Corridor Recreational, Tourism and Commercial Product Identification Study, Waterways Ireland and URS (2012).
- Barrow Trail Survey Report, Amarach Consulting, 2016.
- Borris Our Vision, Borris Community, 2019.
- Borris Walking/Cycling Feasibility Study, Canice Architects, 2018.
- Carlow County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, Carlow County Council, 2015

³ Waterways Ireland has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, and restoration of the River Barrow, principally for recreational purposes.

- Carlow LEADER Feasibility Study on Development of the County Carlow Walking/ Cycling Routes Initiative, The CSA Group, 2006.
- County Carlow Local Sports Partnership Strategy.
- County Carlow Tourism Strategy: 2020 - 2025

State of Play

Outdoor recreation in County Carlow has a range of natural resources, built infrastructure and an assortment of activity providers/programmes.

Cornerstone Outdoor Recreation Assets

The River Barrow's un-spoilt accessible wilderness flows through several counties and as it meanders through County Carlow we share the banks of the river with Counties Laois and Kilkenny. The river's placid water and white-water, its towpath and its necklace of attractive bankside villages makes it the main outdoor recreation asset in the county. In partnership with Waterways Ireland³ and the other counties which host the river, we can respect and grow its heritage, recreation and tourism value.

The Blackstairs Mountains Western flank is in County Carlow and the Eastern flank is in County Wexford. The land is primarily open hillside and it provides extensive views of the surrounding area. This land is owned via a blend of private, commonage and state title.

Sheep farming and forestry are the main agricultural activities in the mountains⁴. The Blackstairs has many walking and agricultural tracks at their base while the uplands are accessible for hillwalking via mountain access points as well as a network of old tracks and informal paths. In addition to its living heritage, the surrounding farmland is a tapestry of contemporary farm practices and historic dwellings which include unique vernacular dry-stone walls and boreens. The potential of the Blackstairs as an outdoor recreation resource is not fully realised and they are the hidden gem of outdoor recreation in the county.

⁴ The Blackstairs Farming Futures is a sustainable farming project in the Blackstairs Mountains with an innovative approach to adding value to the hill farming system whilst also improving habitat condition.

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Local Outdoor Recreation Assets

In addition to the 'Cornerstone Outdoor Recreation Assets', there are several small scale and important outdoor recreation resources throughout County Carlow including:

- Kilbrannish forest and other Coillte forest sites.
- Slievebawn and the Nine Stones.
- The South Leinster Way and the Wicklow Way connection.
- The River Slaney, Tullow, Aghade and Bunclody.
- Carlow Garden Trail sites.
- Urban parks and play areas.
- A variety of local walking trails developed by communities.

All of these resources are important parts of the outdoor recreation environment of County Carlow.

Walking and Cycling Trails

An audit of walking and cycling routes in County Carlow identified 58 cycling trails and 70 walking trails in County Carlow. Most of these trails are located on the Eastern and Western edges of the county see the alongside map.

There is an opportunity to develop additional trails in the centre of the county and also to consider innovative trail development options such as pump tracks, e-biking⁵ and an off-road cycle circuit⁶ in Carlow town.

Further connectivity between existing trails is also suggested to extend the participant experience and support the roles of these trails as a means of connecting places and people. However, additional trails should be off-road or suitably separated from road traffic as road safety concerns limit the value of on-road trails for novice and family participants.

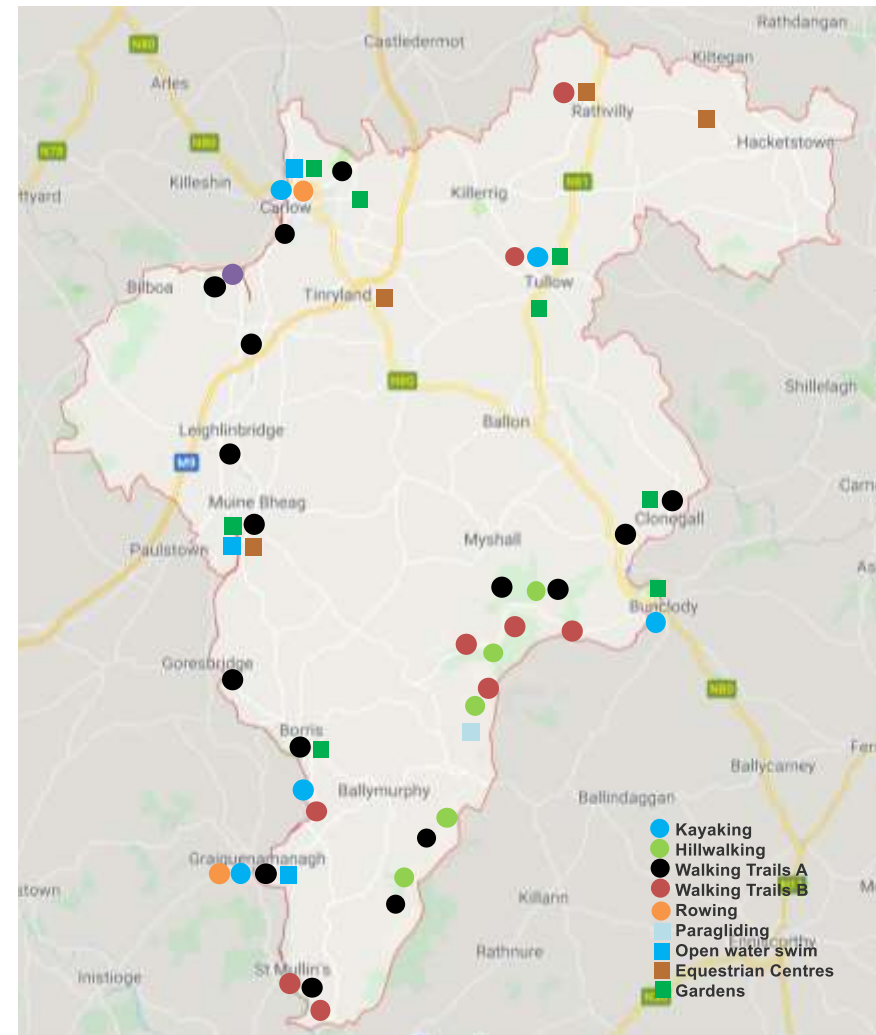


Figure 3: existing outdoor recreation sites.

⁵ Bicycles which have an electric motor to aid propulsion, used for both touring and increasingly in mountain biking.

⁶ Road surface quality, off-road circuits for the exclusive use of self-propelled wheeled sports. Circa 1 km in length, suitable for training and events.

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Activity Providers

Sports clubs⁷ and meet and train groups enable and sustain local participation in outdoor recreation. These outdoor recreation sport clubs provide valuable pathways for residents to take part in outdoor recreation and they provide a means to explore the county's rural areas and waterways.

Some outdoor recreation activities require technical knowledge and expensive equipment. Equipment hire, transport, instruction and route choice guidance are crucial for novice outdoor recreation participants.

Sports clubs and commercial activity providers provide expertise, equipment and guidance and in so doing they add value to outdoor recreation experiences, and pathways for participation. Outdoor recreation events and competitions are increasingly popular, and they stimulate engagement and sustain participation. In addition to sports clubs, commercial enterprises host many of these events and they can be very proactive in this area.

Outdoor recreation sport clubs and commercial outdoor recreation activity providers have a keen market sense and they are important outdoor recreation animators for residents and visitors. Where possible clubs and enterprises should be supported through access to outdoor recreation sites and supporting facilities such as parking, trail infrastructure and equipment storage.

Outdoor Recreation and Inclusion

This strategy recognises the importance and the challenge of outdoor recreation inclusion along a continuum which supports everyone at a level which is appropriate to them.

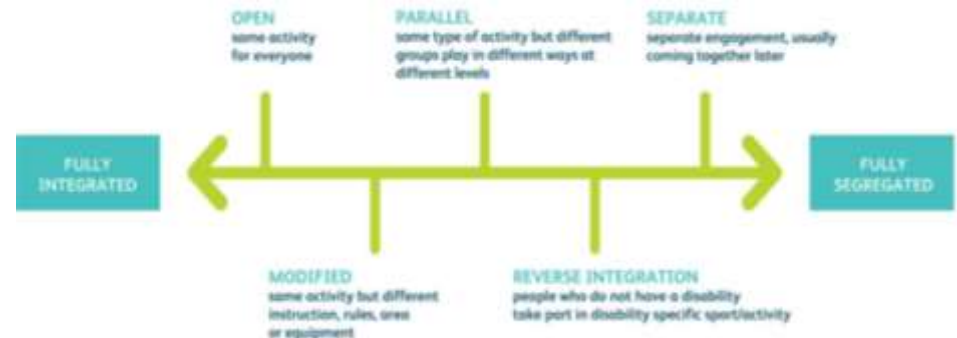


Figure 4: Inclusion Consortium TREE, sourced from CARA, Sport Inclusion Ireland.

An inclusive **environment**, appropriate **equipment/infrastructure** and an array of 'Open' to 'Separate' outdoor recreation opportunities are required for outdoor recreation in County Carlow to be inclusive.

Universal Design⁸ principles and practice are required to support an inclusive approach to outdoor recreation infrastructure design and construction. At a practical level, this means trails⁹ which are wheelchair friendly and signage that is appropriate for the visually impaired and more¹⁰.

More than this however there must first be a desire to include all abilities and the competency and confidence to do so. These attributes are particularly required amongst those who develop, promote, manage or maintain outdoor recreation in County Carlow.

County Carlow Local Sports Partnership (CCLSP), is a key partner in developing and promoting an inclusive outdoor recreation environment in County Carlow. The CCLSP Sports Inclusion Disability Programme works

⁷ Similarly, the various Sports National Governing Bodies (NGBs), provide a strategic vision, development supports and oversight of their respective clubs.

⁸ Irish Disability Act 2005 definition of Universal Design.

⁹ This strategy also acknowledges that there can be physical and design limitations which limit the inclusiveness of some outdoor recreation locations.

¹⁰ See 'The Great Outdoors guide for accessibility in the outdoors' at <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/great-outdoors-a-guide-for-accessibility.pdf>

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with local stakeholders, schools and third-level colleges, sports clubs, community groups and people with a disability to increase participation of people with disabilities in sport and recreational physical activity. CCLSP invests in programmes and initiatives which meet the needs of local communities, reduce participation barriers and enhance participation enablers.

Online Resources, Branding and Promotion.

Several commercial outdoor recreation providers promote their County Carlow outdoor recreation programmes online and there are three dominant online portals which provide overviews of outdoor recreation opportunities in County Carlow:

- Carlow Outdoors: An initiative of Carlow County Development Partnership CLG, which celebrates, expands and promotes the wealth of recreational and tourism outdoor experiences in Carlow.
- Carlow Tourism: An extensive site which comprehensively outlines the outdoor recreation opportunities in the county for visitors.
- County Carlow Local Sports Partnership: a key promoter of resident participation in sports and physical activity in the county. The Partnership uses its website and social media to promote a range of sports and physical activity participation programmes including outdoor recreation.

The Carlow Outdoors, Carlow Tourism and County Carlow Local Sports Partnership online resources provide important points of contact, current programming information and click-throughs to activity provider websites.

Further promotional resources for outdoor recreation in the county include¹¹:

- The South Carlow Adventure Trail: an overview of activities and places for outdoor recreation in the South of the county¹².

¹¹ These feature as either individual websites or on the home page of www.carlowtourism. A sub-brand "Carlow Outdoors" has been developed for the county's outdoor recreation tourism offering.

- Carlow Garden Trail: a detailed brochure outlining the range of publicly accessible gardens and trails throughout the county.
- Carlow Through the Waters of Time. A heritage profile of the county with outdoor recreation links.
- Carlow Trails of the Saints. A blend of walking and driving trails in the county which have an ecclesiastic theme.
- The Mount Leinster Heritage Trail through rural South Carlow which identifies and connects the heritage assets in a range of villages and towns.

There are also several commercial outdoor recreation providers with a strong online presence and the national Sport Ireland Outdoors website provides an important trail finding resource for a variety of land and water trails in County Carlow.

Neighbouring County online outdoor recreation resources include:

- Trail Kilkenny: a blend of trail and general outdoor recreation facilities and offerings. Includes branded themed trails such as Food and Craft, Made and Taste. See <http://www.trailkilkenny.ie>
- Into Kildare, <https://intokildare.ie> is the official tourism and outdoor recreation portal for the county.
- Laois Tourism <http://laoistourism.ie> and County Council via its www.Laois.ie site provides information on various outdoor recreation activities in the county.
- Wexford Walking Trails: a standalone site promoting the walking trails of County Wexford which also includes some trails in County Carlow. <http://wexfordwalkingtrail.ie>
- Wicklow County Tourism <http://visitwicklow.ie/> is a well-resourced and up to date website which includes a range of information on

¹² There is potential to expand this initiative into an all-county offering.

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outdoor recreation in the county. The nascent Wicklow Outdoors website, a Wicklow Tourism project, is intended to provide a stand-alone information portal for the outdoors in County Wicklow.

There are opportunities to align with these neighbouring county structures and promotional approaches, while still retaining a distinct County Carlow brand. Additional County Carlow outdoor recreation products materials can complement the approach of these neighbouring counties such as:

- Themed trails with an outdoor dimension - crafts, food, heritage and the arts.
- Highlighting the unique stone walls which form part of the vernacular architecture of County Carlow.
- A county and corridor map of the various activity locations in the region including:
 - scenic sites: the trail photogenic or 'super-selfie' locations.
 - wet and wild: a profile of water trails access and egress points.
 - An extension of the excellent South Carlow Adventure Trail throughout County Carlow and into neighbouring counties.

Case Study 1: County Carlow Local Sports Partnership

County Carlow Local Sports Partnership's (CCLSP), goal is to increase participation in physical activity & sport in County Carlow by working with clubs, schools and community groups and providing services such as sports and physical activity programmes, information and training.



CCLSP works closely with the sport and physical activity network to increase participation levels, particularly among those sectors of society that are under-represented in sport. CCLSP partners with a range of sport and physical activity clubs and groups, community organisations and state agencies to develop structures and provide quality sports and physical activity experiences.

County Carlow Local Sports Partnership supports inclusion in outdoor recreation through its Sports Inclusion Disability Programme (SIDP). Their inclusion programme targets individuals of all ages and abilities who have an interest in participating in physical activity, including outdoor sport or recreational physical activities. Activities to date include horse riding, cycling, swimming, walking, and inclusive water sports (stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking, and canoeing).

The CCLSP recognises the value of the outdoors as a low cost and nearby sports and physical activity venue. Hence, CCLSP supports a range of outdoor recreation activities in urban and rural areas.



County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Case Study 2: Carlow Town Adventure Hub

Carlow town has an urban and rural population of 24,272 as well as a student population (Institute of Technology Carlow), of approximately 7,000. The River Barrow which flows through Carlow town is the centrepiece for outdoor recreation in the area.

The Carlow Rowing Club, competitive and recreational rowing, has a purpose-built premise opposite the Town Park'.

The Carlow Town Park on the bank of the River Barrow is a focal point for recreational walking. Water access at the park includes a slipway, small harbour and a jetty which are used by local anglers and small boat owners. An adjacent Waterways Ireland Jetty is used by visitors and residents for temporary mooring of motor cruisers and other watercraft.

- The Carlow Dragon Boat Club has temporary changing and boat storage containers at the Town Park and they regularly train from this location, while the annual Barrow river Dragon Boat Regatta also takes place from here.
- The Carlow Sprint Triathlon starts at the Town Park and uses the river, its towpaths and local roads for the different race stages.



- The weekly Parkrun starts and finishes from the Park every Saturday morning.
- In summer the 'Carlow Town Park' activity hub is based at the park and provides a range of outdoor recreation activities on and near the River Barrow including SUP and Kayaking.
- The park is used as an informal base for river swimming during the summer and the adjacent towpath is regularly used by anglers, walkers and joggers.

Nearby the Carlow/Graiguecullen Sub Aqua Club is based at Webster's Lock. This club uses the River Barrow for some of its training.

A Cycle Circuit¹³ development is also proposed for the town.

There is potential for additional outdoor recreation facilities such as a Water Activity Hub and programmes in the town at the Town Park and along the River Barrow towpath.

The towpath of the river Barrow may support a green and blue link between the town, the Institute of Technology Carlow and the Tyndall Institute.



¹³ These cycle-circuit sites can also include cycling pump tracks.

Case Study 3: Carlow Regional Youth Services

“We work to empower young people to achieve their potential through quality youth work.”



Carlow Regional Youth Services (CRYS) is affiliated to Youth Work Ireland which provides programmes and services for young people at risk in the Carlow area through community-based youth work programmes, drop-in, specialised services for young people at risk and leadership training.

In Carlow town, CRYS operates community-based projects, and also in surrounding areas such as Tullow, Bagenalstown, Hacketstown and Borris.

50% of the CRYS's Sports Development Project activities take place in the outdoors, for example, rowing, angling, kayaking and boat tours mainly along the River Barrow and especially in summer. They have bought a small fleet of kayaks and use their staff and commercial outdoor recreation providers to provide these experiences.

Case Study 4: Community Outdoors

Some communities in County Carlow, which do not have access to major outdoor recreation sites such as the River Barrow or the Blackstairs Mountains, recognise the value of the outdoors for the quality of life of their community.

In **Tullow**, the kayak club's clubhouse is on the banks of the River Slaney in the town. The club has a permanent slalom course and travels to various rivers and competitions throughout Ireland. Tullow also has a Slí na Sláinte and there is a desire to expand this to incorporate an off-road walking route via the town's green and blue spaces. The existing town park has a small trail and a series of exercise stations.

In **Hacketstown** the local GAA pitch provides an all-weather walking trail which is used by recreational walkers as well as a training venue for the running club. The community is evaluating how it might develop an off-road walking route in or close-by the town.

Bagenalstown – Muine Bheag

The River Barrow which passes through this town provides a water and land trail for locals and visitors. Access to the river is used extensively for open water swimming, kayaking and angling including wheelchair angling stands. An open-air swimming pool has been developed and managed by the community for many years and this is a popular summer facility.

This strategy will support these and other communities to pursue outdoor recreation opportunities for their residents.

Case-Study 5: Inclusion in the Outdoors

The Delta Sensory Garden and the Barrow Experience are both examples of landscaped gardens which provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the community in general and individuals with an intellectual disability.

Both locations provide a series of interconnecting gardens each with their own story. These gardens are an active, healthy environment for the members of these organisations to work in, and they are also a therapeutic place for both members and the general public to relax in.

Both locations are examples of a Universal Design approach.



Barrow Experience (Bagenalstown), and Delta Sensory Garden (Carlow Town).

Strategy Consultation

The strategic planning consultation process included 250 interactions with individuals, clubs, community and organisation representatives via public and individual meetings, online questionnaires and consumer surveys.

Key Consultation Findings and Observations

Activity profile and demand:

- Outdoor recreation demand is driven by health and fitness, social interaction and competition.
- There are a range of active outdoor recreation users in County Carlow including year-round hill-walking at weekends, mid-week and at night.
- Walking is by far the most popular activity, followed by cycling.
- The Carlow hills are not crowded and there are hidden walks.
- A significant number of walkers from other counties travel to Carlow for hillwalking.
- There is a broad age range of outdoor recreation participants, with a surprising level of adult and older adult participation.
- Water sports are growing in demand and availability.
- There are several relatively 'new sports' such as open water swimming and adventure racing.

Activity barriers and requirements:

- Barriers to participation include: insufficient time, lack of knowledge, never invited, distance, unsure of ability, cost and transport difficulties.
- Challenges include trailheads/parking availability, property safety and some litter.
- More dedicated spaces are required: including off-road walk/cycle trails, a water/adventure hub and a Greenway.
- More awareness is required: including signage at locations, more promotion of places and events, more online resources.
- Further supporting services are required: for example equipment hire, activity guidance and instruction.

Environment

- The quality of the existing outdoor recreation environment was noted and commented positively upon.
- Relatively few environmental concerns were identified, other than the water quality on small sections of the River Barrow.
- No significant erosion issues were identified, however, increases in hill walking and mountain biking is likely to have an impact on erosion in fragile upland areas.

Access

- Farmer/landowner expressed concerns regarding loose dogs and quad use on private land.
- No significant land access concerns were evident however, future access should not be assumed nor taken for granted.
- Low level of comment on access for people with a disability.

General

- The River Barrow and the Blackstairs Mountains were identified as the cornerstone outdoor recreation resources.
- The River Slaney was also noted especially by anglers and canoeists.
- The centre of the county was less visible and has fewer outdoor recreation resources for outdoor recreation.
- Carlow Town was identified as a focal point and a hub for outdoor recreation for residents and visitors.
- Some interest in giving back by clubs through volunteering and assisting in events and litter picking.
- Some observed that more communication is required between the agencies with responsibilities which relate to outdoor recreation.
- The River Barrow needs a recreation plan and a branding strategy.

Outdoor Recreation in Carlow, Vision and Strategy

Outdoor recreation provides value, by adding to our quality of life and by supporting our local economy via activity tourism. The purpose of this strategy is to realise this value.

The Strategy timescale provides a vision for outdoor recreation development to 2040 and identifies the specific objectives between 2020 to 2023, which will bring us closer to this vision.

Slí 2040 Vision

Sustainable, Local, Inclusive.

The Slí components of this 2040 vision are:

- Sustainable: flourishing eco-systems, a partnership with landowners, life-long participation and a stronger local economy.
- Local: outdoor recreation opportunities in every rural and urban County Carlow community.
- Inclusive: outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone and in particular for the novice.

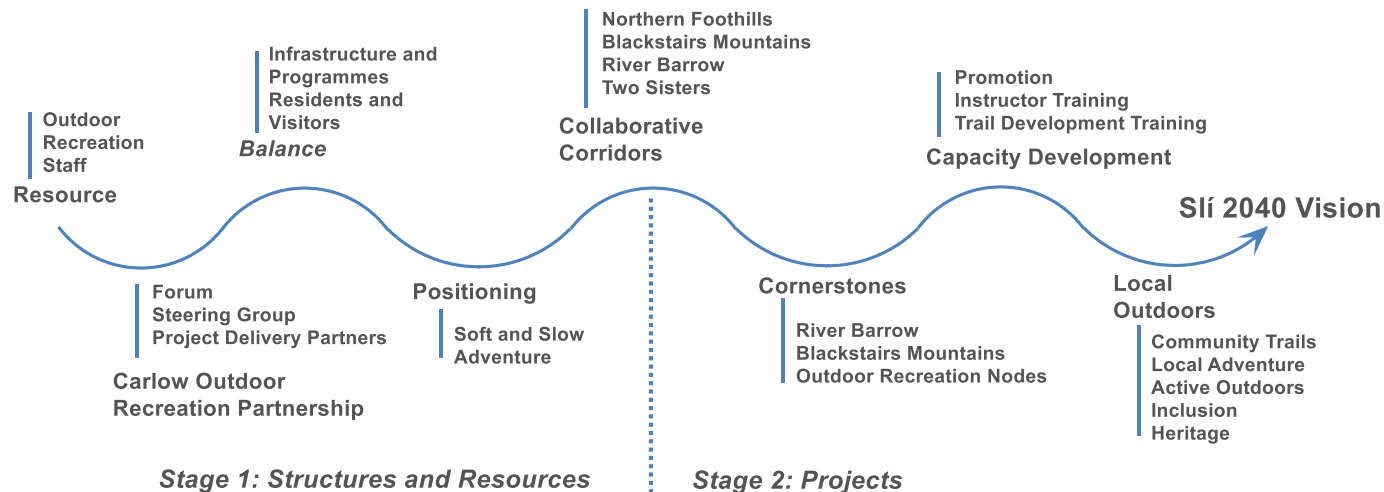
Slí 2040 Mission

On the way to realising this vision our mission is to:

- **respect and sustain the hosts**, host environments, landowners and County Carlow communities.
- be **more than adequate and never exclusive**. Good quality outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences for everyone.
- **together, creative, fun**. A partnership structure, layered experiences and with 'cool' edges.

2020 to 2023 Strategy

This strategy is in two stages, first developing the structures and securing the resources required and then delivering the individual projects which will realise the Slí 2040 vision.



County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Everyone involved in the realisation of this strategy should adhere to the following five touchstones:

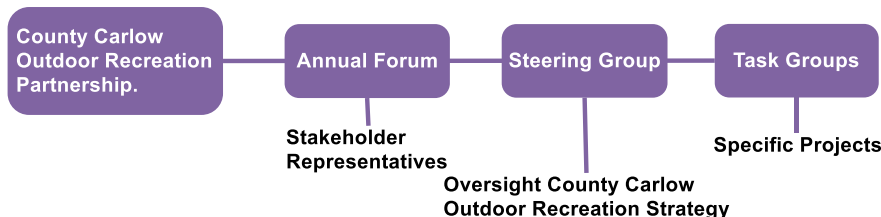
- a **partnership approach**, everyone's voice and shared responsibility;
- **striking a balance** across the infrastructure, programmes, visitors expectations and resident's needs;
- including the **layers** of outdoor recreation; inclusion, urban green spaces, heritage and the arts.
- highlighting the **slow and soft** adventure opportunities of outdoor recreation in County Carlow;
- working beyond borders via **collaborative corridors** with our neighbouring counties.

Partnership and Oversight Structure.

The Carlow Outdoor Recreation Partnership (CORP), is the central partnership structure for outdoor recreation in the county. Open to everyone with an interest or a stakeholding in the County Carlow outdoors, CORP includes a forum with representatives from landowners, communities, environmental groups, outdoor recreation clubs, participants, commercial providers, state agencies and others. This forum provides a voice and an opportunity to hear the sometimes-conflicting expectations of the outdoor recreation sector.

The outdoor recreation partnership forum will take place annually and a Steering Group will deliver this strategy and act on other outdoor recreation opportunities as they arise. Other partners will also be included in this process as required.

The Steering Group will establish a small number of time-limited task groups to deliver specific outdoor recreation initiatives.



Striking the Balance

This strategy must balance the tourism and local participation agenda and the infrastructure development and programming agendas.



While the larger outdoor recreation assets such as the River Barrow and the Blackstairs Mountains have significant **tourism** importance, this strategy recognises that **residents** should be the primary beneficiary of County Carlow's outdoor recreation resources.

Our resident's quality of life should be enhanced through their participation in quality local outdoor recreation opportunities. Visitors to County Carlow should also be encouraged and provided with opportunities to discover, play and experience the quality of our outdoor recreation environment.

An economic benefit is central to the sustainability of the communities who host outdoor recreation on their land and in their area. This strategy recognises the responsibility of outdoor recreation tourism to contribute to the economy of the host communities.

This strategy identifies some **infrastructure** development actions which are necessary to increase the diversity and quality of outdoor recreation in County Carlow. While infrastructure is important, increasing outdoor recreation participation requires that there are opportunities to be involved and aware of these opportunities.

Activity programmes, calls to action, events, familiarisation opportunities, guiding, equipment hire, competitions, and training opportunities are vital to attracting, initiating and sustaining involvement in the outdoors.

Positioning the Outdoors

The County Carlow outdoors is relatively accessible, and they are especially suited to those seeking an introduction or progression in the outdoors. County Carlow outdoor recreation will emphasise its 'Soft'¹⁴ and 'Slow'¹⁵ dimensions. Soft and Slow adventure can be undertaken with a low level of training and with limited equipment.

Soft adventure-seekers want a mix of:

- Wrap-around quality instruction and guidance.
- Experiences which they can step in and out of easily.
- Variety.
- Beautiful places.
- Acceptable discomfort.
- High thrills but limited spills.
- Shared adventure with friends/family.
- Stories and selfies.
- Stretching but manageable challenge.

Slow adventure-seekers want a mix of:

- Unique, educational, nature-focused experiences.
- Escapism, freedom, spiritual connection with a place.
- Work-life balance.
- Self-time, time with friends/family.
- Fitness, fun.
- Connectedness with heritage, place and localness.
- Wanderlust' through myth & legend.
- Low levels of danger.
- Being in nature.
- An appreciation of the power and beauty of nature.

These slow and soft adventure experiences are relevant to participant segments such as Fáilte Ireland's Culturally Curious and Great Escapers. They are also consistent with the 'Dabbler'¹⁶ segment.

¹⁴ Adventure is on a continuum extending from 'hard' adventure with high levels of objective risk to 'soft' adventure with perceived risk but low levels of real risk. Soft activities include easy mountain-biking, grade 1 kayaking, abseiling and so on.

¹⁵ Immersive journeys, living in and travelling through wild places and natural spaces, experiencing nature in its timeframe, its seasons, its weathers and its

Collaborative Corridors

Given that visitors do not see borders and that residents travel to their nearest outdoor recreation sites, outdoor recreation participation is not constrained by county boundaries. Hence, outdoor recreation opportunities along neighbouring county corridors form part of this strategy through a 'collaborative corridor' approach.

There are five potential Collaborative Corridors'.

- River Barrow: Counties, Kildare, Laois, Kilkenny and Wexford share the River Barrow corridor with County Carlow.
- Blackstairs Mountains: County Wexford forms the Eastern flank of the Blackstairs corridor.
- Northern Foothills: the foothills of the County Wicklow mountains shape the Northern border of County Carlow.
- Two Sisters; Saint Mullins to New Ross river junction in Counties Wexford and Kilkenny.
- Castlecomer Plateau: the upland area shared with Counties, Laois and Kilkenny, North-West of Carlow town and including the village Bilboa.

While there have been some collaborative initiatives along these borders to date, not least of all the 'Ancient East' tourism experience, there are further opportunities to develop these corridors through additional outdoor recreation facilities, programmes, services and promotion.

variations.' Varley and Semple, 2015. canoeing on slow-moving rivers, mushroom picking in a forest or low-level hillwalking see https://www.keep.eu/sites/default/files/project_files/Saint_Business%20strategy.pdf

¹⁶ "Dabblers are individuals who aspire or occasionally dip in and out of outdoor recreation as part of their recreational, social or health activities.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Collaborative Corridor Facilities and Services

Practical examples of collaborative facilities and services include:

- Shared, Kilkenny and Carlow, promotion of the Barrow Valley Adventure Hub and the Clashganny to Saint Mullins section of the River Barrow¹⁷.
- Building a land and water trail between Saint Mullins, New Ross and Inistioge.
- Outdoor recreation competitions and events in the Foothills corridor.
- Shared community trail training, trail development, promotion and participation opportunities in the Blackstairs Mountains with County Wexford.
- Determining the feasibility of outdoor recreation links between the Castlecomer Plateau and the River Barrow.

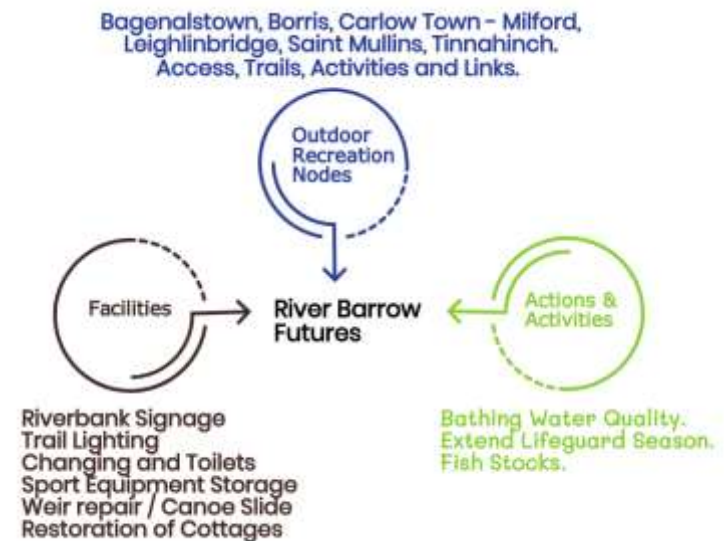
Cornerstone Developments

There are two cornerstone outdoor recreation developments proposed for County Carlow:

River Barrow Futures

The river Barrow is unique in that it provides an unspoilt wilderness which is easily accessed and which passes alongside or close-by villages and, towns in County Carlow, County Kilkenny and County Laois. The River Barrow has national importance for recreational walking and water-sports. Waterways Ireland is responsible for the operation and upkeep of the River Barrow and has been active in supporting outdoor recreation in, on and alongside the river.

Supporting the use of the river and its environs as an outdoor recreation space is challenging given the rich and at-times fragile cultural and



environmental heritage which it hosts. A partnered, planned and well-resourced approach is required to sustain this fragile heritage as the recreational use of the river increases.

¹⁷ The 'Trail Kilkenny' model is one of the possible formats for this promotion.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Blackstairs Mountains

The unspoilt working landscape and wilderness of the Blackstairs, their habitats, unique laneways and walls must be protected. While the opportunities and growth in hillwalking, mountain-biking and paragliding/hang-gliding in this area should be supported. The generosity of landowners in permitting access to these places must also be respected.

Agreement on additional formal lowland walking trails and measures to sustain existing mountain pathways are required by:

- further engaging with landowners through the Blackstairs Farming Futures to develop sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities;
- links with Wexford Walking Trails to develop the walking product and promote the Blackstairs as a walking destination in a consistent manner;
- bundling the Blackstairs paths, trails and other outdoor recreation products with local enterprise services to add value and support the local economy.



Outdoor Recreation Nodes

The following is a selection of some of the locations in the county with further significant outdoor recreation potential.

Borris and Rathanna

Including Clashganny, Ballytiglea Bridge and Ballymurphy. Actions include improved access and links between the River Barrow and Borris and extending the railway line walking-trail. The feasibility of additional mountain access and routes in the Southern Blackstairs and Rathanna area should also be established.

Myshall Area

Including Kilbrannish Forest, Nine Stones, Slaney River, Kildavin and Clonegal. Actions include additional connecting trails, the development of the Columban Way, trailhead and mountain links at Myshall, re-imagining the Nine Stones, enhanced water activities and angling on the River Slaney, continued engagement with Coillte regarding the provision of further outdoor recreation opportunities at Kilbrannish Hill and Kilbrannish South.

Bagenalstown and Leighlinbridge

The functioning railway station and bus transport to Bagenalstown position it as an outdoor recreation gateway for the area as a start or endpoint for walking, cycling or paddling along the River Barrow. There is significant use of the river Barrow by locals and visitors. Continued river access, drinking water, toilet facilities, looped walking and cycling routes to and from the riverside are part of the future 'service-scape' of this location. There is also an opportunity to realise outdoor recreation social enterprise in bike and kayak hire and the local communities are active in enhancing and sustaining their environment.

Tinnahinch/Graiguenamanagh

Including Clashganny and Saint Mullins. A popular section of the river Barrow for walking and water sports. The recent development of the Barrow Valley Activities Hub in Graiguenamanagh is increasing the profile and value of this area for local and visiting outdoor recreation. Actions required include increasing awareness and sustainably managing outdoor recreation in this unspoilt area. There may also be an opportunity to support this location as an outdoor recreation education and training area.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Tullow, Hacketstown and Rathvilly

Including Aghade, Altamont Gardens and Rathwood Forest. A cluster of communities and outdoor recreation venues. Actions required include supporting additional off-road activity trails, supporting existing recreational and competitive kayaking at Tullow and Aghade, supporting angling on the Slaney and Derry rivers and raising the outdoor recreation profile of the area locally and amongst visitors.

Carlow Town

Including Oak Park, Clogrennane Woods and Milford Lock. Further development of the Town Park as an outdoor recreation water and land activity sports hub. An outdoor recreation masterplan for a linear park development along the River Barrow Town Park area is recommended. This plan should include further consultation with the community and other stakeholders, additional physical infrastructure such as riverside changing facilities, improved walking and cycling routes to and from Graiguecullen, water-craft storage, enhanced water access, recreational swimming support¹⁸, formal user codes on the river, a Cycle Circuit development and expanding the current summertime Carlow Adventure Hub services at the Town Park. Further local and tourism outdoor recreation promotion of this wider area and its activities is also required.

Training and Research

There is an increasing role for outdoor recreation in personal development, community development and adventure tourism services. Correspondingly there are opportunities for employment as outdoor recreation instructors or in outdoor recreation-related enterprises.

Some outdoor recreation sports provide instructor training in their activities and the Quality and Qualifications Ireland has a Level 5 and 6 certificate award in outdoor recreation instruction.

Duisk College in Graiguenamanagh, a Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board school, provides a full-time Adventure Tourism course for outdoor recreation instructor training. Similarly, Shielbaggan Outdoor Education and Training Centre has an outreach facility in Bunclody, Baltinglass Outdoor Education and Training Centre is also located close to the North Carlow border. The feasibility of an Outdoor Education and Training resource in County Carlow might be considered.

Furthermore, the Institute of Technology Carlow is a significant community of students and staff who have the potential to both participate and provide training and research resources for outdoor recreation in the county.

Trail Training and Promotion

Developing outdoor recreation trails requires a range of actions from securing access, managing environmental concerns, engaging the community, designing the route, securing the resources and building the facility, promoting the opportunity and then managing and maintaining the route.

Training supports are required if individuals and communities are to develop sustainable trails which meet the need of participants. The County Wexford trail training process is a benchmark for such an approach.

¹⁸ Currently swimming in summer by local youth takes place at this location. This unmonitored and unstructured activity has the potential for injury and conflict with other water users.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Heritage

The outdoors is more than functional. While providing places to get fit or clear our minds, the outdoors are also places of inspiration, awe and emotional invigoration.

The layers of heritage and art in the outdoors can raise the profile of the site, creatively motivate and reward the participant and elevate the experience beyond the mundane.

The rich heritage and art resources of the county should be engaged with to reflect on and enhance the outdoor experience.

Other countries outdoor heritage and arts experiences include night-time trails with bicycles festooned with LEDs, scale profiles of the DNA helix or the solar system along trail surfaces or using alongside trail sculptures. Other examples of potential trail features include life-size steel cut-outs of local legends and characters, themed benches and signs and so forth.

Environment

Environmental sustainability requires that respect the natural environment and habitats which are the hosts for outdoor recreation. This strategy supports the Leave No Trace principles as part of this environmental responsibility.



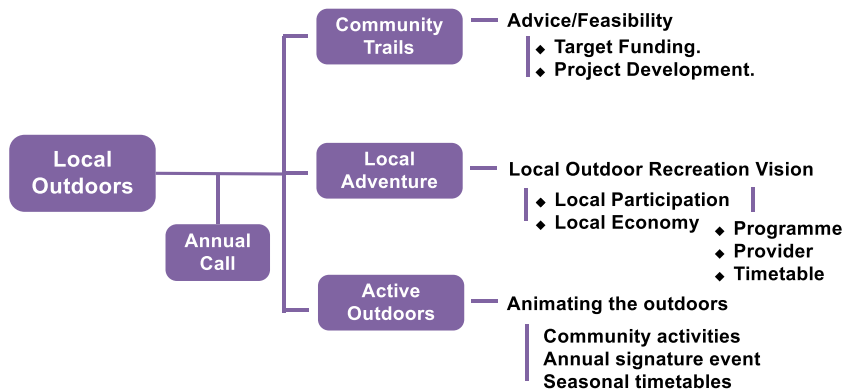
Figure 5: Steel character cut outs on UK Walking Trail (SUSTRANS), Outdoor chimes, Lithuania.

Community Outdoor Recreation, 'Local Outdoors'.

Local participation in outdoor recreation supports physical and mental health, encourages social interaction, enhances pride of place, heritage and environmental awareness and strengthens the local economy through activity tourism.

Outdoor recreation opportunities which emerge from and which are based in the community are likely to have the most impact and sustainability. Such community based outdoor recreation initiatives might be realised via a social enterprise structure in the provision of equipment hire, guiding and instruction.

A Local Outdoors approach is proposed to support the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities and local participation.



Community Trails

The popularity of the outdoors for recreation is reflected in the development to-date of walking trails in County Carlow communities. This strategy recognises the importance of community trails¹⁹ and the central role of the community to identify, inspire, negotiate access, build and manage trails.

The partnership approach to outdoor recreation development proposed by this strategy will be reflected through agency-community co-operation on local outdoor recreation and using local resources to the best effect.

Practical supports for communities to identify how they might best develop nearby outdoor recreation resources such as rivers, forests, parks, pitches²⁰ or other outdoor spaces, include:

- Information on the best practice actions for trail and other outdoor infrastructure development.
- An annual funding call for trail feasibility studies, trail infrastructure and trail building.
- Advice and support to manage and maintain trails.

Local Adventure

While some outdoor recreation activities, such as walking, require little equipment or expertise, other outdoor recreation sports such as kayaking, off-road biking and Stand Up Paddle Boarding require instruction and equipment supports if people are to engage with them.

This strategy's consultation process identified opportunities for additional outdoor recreation instruction and equipment services at various locations in the county. The Waterways Ireland facility block on the River Barrow at



Figure 5: An example of a portable service unit.

¹⁹ Including pump tracks, Blueways, equestrian and arts and heritage trails.

²⁰ GAA clubs have enabled the use of their pitch perimeters as community walking tracks.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Clashganny is a best practice model²¹ for such local and commercial outdoor recreation 'pump-priming'²².

While there is value in replicating facilities similar to Clashganny at other locations, the development, management costs and the investment risk of such an approach is prohibitive. However, the provision of high quality temporary ***mobile adventure units*** with changing facilities and equipment storage is potentially feasible. These mobile adventure units could be available for a six month to one year via a 'project bid'²³ from communities²⁴ and commercial providers.

Active Outdoors

There are several local outdoor recreation clubs, programmes and activities which take place at various locations around County Carlow. County Carlow Local Sports Partnership, Carlow Regional Youth services and others encourage, promote, coordinate and provide some outdoor recreation opportunities in the county. To increase outdoor recreation participation amongst residents and visitors, an 'Active Outdoors' initiative will encourage and promote additional programmes and events via start-up resourcing, programmes, events and seasonal participation timetables.

Outdoor recreation experiences should be available for everyone, regardless of their abilities. Currently, there are disability access angling stands and most urban parks are wheelchair accessible and there are further opportunities to develop multi-access trails and more inclusive outdoor recreation experiences in the county.

²¹ Wastewater facilities are to be upgraded and there are challenges around unauthorised camping and inappropriate seasonal use of the site.

²² The scenic river location, proximity to Graiguenamanagh access to flat and moving water, riverside parking, a nearby walk and the changing and toilet facilities, have resulted in a high volume of outdoor recreation use in this area by individuals, clubs and commercial outdoor recreation providers.

²³ Projects should identify how these units will be used to increase local participation in the outdoors and to support tourism development.

²⁴ This community type approach might be structured via a community based social enterprise.

Action Plan

The following pages outline the four key pillars and actions for the proposed County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategy.

Appendix 1 provides further clarification on the first pillar and how these Integrated Structures will be realised and managed.

Abbreviations

CCLSP: County Carlow Local Sports Partnership.
 CDP: Carlow County Development Partnership.
 CORP: Carlow Outdoor Recreation Partnership.
 CPPN: Carlow Public Participation Network.
 CRYS: Carlow Regional Youth Services.
 SLW: South Leinster Way.



OBJECTIVE 1: INTEGRATED STRUCTURES

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicators
Outdoor Recreation Development Staff. Focused responsibility and action.	Rural Recreation Officer (RRO). Full-time outdoor recreation staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and pursue accreditation for 'Walks Scheme' trails in the county. Apply for Rural Recreation Officer Funding on behalf of County Carlow. 	2020 2020	Carlow County Development Partnership (CCDP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlow County Council. 	A suitable level of funding for a new outdoor recreation staff member.
	Representation. A voice and action centre for the development and management of outdoor recreation in the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the terms of reference for the Carlow Outdoor Recreation Partnership (CORP). Develop the CORP structure to include broad representation from individuals, communities, landowners and agencies. Form a steering group within CORP to realise the Outdoor Recreation Strategy and other outdoor recreation resources and activities. Identify time-limited projects to undertake specific outdoor recreation initiatives. Define and promote a sustainable inclusive culture for outdoor recreation in the county. 	2020 2020 2020 2020	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCDP. County Carlow Local Sports Partnership (CCLSP). Carlow Tourism. Sport Ireland Industry representatives. IT Carlow. Coillte Waterways Ireland 	Annual CORP Forum Meeting. CORP actions.

County Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan.

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicators
Outdoor Recreation Partnerships Contd. Forum, oversight and collaboration for outdoor recreation in County Carlow.	Blackstairs Farming Futures Innovative approaches to add value to the Blackstairs hill farming system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal consultation with the Blackstairs Farming Futures project to realise their objectives as they relate to outdoor recreation. 	2020	CORP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackstairs Farming Futures 	The number of meetings and shared projects with the BFF.
	Intercounty Projects. Other County Corridors.	Shared Actions. Effective outdoor recreation facility development and promotion activities with neighbouring counties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formally engage with other counties regarding the shared development of outdoor recreation. Identify relevant facility development and animation projects for neighbouring Counties. Pursue key intercounty projects. 	2020 2020 2021	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlow CDP.
Walking and Cycling Strategies.	Integrated Approach Quality and sustainable walking and cycling opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the County Carlow cycling and walking strategy priority actions. Evaluate the connectivity of current cycling and walking products. 	2022	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCLSP. Carlow Tourism. 	Increase in trail management, maintenance and development resources.
	South Leinster Way (SLW). Visible, connected and quality long distance walking opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a South Leinster Way Committee to involve all stakeholders and oversee the planned development, management and maintenance of the route. 	2021	Carlow Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlow Co Co. Coillte. Waterways Ireland. Carlow CDP. Carlow Public Participation Network. (PPN). 	Functioning SLW Committee.

OBJECTIVE 2: MORE PARTICIPANTS AND A STRONGER NETWORK

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
More Participants Carlow Outdoors opportunities for residents and visitors.	Increases in awareness and the number of outdoor recreation programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal county 'Active Outdoors' programmes and timetables. Annual outdoor recreation signature event. Seasonal outdoor recreation timetables and initiatives in urban play areas, formal gardens and trails. 	2020 2020	County Carlow Local Sports Partnership, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor Recreation Partnership Forum. Carlow Regional Youth Services (CRYS). 	Seasonal outdoor recreation activity timetables.
	Clubs. Increased awareness of the needs and priorities for outdoor recreation clubs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A profile of all existing outdoor recreation clubs in the county and their activity programmes. Identify outdoor recreation club gaps. Identify an annual priority outdoor sport and development programme. Annual club volunteer training and education supports. 	2020 2020 2021 2021	County Carlow Local Sports Partnership, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant Sports National Governing Body. 	Annual priority outdoor sport and development programme.
	Commercial Provision. Strengthened commercial activity and tourism sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outdoor recreation business development programme to enhance the commercial development and economic return from outdoor recreation. Work with the accommodation sector to identify familiarisation opportunities with the outdoors sector. The continued inclusion of commercial outdoor recreation provider information and events in relevant tourism and promotional materials. 	2020 2020	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Enterprise Office. Carlow County Development Partnership. 	Numbers taking part in an annual outdoor recreation familiarisation event.

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Providers (Contd). Supporting the people and organisations who animate the outdoors.	Communities. Locally based and community-driven outdoor recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify locations and local champions. Identify the relevant outdoor recreation sites and initiatives in three communities each year. 	2021	County Carlow Local Sports Partnership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRYS CDP. Carlow Public Participation Network (CPPN). 	Outdoor recreation participation initiatives in three communities each year.
	Education Sector A student culture of being active outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and promote a short series of good practice student outdoor guidelines and a school's outdoors charter. Respond to the education sector desire to implement outdoor recreation in their curriculum or facilities. Seasonal programme of education-related outdoor recreation activities. 	2021 2021 2021	County Carlow Local Sports Partnership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Network. Carlow IT CRYS 	Student outdoors good practice guidelines.
	Voluntary Sector. More positive opportunities and experiences of the outdoors amongst youth clubs/groups and uniform groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the key 'actors' in the voluntary sector and identify their existing and potential annual timetable of outdoor recreation activities. Identify outdoor recreation collaboration opportunities and priority programmes. Promote relevant initiatives, best practice and participation opportunities. 	2020 2021 2021	County Carlow Local Sports Partnership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRYS Carlow Volunteer Centre 	Annual outdoor recreation initiatives and timetable.

OBJECTIVE 3: GREAT LOCATIONS

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Locations Developing and sustaining the places for outdoor recreation.	Local Outdoors New and re-imagined local places for outdoor recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility study of the ‘Local Adventure’ initiative. 	2021	Carlow County Development Partnership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlow Public Participation Network. County Carlow Local Sports Partnership. 	Local Adventure Feasibility Study findings.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the priority actions of the County Carlow Walking and Cycle trail Plan. 	2021		Priority walking and cycle trail developments.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed structure and format of the Local Outdoors approach. 	2021		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to community-driven outdoor recreation social enterprise requests. 	2021		Level and quality of response to Local Outdoors funding call.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual outdoor recreation funding ‘call to action’ targeting the locally-driven development of trails, supporting facilities and services. 	2021		Outdoor Recreation Node development.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and coordination support for community-led trail development. 	2021		Two local outdoor recreation infrastructure developments per annum.

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Facilities Existing places.	Enhanced Use of Existing Places. Re-thinking the outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support outdoor recreation in urban environments in County policy under the review of the current County Development Plan. Support the development of additional outdoor recreation infrastructure in line with the County Carlow Walking and Cycling Trail Implantation Plan. 	2020	Carlow County Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Carlow Children and Young People's Services Committee. 	Urban outdoors included in county policy.
	Angling Improved angling experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support water quality and fish management on County Carlow's rivers. Include angling sites and facilities in seasonal Outdoor Recreation Timetables and initiatives. 	2021	Inland Fisheries. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angling Club Representatives. Local Authority Water Programme. Waterways Ireland. 	Increased sale of angling permits.
	River Infrastructure Best use of river infrastructure for outdoor recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for outdoor recreation enhancement in the refurbishment of any river weirs or banks. Advocate and support further improved access and navigation on the river Barrow for self-propelled watercraft. 	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterways Ireland. Angling Club Representatives. Local Authority Water Programme. 	River infrastructure development actions.

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Water Facilities. (Contd).	Blueways Improved Blueway local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite submissions from communities and others under the national Blueway Accreditation scheme for the rivers Slaney and Barrow corridors. 	2020	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterways Ireland Carlow PPN. Carlow CDP. Local Authority Water Programme. 	Blueway accreditation on at least one location ²⁵ .
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit priority Blueway applications. Follow through on the development of Blueways in partnership with communities. 	2020 2021		
Signature Facilities	Defining Places and Experiences. Outdoor recreation sites which define and raise the profile of outdoor recreation in County Carlow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the process for the further development of the Borris viaduct as a walking trail. 	2021	Carlow County Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlow CDP. Waterways Ireland. Blackstairs Farmers. 	Feasibility study findings on the Greenway and St Mullins route. Increased recreation opportunities on the River Barrow. Clashganny report findings. The realisation of the Columban Way.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and realise the priority actions in the Barrow Corridor Recreational Tourism and Commercial Product Identification Study. 	2021		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility study for the development of a walk/cycle trail between Saint Mullins and New Ross. 	2022		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interagency outdoor recreation development of the River Barrow. 	2020		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the Clashganny water recreation facility model. 	2021		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of the Columban Way in County Carlow. 	2021		
Blackstairs Mountains Sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on an outdoor recreation development project for the Blackstairs Mountains. 	2021	County Carlow and County Wexford Leader Partnerships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackstairs Farmers. Carlow Tourism. Wexford Agencies. Coillte 	Improved mountain access and routes on the Blackstairs.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Nine Stones area as an outdoor recreation launch point in consultation with landowners. 	2021			

²⁵ The Blueway accreditation process supports the development of standalone Blueway sites such as at a town or village, as against a linear route along a river, or around a lake.

OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASED AWARENESS					
Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Social and Environmental Awareness. Sustainability of the host environment respective landowners.	Charter. Environmental and landowner awareness within the outdoor recreation planning and management process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and liaise with appropriate landowner representative groups. An outdoor recreation participation charter to guide the actions and activities of outdoor recreation participants and providers. 	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Recreation Officer. Parks and Wildlife. Irish Wildlife Trust. County Carlow Local Sports Partnership. 	Landowner representation and relationship.
			2021		
	Host Environments. Improved host environments and authentic recreation in nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to the Leave No Trace principles in all our outdoor recreation activities. Engage with Mountain Meitheal for specialist advice and to identify the need and opportunity for a voluntary trail management process. 	2020	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CORP Task Group. 	Practical application of Leave no Trace in our actions and amongst our participants.
			2021		
Research and Insights. Benefiting from informed perspectives, others experiences and focused actions.	Data collection and analysis. Secure and analyse participation data to benchmark and monitor participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual participation numbers and trends report for key outdoor recreation sites. Annual activity provider market feedback. Annual reference to other county/country outdoor recreation research and analysis. Two yearly participant feedback on outdoor recreation in County Carlow. Annual outdoor recreation insight report. 	2021	Carlow County Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute of Technology Carlow. 	Improved outdoor recreation quantitative and qualitative data.
			2020		
			2020		
			2022		
			2021		

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Position and Promotion. A compelling and shared message about outdoor recreation in County Carlow.	Claiming Our Space Locating County Carlow Outdoors positively in the minds of current and potential participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A communications strategy for the Carlow Outdoor Recreation Partnership and the County Carlow outdoor recreation product. Including the development of a trails brand. 	2021	Carlow County Development Partnership.	Published Communications Strategy.
Communications.	Integrated Communications Continuity across the County Carlow Outdoor Recreation product and with neighbouring counties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen online portal for outdoor recreation with facilities and activity programme/calendar integration. Integrate relevant outdoor recreation initiatives and products such as the Carlow Garden Trails, within an outdoor recreation portfolio. Increase the focus on the unique attributes of the county including its soft and slow adventure and its vernacular stone walls. Align our branding and promotion initiatives, with our neighbouring counties. Revised and shared outdoor recreation marketing collateral brand guidelines. Update South Carlow Adventure Trail materials and replicate for the North of the county. 	2020 2021 2021 2021 2021 2020	Carlow County Development Partnership.	Level of visibility of Carlow Outdoors brand. Substantial volume of online visitor metrics and click-throughs to provider and location sites.

Strategic Area	Outcomes	Actions	Timetable	Lead and Partners	Key Performance Indicator
Intercounty Communications Outdoor Recreation without borders.	Border Opportunities Awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities along our border corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with neighboring county outdoor recreation brands and portals to identify a consistent or cross-over branding style. Identify how a multi-county outdoor recreation branding strategy, can be located within the Ireland's Ancient East offering. 	2021 2021	Carlow County Council.	Brand development and projects with neighboring counties.
Integrating the Sector. Structured interaction between commercial stakeholders.	Sector collaboration. Integrating outdoor recreation activities and supporting services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual outdoor recreation activity, accommodation and dining bundling support initiative. An annual familiarisation programme between activity, information, accommodation and dining providers in County Carlow and neighboring counties. 	2021 2021	Carlow Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CORP Task Group. 	Number of bundling initiatives and familiarisation participants.

Appendix 1: Integrated Structures Format

