

Local community participation on an upskilling course at Sliabh Liag, Co Donegal

DONEGAL
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Participants at the Sliabh Liag Training Programme

Empowering communities to maintain upland paths

One of the key components of the ASCENT project is to provide a number of upskilling programmes in path management and maintenance. The purpose of this is to ensure that learning and skills are retained within each partner community for the long term maintenance and sustainability for upland paths and thus in effect creating post project legacy.

For project partner Donegal County Council, onsite training on the local site at Errigal, would only be possible with planning approval. Therefore as an interim solution, training was undertaken off site at Sliabh Liag, one of the County's flagship tourist destinations where Donegal County Council was overseeing remedial works along the coastal path there, with annual footfall of 185,000.

A two day course took place from the 24th to the 25th of January 2018 as part the Sliabh Liag Strategic

Development Project. The purpose of this training course was to provide both theory and practical sessions supplemented with on-site activity on upland path construction techniques.

Three members from the local community near Errigal participated on the course, along with the ASCENT project co-ordinator and two members of the path team from sub partner Mourne Heritage Trust.

Day 1 focussed on the theory element with an Introduction to Upland Path Work - to include

Principles, Environmental Impact, Surveying, Maintenance, Erosion Control Technique, Tools and Equipment, Stakeholder Engagement, Principles of Path Work, Restoration and Landscaping, Health and Safety and Climate Change.

Day 2 involved practical demonstrations and application of path constructions techniques continuing on site along the upland coastal path adjacent to the sea cliffs.

Outcome

On Day 1 an introduction to upland path work equipped participants with knowledge regarding the importance of wide stakeholder engagement and consultation at project planning phase to garner the views of target groups. Environmental designations and the impact of proposed work on habitats were discussed, along with design considerations with reference to industry standards to be adhered to. Erosion control techniques to reduce the impact of water erosion and drainage techniques were introduced. In assessing current condition along routes or sections and to determine those most in need of repair, amber and red survey techniques were introduced, with the latter identifying a bill of quantities, restoration needs and recommendations for the use of local natural materials. Volunteer training was presented for large scale projects,

in providing an opportunity for local involvement; a key area of interest for post project legacy at Errigal Mountain. The Principles of Path Work centred on upland drainage, construction techniques including aggregate, stone pitched paths, while restoration and landscaping were integral to any path project.

The second day involved pitching, aggregate, stone and drainage demonstrations and path construction techniques along a number of sections of the coastal path. The benefits of stone pitching in defining the route and protecting the wider corridor from footfall erosion, were clearly evident. Natural rock was collected from scree deposits thus in keeping with the natural landscape. Stone cross drains were built along a section of high footfall, with participants guided by the path team.



Key Findings & Learning Points

ASCENT will ensure that skills in upland path maintenance are obtained and retained within the local host community. By partaking on the upskilling programme at Sliabh Liag, local community members were afforded the opportunity to partake in quite skilled work including hand built techniques and to have the expertise to maintain paths for the long term management of Errigal.

Key learning points included the importance of project planning for any path construction project, an upland path fitting naturally into the landscape, with maintenance varying per site and that good design is imperative to ensure long term sustainability.

Following completion of the course it was stated, that *'As an introduction to Upland path construction I found the two day course extremely useful in learning how to undertake path work. I would be very interested in participating in any future training offered.'*

Three members from the local community near Errigal who undertook the course were presented with their training certificates by the Cathaoirleach (Mayor) of the Glenties Municipal District in County Donegal, at the Errigal Stakeholders Committee meeting in April 2018.

Path work at Sliabh Liag



FURTHER INFORMATION

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