



Trialling work completed at Errigal, Co Donegal

ERRIGAL MOUNTAIN
COUNTY DONEGAL
IRELAND



Completed Stone Path on Errigal

Instilling confidence and moving forward to implementing sustainable access at Errigal

Errigal is facing challenges associated with increased visitor numbers exasperated by social media exposure. The main access to the summit of Errigal is from the car park off the main road (R251). With no formal path construction, multiple evolved and degrading routes have formed, radiating from the car park to the south-eastern ridge and beyond to the summit. The community, Donegal County Council and other Stakeholders had a strong desire to improve the visitor experience to Errigal, restore the damage to natural habitats and improve the visual landscape impact of multiple evolved routes, by constructing a single sustainable path to the summit

After a technical evaluation and consultation exercise, the streamside route emerged as the single path route to progress to planning. A Part 8 planning application for Habitat Restoration and Sustainable Access on Errigal was approved by Elected Members of Donegal County Council in April 2019. The two pilot sites most in need of repair were identified by a leading upland path expert and trialling work commenced in June 2019, providing an opportunity for

members from the local community to become familiar with the highly-skilled methods of upland path development and repair.

Upland path contractors conducted trialling work on different sections of the upland path incorporating the following elements of pitched paths, aggregate path, revetments, path drainage, anchor bars, landscaping and revegetation.

Trial Section 1 – the Peat Path consisted of 70 metres of aggregate

based path at the beginning of the 3 km path and Trial Section 2 – the Stone Path incorporated 30m of pitched path from 2 km at an altitude of 550 m.

In addition, a Training Programme for 10 local members of the Community for 2 days on path construction and maintenance was held onsite at Errigal. This programme included a Theory module on Best Practice for Path Construction Techniques and Maintenance and a Practical module at both trial site locations.

Outcome

The project saw sustainable access works on sections of the upland path at Errigal. With planning permission approved in April 2019, essential trialling works were enabled in the form of aggregate and stone pitched path construction. Those works allowed for access to Errigal mountain to be maintained throughout, while pas-sing visitors viewed firsthand the necessity and impact of works on the sensitive habitats there, while allowing for sustainable access.

The two day upskilling event afforded 10 local volunteers the opportunity to shadow the experienced and competent contractor team and allowed for the transfer of knowledge and skills in upland path construction including habitat restoration techniques to the various event attendees and to develop the expertise to maintain paths for the long term management of Errigal.

The Upskilling Programme was conducted at Dunlewey Community Centre and on site on both trial sections from the 21st and 22nd Jun 19. The Programme included an Introduction to Upland Path Work, Drainage, Construction, Site Restoration and Landscaping.

At Trial Section 1 "The Peat Path, a team of three skilled upland path worker's constructed Trial Section 1 of the path between 15th June and 27th June 2019. During the path construction, the following materials were used including Terram Geotextile, Geogrid reinforcing and Quarzite aggregate sub-base.

At Trial Section 2 The Stone Path, a team of two skilled upland path workers constructed Section 2 of the path between 15th June and 27th June 2019. All material used was locally sourced.



Key Findings & Learning Points

Key learning points were to ensure that the route is future-proofed in terms of path width to cater for future increases in visitor numbers, while a more varied path allows for blending into the landscape. Fundamental to the long term sustainability of the route is maintenance and therefore providing longer term employment for suitably skilled local contractors.

The works completed presents a viable solution for repairing Errigal and importantly instilling confidence in moving forward to a future implementation phase.

Members from the local community near Errigal who undertook the course were presented with their training certificates by the Cathaoirleach (Mayor) of Donegal County Council at the ASCENT to Summit Conference on June 26th 2019.



Participants at the Errigal Upskilling Programme

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details: Rosita Mahony
ASCENT Project Manager
Donegal County Council
Ireland

e-mail: rosita.mahony@donegalcoco.ie

www.ascent-project.eu