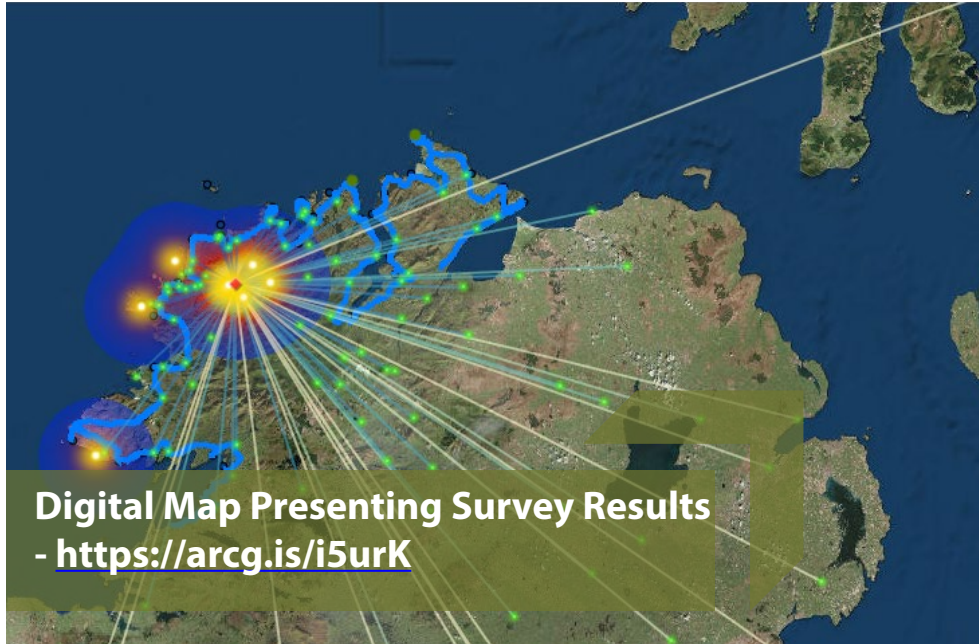




Conducting Visitor Surveys Digitally



Digital Map Presenting Survey Results
 - <https://arcg.is/i5urK>

ERRIGAL MOUNTAIN

COUNTY DONEGAL

IRELAND

Innovative Technology to Capture Visitor Experiences and Opinions at Errigal Mountain

A core objective of the ASCENT project is to measure the impact of unregulated access across seven project sites in the Northern Periphery Area of Europe.

At Errigal Mountain one of seven project sites, a number of methods are adopted to fulfil this activity, including undertaking visitor monitoring surveys, the main purpose of which is to analyse usage and to discover visitor perceptions, experiences and opinions of those visiting Errigal.

The visitor monitoring survey was developed and administered by lead partner Donegal County Council and assisted by members of the Errigal Stakeholders Group, during the Summer of 2018, commencing at the end of June and concluding in early September.

The survey's content and structure was derived from a template developed by the ASCENT partners and then tailored specifically to Errigal. A draft survey was circulated for comment among the Errigal Stakeholders and both English and Irish surveys were made available.

The project team explored the use of a suitable app to capture visitor

responses to work offline. The survey app was developed using ArcGIS. The survey content was imported into the survey123 app and later tested among a focus group, comprising of members of the Errigal Stakeholders Group and the local community. 11 members volunteered to assist with the survey on site at Errigal.

By analysing footfall data since July 2017, it was determined that the busiest week days were Tuesdays and Thursdays, with peak 'descent' experienced between 1pm to 3pm. In total there were 19 survey days, 15 of which were week days and 4 during weekends during August, to maximise returns.

To further promote the survey, a second survey was developed - <https://arcg.is/i5urK>, to maximise responses and to capture the opinions and experiences of those who recently visited Errigal, through widespread circulation on social media. www.errigalmountain.ie was developed by the project team to display local ASCENT activities for Errigal Mountain and to promote the survey further.

The surveys concluded on Saturday 1st of September 2018, with a final sample of 541 from the survey 'on site' app and the online survey, well exceeding the target set of 400 responses.

Outcome

The survey results were based on 541 returns across the following sections:

1. For Visitor Information the survey was completed on behalf of 1773 visitors, the majority of which were aged between 18-64 years of age and mainly as part of a group. 80% of visitors originated from the island of Ireland, 16% from the EU and 4% internationally.
2. For Experience at Errigal Mountain 93% accessed Errigal Mountain by Car. The primary motivation to climb was because of the scenery and landscape, while word of mouth was attributed to 'first hearing' about Errigal Mountain. 37% had little or no hiking experience. 80% reached the summit of which 47% took the same route on descent. There was a high level of return visits to Errigal Mountain.
3. For their Stay, a distance of 7,000km was travelled from 95 towns in Ireland and the UK, by those who participated in the survey. The vast majority of visitors stayed overnight and mostly between 3 to 5 nights. The top types of accommodation stated were staying with family and friends, in a hotel or in a holiday home. The average spend was €59 per person. The top attractions visited were Glenveagh National Park, then Dunlewey Lake and Village and the Wild Atlantic Way. Walking and Hiking activities were the most popular.

Finally, the comments and suggestions were broad ranging and therefore grouped into generic headings including: Safety, Access, Litter, Environment / Conservation, Sustainable Access, The Experience, Facilities / Services, Car Parking, Signage / Way Markers / Information, Equipment, Condition / Weather, Erosion, Events, ASCENT Project and General.



Working with the Errigal Stakeholders Committee

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Key Findings & Learning Points

Survey123 was an ideal technical solution, with its ability to work offline, with minimal network coverage at designated survey points. As an intuitive form-centric data gathering solution, creating and administering surveys at Errigal with 11 volunteers was with ease. The app negated the need for manual data entry, since responses were captured on site, with subsequent statistical and spatial analysis via the app thereafter. The supporting digital map arcg.is/1qeOHO, displays much of the spatial information captured.

The survey app contributed to the achievement of ASCENT activity T3.1 in exploring ICT based tools for participatory based surveying. The app is shared with the ASCENT partners as an ideal digital solution for conducting visitor monitoring in the Northern Periphery Region of Europe.

Importantly, the baseline information captured and the key findings will greatly inform the development of an Integrated Management Plan for Errigal Mountain.