

The group in lively discussion



THEMATIC SEMINAR

13TH SEPTEMBER 2018

ODDA

NORWAY

Building a better path for our landscapes

In connection with the visit from the ASCENT Mournes team, a thematic seminar was held in Odda on Thursday 13th September 2018. The aim of the seminar was to invite local stakeholders and the ASCENT teams from Trolltunga and Mournes to an exchange of knowledge, ideas and learning.

Marta Rongved Dixon from ASCENT Trolltunga/HCC welcomed everyone to the seminar and gave a short introduction to the ASCENT project. She introduced Matthew Bushby from Mournes Heritage Trust, who summed up the work the group had done previously that day to trial wool as a building material. Darren Rice and Katie Taylor then presented to the audience the organisational structure of the Mournes Heritage Trust, with particular emphasis on the volunteer programme they operate.

Turning the attention back to Norwegian soil, Helene Ødven from DNT The Norwegian Trekking Association described the DNT's network of cabins and trails, guided

hikes and volunteers who mark and maintain trails both in summer and winter. The organisation is 150 years old and their trademark, red T's painted on rocks and trees along the routes, is a much loved guide to Norwegian trails. In the winter, main trails are signposted using rods and sticks planted in the snow. While most trails between the various DNT cabins are subtle tracks in the landscape, the next speaker on the programme, Erling Birkeland from Bergen Træ-og Skogplantningselskap, could share details of Bergen's latest big track investment – the colossal Oppstemten stone stair built by a team of Sherpas from the Nepalese village of Khunde. The trail leads from Bergen city to

mount Ulriken, one of the 7 mountains circling Bergen town centre. The trail is 750 m long and has an ascent of approximately 270 metres. The trail is built to cope with an annual guest number of 500 000 and attracted approximately 240 000 hikers in 6 months.

The final speaker was Hans Jørgen Andersen from Visit Hardangerfjord, who gave an overview of tourism to the Hardanger region, the effect the rising interest in Trolltunga has had on the local population and the financial element of the sustainability indicators for tourism to Trolltunga.

Outcome

The thematic seminar attracted 23 participants from the local community, local businesses and regional organisations such as DNT Bergen and the Heathland centre. The number of attendees was in line with the expected for an evening event mid-week. The Hardanger region is a large area and the driving distance between various villages is considerable and may include a ferry, so it is not reasonable to be able to cover a large geographical area. Having visitors from Bergen and also from the northern part of Hordaland, a good 3-4 hours away was therefore

very positive.

A benefit from a smaller group of people is that it invites discussion between the parties as questions were asked and experiences exchanged. The seminar ran well over time as the conversation ran freely. As we have seen in the trials and visits where a relatively relaxed form has been established, this leads to an abundance of new ideas as the presenters and audience talk freely amongst themselves. The seminar concluded the week's study visit by the Mournes team to Norway.

Red T-letter, painted on rocks and trees along the routes, is much loved guide to Norwegian trails



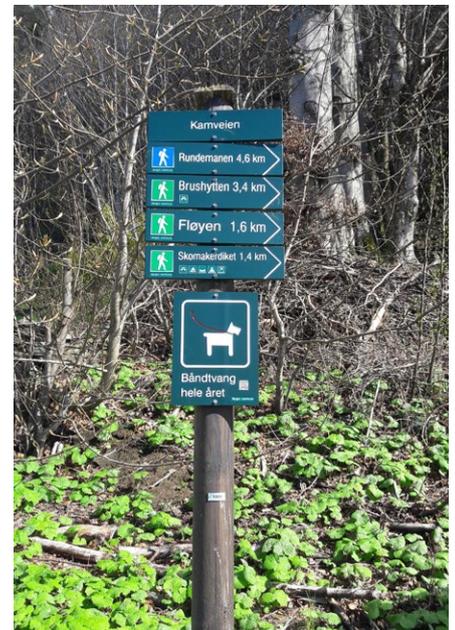
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FURTHER INFORMATION

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Key Findings & Learning Points

For the Norwegian attendees, the information from the Mournes team detailing the various methods for path building, including the theory behind the wool trial we had carried out, was new and very interesting.

While DNT has a number of volunteers working to (primarily) mark but also maintain trails between their cabins, the average age is high and so there was particular interest in the Mournes' experience with operating a system for young volunteers.

Discussions started as to whether it might be possible to establish a form of exchange programme for youths between two or more of the ASCENT partners. Due to the time left in the project, this would have to be a post ASCENT activity and a part of the legacy of the project.