

## Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains



**South Tipperary Tourism Company  
South Tipperary Development Company**

**February 2011  
SLR Ref: 501.00209.00001**

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***The Vee Trailhead  
'Welcome to Co. Tipperary'  
at entry point to the  
Knockmealdown Mountains Recreational Area,  
with the Galtee Mountains to the north in the background***

## Executive Summary

A Feasibility Study for the development of a Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains was carried out in late 2010 by SLR Consulting. The study involved field scoping, desk review and extensive consultations with stakeholders ranging across the community, private and public sectors. A public forum was held at the end of the consultative process to ensure that stakeholders were happy with the general conclusions and thrust of the Strategy.

The Knockmealdown Mountains enjoy under-exploited recreational potential in a beautiful, rural landscape, within 80km of major urban centres. The area has extensive, albeit fragmented, supporting services, which require both capacity and confidence building. The geographical area of influence was broken into three local (Triangle 1/ T1), sub-regional (Triangle 2/ T2) and regional (Triangle 3/ T3) scales for ease of reference. T1 is focussed on the three core communities of Clogheen, Goatenbridge and Newcastle in the foothills of the Knockmealdown Mountains, while T2 includes Ardfinnan, Cahir and west towards Mitchelstown. T3 has a more strategic regional focus.

The following SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) summary of the Knockmealdowns' current capacity to develop as a recreational tourism destination is based on the combined local, regional and national consultative and research data.

### Strengths

- ❖ Clean, unspoilt environment. The natural beauty of the area is its biggest attraction to visitors. Respondents to consultations expressed concern that tourism should "not kill the goose that lays the golden egg" i.e. that all care must be taken to respect and preserve the natural environment.
- ❖ Strong sense of heritage and its potential to attract visitors.
- ❖ Good array of linear and looped walking trails, suited to the non-elite walker/ hiker.
- ❖ Rural Recreation Officer in place.
- ❖ Excellent potential for integrated outdoor activities: walking, hillwalking, angling, cycling, kayaking/ canoeing, equestrian trails which can be packaged collaboratively to achieve economies .
- ❖ Cahir is a 'centre of excellence' for angling tourism, with high quality game fisheries in the Suit, Tar and Duag rivers.
- ❖ Gun clubs are pro-actively engaged in game conservation and environmental monitoring.
- ❖ Bus Eireann services public transport routes daily through T2, from Cork to Clonmel with onward links to Kilkenny and national destinations.
- ❖ T2 'honeypot' attractions of Cahir Castle and Mitchelstown Caves attract 55,000 and 10,000 visitors respectively and more can be done to retain visitors in the area.
- ❖ Positive public support has been offered for private/ community initiatives.
- ❖ **Positive response among all consultees to the Recreational Strategy bodes well for the future.**

### Weaknesses

- ❖ Knockmealdowns straddle three countries and thus not a priority for any local authority.
- ❖ There is no distinctive "Knockmealdowns Mountains" brand;
- ❖ No central point at which visitors can access tourism information; no central website.
- ❖ Walking trails are locally over-exploited with erosion of most popular near The Vee.
- ❖ Single NPWS ranger for south Tipperary; thus under-resourced capacity to monitor environment/ litter/ oversee trails and use of 4WD/ scramblers
- ❖ Current accommodation base in Triangle 1 is insufficient to hold a critical mass of visitors in the area, particularly with no 3\*-4\* Hotel
- ❖ Accommodation base in T1/ T2 is fragmentary, with no history of collaborative marketing
- ❖ Rural pubs available, but with limited / no food provision

- ❖ Signage is weak from Cahir, Clonmel and Lismore and particularly off the M8 motorway, a critical tourist corridor linking Dublin and the SouthWest.
- ❖ Traffic speeds are dangerous for cyclists along the main roads
- ❖ Poor maintenance along parts of the Tipperary Heritage Way
- ❖ Limited activities for families, particularly children under-10;
- ❖ Limited evening/ cultural activities for young adults/ adults
- ❖ **A fragmentary approach exists to tourism by a range of operators**

### Opportunities

- ❖ Potential to develop a unique brand, with capacity to resonate key attractions to develop the area as a vibrant recreational centre.
- ❖ Service providers willing to participate and work collaboratively, with public supports.
- ❖ Packaging/ bundling of attractions & services, such as short breaks and weekends based on the range of accommodation/ activities/ walking/ trekking/ angling/ equestrian/ golf etc, with service providers and key attractions, linked to festivals and events.
- ❖ New product ideas such as *breac-Gaeltacht*, walking festivals and educational/ environmental programmes. These will need to be teased out in terms of pragmatic considerations such as personnel, accommodation base, access, insurance, training requirements and capacity to deliver.
- ❖ Both heritage facilities at Mitchelstown & Cahir Castle would like to strengthen their educational outreach programmes/ community linkages.
- ❖ Links to other outdoor recreational initiatives at regional levels, to create a Munster Borders 'Destination'
- ❖ Build on existing low level seasonal (angling, walking) & cultural events (Draóicht, Gaeltacht, Rhododendron, etc.),
- ❖ **Build partnerships among existing community and voluntary organisations, with public sector supports**

### Threats

- ❖ Sustainability of defined "Driver" to implement the Knockmealdown Mountains Recreational Strategy in a commercially sustainable fashion.
- ❖ That service providers will not rise to the challenge of collaboration and packages development (training will be required).
- ❖ Visitor trends towards short break holidays in urban areas, versus longer leisurely holidays in rural areas
- ❖ Daytrippers to Cahir Castle / Mitchelstown Caves give poor return to local economy
- ❖ Decline in the B&B sector, coupled with the perception that Fáilte Ireland grading for accommodation providers is too stringent for SME operators, which may discourage new service provider entrants.

### **>> More integration and less fragmentation is required, at all levels**

While the recreational base is largely in place, the existing fragmentation of products and services must be overcome. Activity will focus on developing a partnership approach to walking/hiking, angling, culture and heritage, adventure sports and ancillary supporting services, within an environmentally sustainable framework. This can be 'driven' through the facilitation of the Muintir na Tíre's offer of a part-time project Officer, supported by the community and the existing Tipperary Rural Recreation Officer, within the framework of a Knockmealdown Mountains Partnership approach.

The feasibility study, through the consultation and discussions, has aimed to develop a workable Recreational Strategy, largely based on existing human and financial resources. The key elements (Triangles 1, 2) can be delivered for €162,000, which with an additional Communications budget of €34,500 would cost less than **€200,000**, over 3-5 years. If a more ambitious target is set, to include a more regional approach (Triangle 3) and large capital item, would bring the total cost to **€376,500**.

The authors are extremely impressed with the level of commitment shown by all stakeholders, community, public and private, which will ensure that the recreational strategy has an excellent chance of delivery.

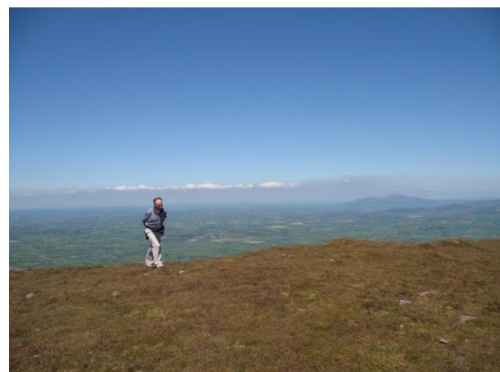
It is recommended that:

- ✓ The **Knockmealdown Mountains Partnership (KMP)** be established in early 2011, encompassing interest groups from landowners, community groups, activities (walking, cycling, angling, biking, shooting, paragliding, kayaking etc), service providers (accommodation, food, pubs, transport etc) and key public agencies (STDC, STTC, South Tipp CoCo, Coillte, Inland Fisheries, NPWS, etc), training agencies (Fás, VEC) and community employment schemes.
- ✓ KMP to be facilitated by a part-time Muintir na Tíre Project Officer, supported by community leaders and the *Rural Recreation Officer* of the South Tipperary Development Company;
- ✓ Establish a private company limited by guarantee in order to have a legal entity to procure funding. Establish a bank account and obtain tax clearance from Revenue. Early actions to be financed through the conduit of the South Tipperary Tourism Company, until the private company limited by guarantee is established.
- ✓ Working groups be established as recommended in the Strategy to address specific tasks and goals; training supports to be provided to the leaders of those groups.
- ✓ Internal & external Communications & Marketing Plan enacted through 2011-2015
- ✓ Funding applications be placed with STDC and other public funding agencies, including Fás, VEC, County Enterprise Board, Fáilte Ireland, etc, as applies;
- ✓ Focus on early building of network, to deliver 'soft' capacity, with subsequent focus on new products and services as set out in the Action Plan;
- ✓ An early facilitated branding exercise, '*Knockmealdowns Active!*' or some such brand, should be agreed and a marketing and promotional campaign delivered as recommended in the Communications & Marketing Plan contained herein;
- ✓ New products & services to be developed through the KMD Action Plan 2011/2012,
- ✓ Ongoing building of regional alliances to commence early building of a 'Munster Mountains' or 'Munster Border' recreational destination of excellence.
- ✓ Monitoring & evaluation (M&E) be carried out annually to provide benchmarking and sense of achievement.



## Part A

# Feasibility Study for Development of a Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains





## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

SLR Environmental Consulting Ireland (SLR) carried out a Feasibility Study in late 2010 to develop a ***Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains*** in southwest County Tipperary. The clients, South Tipperary Tourism Company (STTC) and South Tipperary Development Company (STDC), commissioned the work on behalf of local stakeholders who are seeking to develop an integrated, activity-based recreational tourism base. The Feasibility Study sought to identify the current and requisite levels of infrastructure to support such a strategy, while also identifying the gaps and supports which will be required to attract visitors to a sustainable tourism destination.

SLR professional personnel, Deirdre Lewis (geologist, environment & recreational activity expert) and Alan Hill (tourism development, marketing & communications expert) have worked to develop a pro-active recreational strategy, to address the terms of reference to enhance existing facilities, and to promote the outstanding natural heritage and cultural environment of the Knockmealdown Mountains.

This report is divided into *Part A: Feasibility Study* and *Part B: Recreational Strategy* for the Knockmealdown Mountains.

### 1.1 Terms of Reference

The three communities of Clogheen, Goatenbridge and Newcastle wish to enhance the potential of the Knockmealdowns to attract sustainable tourism development based on outdoor recreation, and identify a suitable strategy to achieve tangible economic benefits for the communities. The Terms of Reference were set out as follows:

1. *Identify the existing facilities / infrastructures*
  - Location of the existing facilities / infrastructures
  - Identify who has responsibility for the existing facilities / infrastructures
  - Standard of the existing facilities / infrastructures
  - Comment on work, if any, that needs to be done to bring the facilities / infrastructures up to an acceptable market standard
  - If work needs to be done, prepare a cost schedule for same and identify sources of funding to cover the costs identified
2. *Identify complimentary/ new facilities / infrastructures*
  - Suggestions for additional amenities /facilities / infrastructures that can be easily provided based on existing resources and determine the timeframe required to develop, cost and source of funding. (Short-term)
  - Facilities / infrastructures that can be developed / provided in the future – time frames associated with this, costs involved and outline sources of funding (Long-term)
3. *Advise on the “boundaries” of the amenity / activity area*
  - Presently the proposed area is the Newcastle / Clogheen / Goatenbridge area in South Tipperary. If this boundary should be extended, provide the rational for same
  - Recommend strategies for inclusion of communities and stakeholders in the “proposed extended project area” - if extension of above area is recommended.
4. *Advise on marketing strategy re bringing the recommended product to the market*
  - Outline a marketing strategy for the project
  - Prepare a cost schedule for the marketing plan suggested and outline sources of funding
5. *Recommend a management structure for the project*
  - The project is currently at concept stage i.e. there is no formal management structure in place. A model for an official management structure will need to be

- put in place if the project is to proceed. Please indicate appropriate business models e.g. company limited by guarantee, community group, etc
- Outline a sustainable plan for the day-to-day management of the project and detail how this plan will be funded
  - Outline the costs associated with the proposed management structure and outline how these costs, if any, will be funded.
  - Provide examples of “best practice” for projects of a similar nature in Ireland and /or overseas
6. *Time frames – Suggest time frames for the development of the programme*
- Time frame to develop the project from its current phase to the point where it can go to market

Central to the terms of reference was the identification of existing tourism facilities, observation of potential gaps and lack of potential complementarity in the current service supply; and the means by which these gaps can be addressed. The strategy was also to promote an integrated product/ service base with a coherent marketing plan. Additionally, a workable management structure was to be recommended, to link the public, community and private sector players to develop the Knockmealdowns as a recreational ‘centre of excellence’ tourism destination.

## 1.2 Partner Profile

The South Tipperary Tourism Company Ltd (STTC) and the South Tipperary Development Company (STDC) are facilitating the development of the recreational strategy to generate rural enterprise in southwest Tipperary, on behalf of three core communities in Clogheen, Goatenbridge and Newcastle, respectively.

**Clogheen**, a small town at the confluence of the Tar and Duag Rivers, has a population of c. 500 people; **Newcastle** is a small village of a few hundred people on a strategic River Suir crossing, while between the two, **Goatenbridge** comprises a crossing point on the River Tar, between Clogheen and Newcastle, with a pub, shop and GAA grounds, with a largely dispersed rural population. This core area has an east-west axis of 13km.

**Ardfinnan** lies 4km to the northeast with a population of 1000 people, while 15km to the north, **Cahir**, an attractive heritage town, has a population of 3,380, serving a catchment of 5,000 people. **Mitchelstown**, an active market town in east Cork to the southwest, has a similar population to Cahir (CSO, 2006). Clonmel, the South Tipperary county town, is 12km east of Newcastle.

The following key points may be made about the partnership:

- The population in the area of question is largely agriculturally based, although significant numbers commute to Clonmel, Cork, Limerick and Waterford to work.
- There is not a strong tradition of tourism development and provision.
- The three key communities do not have a single entity development company; rather there are highly active voluntary, parish-based community councils, Muintir na Tíre, ICA and GAA clubs at local level.
- Additionally, country pursuits are highly popular and there are a number of gun, game conservation and angling clubs in the district.
- A number of local residents are active walking members of the Clonmel-based, Peaks Mountaineering Club.

Thus the ‘client’ is somewhat dispersed and it was acknowledged during the consultative process that some developmental work would be required to build a single vision and possible ‘branding’ for the Recreational Strategy project at community level.

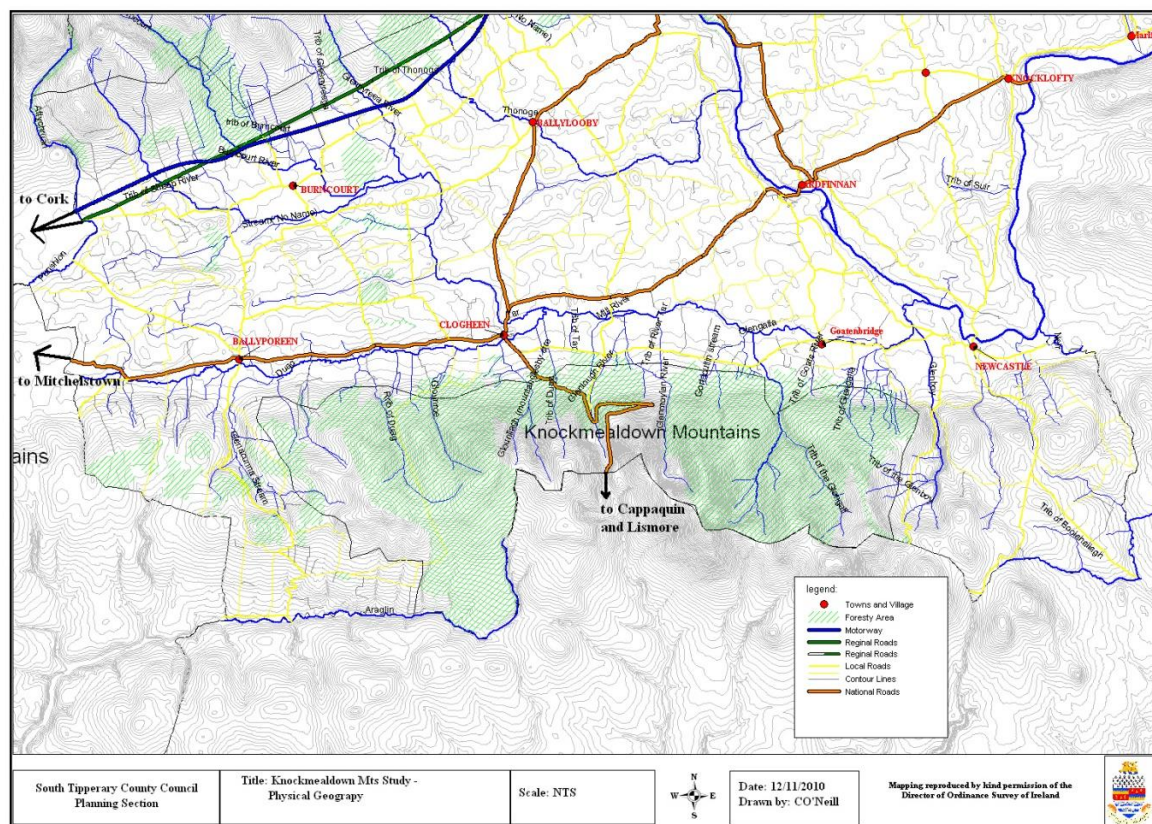
### 1.3 Defining the Boundaries of the Area

The three communities of Clogheen, Goatenbridge and Newcastle are located along the northern fringes of the Knockmealdown Mountains in southwest county Tipperary, within a highly agricultural, pastoral landscape. The area is endowed with an excellent array of natural and cultural assets displaying superb vistas to the plains north and south, with mountain plateaux of the Galtees & Ballyhoura Mountains to the northwest; the Comeragh, Monavullagh and Slievenamon Mountains to the east and northeast; and the coast of Waterford and Cork to the south. A rich array of historical and cultural heritage is present within the area, given its strategic location along ancient territorial boundaries.

*View from  
'The Vee' in the  
Knockmealdown  
Mountains,  
northwards towards  
the Galtee Mountains,  
South Tipperary*



The eastern boundary is formed by the southeast flowing River Suir, while its east-flowing tributaries, the Duag and the Tar, drain the main area in question (Map 1).



Map 1. Geographical Boundaries of the Knockmealdowns Recreational Strategy (Triangle 2):  
Courtesy: Planning Department of South Tipperary County Council

During the review and consultative process for the development of the Knockmealdown Mountains Recreational Strategy (KMRS), it became apparent that the geographical boundaries of the core area (**local - Triangle 1**) would need to be expanded to include higher critical mass. The area is enclosed within a larger sub-regional triangle bounded by the Knockmealdown Mountains to the south, the River Suir to the east and the Galtees to the northwest, with the northwestern boundary defined by the M8 motorway (**sub-regional Triangle 2**). In terms of recreational tourism and potentially strategic partnerships, the Knockmealdowns sit within a geologically contiguous regional range of hills/ mountains embracing the Ballyhouras/ Galtees to the northwest; and the Monavullaghs/ Comeraghs to the East (**regional - Triangle 3**).

The strategy is critically framed within these three triangular zones – each with specific actions required to reach full potential. These 3 triangles may best be represented graphically as follows:

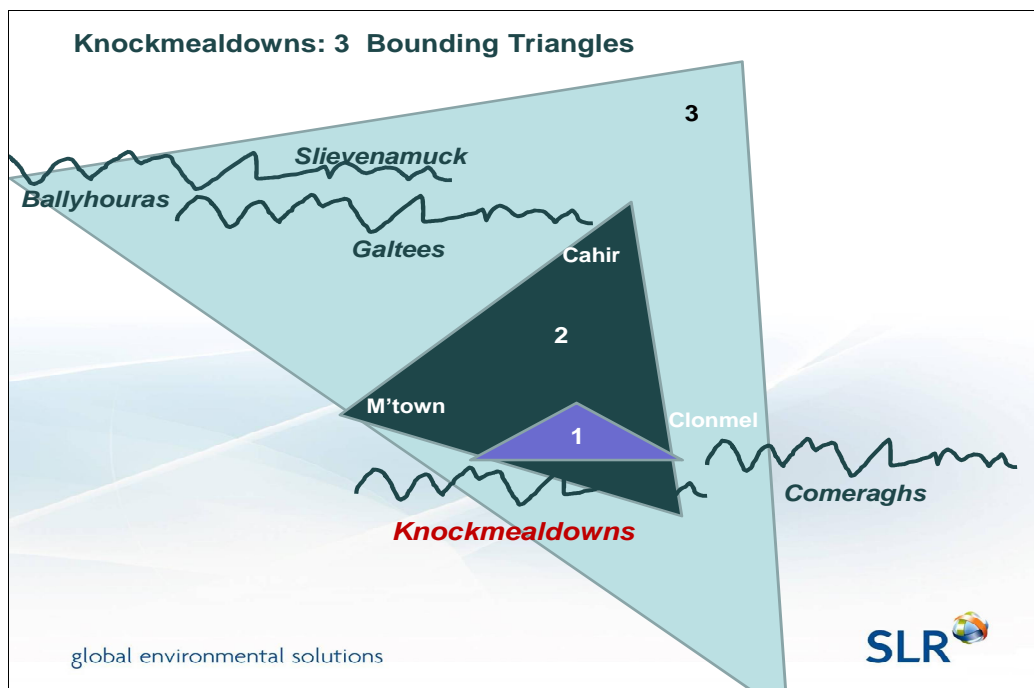


Figure 1: Bounding Triangles of the Knockmealdown Mountains - note: not to scale

Significant community vision and capacity must be built at **Triangle 1** level to create local ownership and delivery of the Recreational Strategy, a process already underway. Triangle 1 encloses the key physical assets under consideration in the Strategy.

**Triangle 2** represents a critical access and supporting area of influence, being marked by the M8 motorway on its northwestern boundary, with two portal towns of Cahir and Mitchelstown at its apices. Critically, Cahir Castle and the Mitchelstown Cave in T2 have the capacity to attract 65,000 tourists into the area per annum. Additional 'soft' tourism infrastructure is enclosed within this triangle.

**Triangle 3** represents a broader inter-county, regional strategic approach, based on a collaborative partnership where adjacent recreational zones (*Ballyhoura, Galtees, Knockmealdowns & Comeraghs*), collectively could offer a real destination of choice, of

critical mass, for the recreational holidaymaker. Each zone could offer its own unique selling point (USP) while complementing the adjacent offering. Such a Munster Borders Mountain Zone could become a major recreational destination on the international calendar, adopting the 'collaborate to compete' approach.

## **1.4 Approach & Methodology**

The approach adopted by SLR was based on a 'tried and tested' methodology. There are two key approaches to determining local tourism potential and its economic impacts: (i) a top-down disaggregation of national/ regional statistics and/or (ii) a bottom-up estimate measured at the level of local businesses. Either method allows the key estimate of visitor volume to be made, in order to estimate revenue, employment and potential multiplier effects. The bottom-up method produces a more positive approach with local business, and ideally should allow a better approximation of the actual value of local tourism, as well as 'real time' trends in the local market.

In this study, SLR have used a combined approach, as published 'top down' data specific to southwest Tipperary is scarce, while acquiring reliable and consistent quantitative data from local businesses is difficult, given that service providers are generally reluctant to divulge details of business performance such as tourism revenue or turnover. Where possible, data were recorded to supply at least some hard facts.

Applying the more traditional 'top down' approach, relevant market research studies undertaken by Fáilte Ireland and general tourism publications were reviewed. These data have been compiled to define trends in the general market, which were used both to interpret local data trends and to design an appropriate marketing & communications strategy for Knockmealdowns.

Applying the bottom-up approach, SLR interviewed a cross-section of tourist service providers and agencies, some of whom reside beyond Knockmealdowns, on a 1:1 or telephonic basis. Additionally, local authority personnel, regional tourism authorities and strategic tourism planners were interviewed.

SLR compiled all relevant information within Knockmealdowns catchment radius (Triangles 1, 2). Available website data and brochures from tourist offices in Clonmel and Cahir were gathered, to provide an overview of the accommodation base (B&B, guest houses, hotels, self-catering etc), restaurants, attractions, craft providers, events, activities etc, all of which have been compiled to a single digital platform (see Map 1).

The 'honeypot' attractions in Triangle 2, Cahir Castle and Mitchelstown Caves respectively, represent significant tourist introductory 'gateway' opportunities on which the Knockmealdowns community can build. The management of each facility was interviewed to provide useful specific local market data.

The Knockmealdown Mountains straddle three counties and key inter-regional boundaries which are subject to EU InterReg initiatives such as 'Celtic Community Link', a rural partnership being conducted by Muintir na Tíre in rural areas of Tipperary and Waterford. Additionally, ideas for a more regional 'recreational destination' approach of critical mass were discussed with players in neighbouring ranges in Ballyhoura, Aherlow and Comeraghs. Each of these strategic initiatives was consulted with a view to assessing their likely impact for tourism development within Knockmealdowns.



A public meeting was held in Goatenbridge on 9 December 2010 to provide feedback to almost 40 stakeholders and to garner opinion on priorities for development. All of this was underpinned by the experience of the two consultants to define the recreational strategy best suited to the Knockmealdowns catchment.

Through a strongly consultative approach, engaging with a range of stakeholders to define their needs & aspirations and by mapping of existing infrastructure and gaps, SLR has attempted to develop a soundly-based Recreational Strategy to build local ownership with momentum to implement the strategy over a phased timeframe.

## 1.5 Recreational Strategies

A number of councils and sports partnerships have been examining ways in which to develop internationally attractive recreational facilities and foster increased local recreational participation in walking and other outdoor pursuits, while at the same time building the requisite supporting services delivered by local enterprises.

**Waterford County Council** developed a 'bottom-up' county-wide walking strategy in 2003 which remains the benchmark for Irish local authorities. It is being rolled out in the neighbouring Comeragh Mountains, and pertinently for this study, a **Comeragh Mountains Forum** has been established to drive the strategy forward to realise the benefits locally. Working groups have been established under the umbrella of the Forum to address specific aspects of access, funding, partnership, service provision etc. and provides a working model for the Knockmealdowns setting.

The National Trails Office of the Irish Sports Council developed a very comprehensive and consultative **Irish Trails Strategy** to promote and develop Irish recreational walking. Similarly, **County Mayo** has published its county Walking Strategy, with similar aims to Waterford. Under the Country strategy, the Newport-Mulranny Greenway (disused railway) was rehabilitated and developed as a walking-cycle track. A recent festival held there attracted 1000 people over a weekend, while the Mulranny Park Hotel has re-fashioned itself as a centre of recreational activity to tap the new markets.

SLR worked with **Louth County Council** to develop a *Recreational Strategy for the Cooley Peninsula* to promote the recreational and tourist benefits of walking, while at the same time fostering a valuable tourism product to add to the Cooley's status as Ireland's "EDEN" as European Destination of Excellence award (2008). Their approach of 60% focus on local health and wellbeing with 40% on tourism was interesting. In the intervening two years, a Cooley Forum was established and have recently developed new looped walks suited to less 'elite' walkers and wheelchair/ buggy access. This is part of an ongoing development plan with local communities.

The Western Development Tourism Programme developed ***Walking in the West*** – an innovative step-by-step guide to development of local walking partnerships (in those counties from Donegal to Clare, west of the Shannon) in an effort to coordinate the ad hoc activities of local communities, to develop a high-quality, integrated recreational product, based on best international practice. Carlow LEADER developed an integrated '***Walking-Cycling Strategy for Co. Carlow***' in 2006, which is forming the core of further walking products and integration of services and festivals.

South Tipperary agencies are aiming to facilitate a similar process to these strategies to ensure local engagement, 'ownership' and management of the Knockmealdowns Recreational Strategy, which will ultimately ensure long term sustainability to deliver positive benefits to local communities.



## 2.0 BACKGROUND

The global tourism economy is going through great change and the development of the Knockmealdown Recreational Strategy will not escape its impact. Planning needs to be aware of policy directions and consumer trends to capitalise fully on the opportunities presented by the world's leading industry.

### 2.1 Tourism Policy Review

How does Europe see our tourism future? In October 2010, the EU stated clearly “...*the European tourism industry faces a number of challenges into the longer term, including climate and demographic changes, pressure on biodiversity, the growing impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and increasing global competition, while the industry needs to recover from the effects of the global economic crisis.*”

They went on to suggest how recovery may be achieved through three distinct measures:

1. promoting the development of *sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism*;
2. consolidating the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations; and,
3. maximising the potential of EU policies and existing financial instruments for developing the sector.

The influence of emerging markets such as China and India shifted the trading balance away from Europe from the high watermark of the mid-1990s of 60% of world tourism trade, to a projected 46% by 2020 (WTO, 2010). Europe and Ireland will have to fight harder in the coming decade to hold what it has in terms of numbers / expenditure.

Ireland's tourism development has been dramatic over the last two decades; however, the spatial spread of tourism and spend has been disappointing for the majority of rural destinations away from 'honey pot' destinations. In total 8.7 million visitors visited the island of Ireland in 2008, spending €4.366bn. This decreased to c. 6.5 million visitors in 2010, with average spend per visitor of €502 (Tourism Ireland, 2010). The profile of visitor will likely change over time and the Knockmealdown strategy needs to reflect this demographic shift - namely that the 55+ age group (*have money, will travel*) present opportunities, along with specialist educational markets. Broadly, the domestic 'home' market has grown in importance as the international has slid back over two years of recession (and is likely to remain 'soft' for a few more years to come). Therefore in the short to medium term, the domestic and regional markets offer the area the most likely returns and it should not be underestimated that the 'M8 corridor' linking the island's two most popular destinations (Dublin & Southwest) passes the gateway towns to the Knockmealdown (T2).

It is predicted that it be more difficult to attract and retain new visitors (domestic or international) for new emerging rural destinations in the coming years.

### **Regional Tourism Development**

Fáilte Ireland (FI) have responsibility both nationally and regionally for tourism development. They are responding to this fast changing 'landscape' and welcome the potential emergence of the Knockmealdown as another quality rural tourism brand in the South East region. They see the following requisite *strategic goals* for developing tourism in the SE:

- Position the region as a leading heritage destination
- Expand the cultural & events on offer, positioning the South East as a 'happening place'

- Roll-out 'Family Fun and Resorts Activities'
- Develop water- and land-based access and recreational activities
- Improve transport access to and within the region

Overall sustainability comes across clearly in Fáilte Ireland's vision for the region. The *guiding principles* underlining regional tourism development, and which will impact significantly on the development of the Knockmealdowns, are:

1. **Protect Ireland's principal strengths: people, the natural environment & sense of place**
2. **Ensure a focus on quality and economic value**
3. **Develop attractors which fill a gap for a defined market demand**
4. **Spread benefits around the region, where this meets market needs and has community support**
5. **Develop facilities that benefit residents and visitors alike**
6. **Work closely with public authorities, agencies and other stakeholders to achieve objectives.**

This recreational strategy is informed by these defined principles. Its implementation should be rolled out with the full, formal and regular input from Fáilte Ireland at regional level, support which has been offered through the regional office.

### ***The Changing National Picture***

When creating a new recreational strategy it is important to know why visitors are likely to come to your area. What 'activities' were engaged in by international visitors in 2009? (source: *Tourism Ireland, 2010*).

- Culture & Heritage 46%
- Gardens 20%
- Hiking & Walking 13%
- Festival & Events 6%
- Cycling 2%
- Fishing 2%

From Knockmealdowns' perspective, many would have assumed that both angling and walking would have scored more highly, but it is important to note these are composite figures and are an average across the whole country, while many will be surprised by the strength of 'culture' to draw in and keep visitors. The Knockmealdowns' best (but not only) prospects are *Hiking/Walking and Culture & Heritage* visitors. They have been defined by their holiday taking needs, which include an interest in outdoor activities, sight-seeing, learning about, visiting, and experiencing the country and its culture. Using a car to tour around a destination, or simply to get from one location to another, is very popular and a growth area with tourists.

As mentioned above both walking and angling are important activities for the area so how do they measure up to analysis?

- *Walking*: Over 800,000 overseas visitors claim to have gone hiking/cross-country walking in 2009. However, the number who walked off-road, for more than 5km on average, is 388,000 and they spent an estimated €183 million. Holidaymakers who stated that walking was an important factor in their choice of Ireland as a holiday destination number 366,000 and they spent an estimated €215 million while in Ireland in 2009.
- *Angling*: An estimated 132,000 overseas visitors engaged in angling while in Ireland in 2009, and spent an estimated €105 million.

- **Culture/ Historical Sites:** Over 3 million people visited cultural and historical sites in 2009 in Ireland, arriving by air primarily from Europe, UK and USA. Castles/ houses, museums & galleries and interpretative centres were the most popular attractions. There is a good year-round spread, with 33% arriving between October – March, with an average length of stay being a full week (7.2 days). No data is available for their specific spend, but overall visitors to Ireland spend in the region of €510 per head.

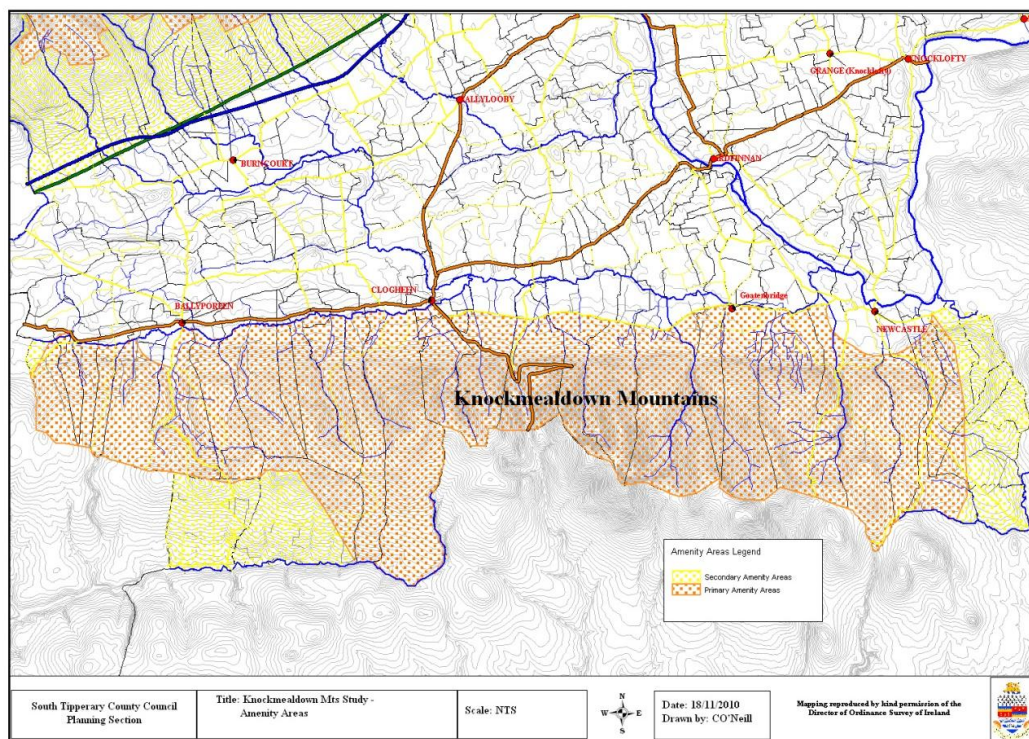
These activities are key markets for the Knockmealdowns tourism development.

Domestic tourism will continue to be a source of growth area, providing the region offers and an attractive array of activities, events and festivals. However, local service provision must meet expectations.

## 2.2 Planning Framework

South Tipperary County Council (STCC) has committed to sustainable tourist development in its current County Development Plan (2007-11). The Council aims to facilitate the enhancement of “additional recreational facilities in appropriate locations to cater for the population of the county and its visitors”.

In 2002, STCC undertook Phase 1 of a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) over the upland areas of the county, including the Knockmealdown Mountains. The LCA identified primary and secondary amenity areas that have ‘special sensitivity’ and ‘high sensitivity’ designations. In primary amenity areas (specially sensitive) it is considered that landscape values are too high to absorb more than limited change, while in secondary amenity areas (highly sensitive) the landscape is capable of absorbing change that reflects and enhances the current landscape condition. The CDP specifically provides for recreational zoning of the Knockmealdown Mountains as both primary and secondary amenity zones, with the bulk of the mountain uplands incorporated in the higher amenity category (Map 2).

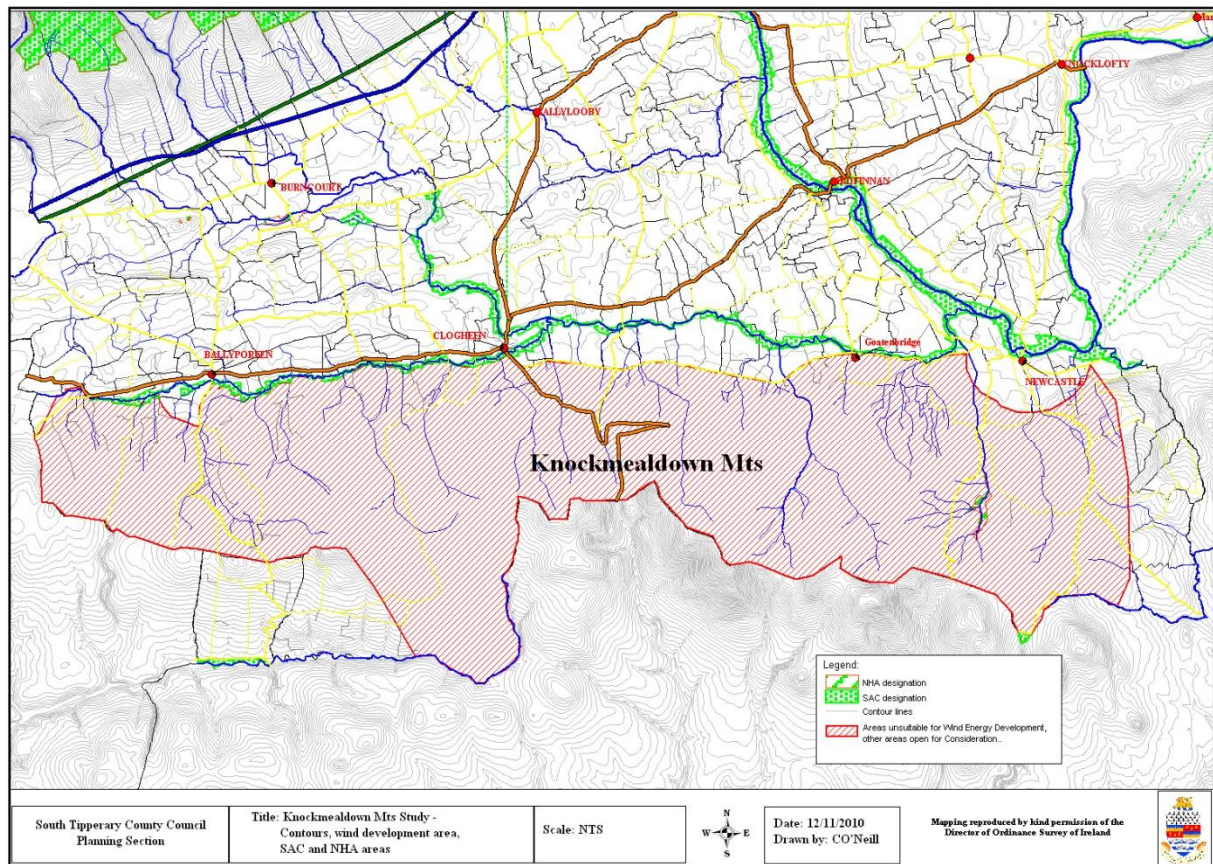


Map 2. Planning Designations of the Knockmealdown Mountains (South Tipp County Council).



In relation to any proposed developments, “STCC will balance the need to protect the landscape character against the requirement for appropriate socio-economic development of the area”. Outdoor recreational facilities which are likely to fall within the amenity areas must take these designations into consideration, maintaining the lowest impact possible.

The National Parks & Wildlife Service, in consultation with South Tipp County Council and fisheries authorities, have also designated a number of areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), conferring significant protective measures therein (Map 3).



Interestingly, the upland ‘primary and secondary amenity zones’ are not designated as SACs but are deemed as unsuitable for wind farms, while the important riverine habitats of the Rivers Suir, Tar and Duag are all designated SACs.

## 2.3 Economic & Social Context

The Knockmealdowns are strategically located within 80km radius of Limerick (70,000 people), Cork (500,000 people) and Waterford (50,000) and within 15km of the South Tipperary county town, Clonmel (>32,000 people in its hinterland). It thus has the potential to attract a significant local/ regional, year-round visitor profile, as well as other domestic and international recreational tourists.

Critically, despite its natural and demographic advantages, the Knockmeladown Mountains straddle three counties: Tipperary, Waterford and Cork respectively. Thus, the range has

never been a high priority in recreational terms for any of the local authorities, despite its potential and popular appeal.

In 2008, more than 517,000 international visitors went **hiking/ hillwalking** in Ireland, with (*questionably*) 830,000 in 2009 (Fáilte Ireland Fact Cards, 2010). There are five registered<sup>1</sup> hill-walking clubs in North, Mid- and South Tipperary, six in Co Waterford, as well as about 10 clubs in Cork city and county. These are great sources of all-year-round visitors, while the domestic hillwalking numbers across Ireland are reckoned to be in excess of 50,000 and growing. These are huge markets which can be tapped by an excellent product which is well managed, marketed and sustained. However, expanded accommodation base and supporting services, strong marketing and promotion will be required to attract and retain potential inflows. As well as that, strategic partnerships in the medium term with the Comeraghs, Galtees and Ballyhouras could provide year-round visitors.

### **2.3.1 South Tipperary Tourism Review**

No current clear and reliable economic performance figures exist for Triangle 1 or even Triangle 2; however solid information from the Bane & Mullarkey report (Jan. 2008) on tourism in South Tipperary (*South Tipperary Tourism: Review & Development Strategy, 2008 - 2014*) stated that :

*" ...161,000 overseas visitors to South Tipperary in 2006 spent over €66 million in the county. UK visitors make up the majority of this market at 40%, followed by Mainland Europeans at 28% and North Americans at 25%.*

*Domestic visitors to the South East Region increased in number but decreased as a proportion of total domestic holidaymakers during the 2002-2006 period. Year round distribution makes the domestic visitor an attractive segment ... "*

We can extrapolate with a degree of confidence that overseas visitors to South Tipperary (2010) were about 133,000 (down 20%) with an expenditure of about €50 million. This would be similar to national trends. However with the probable exception of The Vee, the Triangle 1 territory sees little evidence of these visitors except at peak weekends over the high season. Certainly, all the intelligence gained from the accommodation providers during consultation indicates a dramatic and worrying decrease in overnight visitors and subsequent expenditure. Many experienced operators are just holding on to their businesses 'by the skin of teeth'. It is important not to lose this business and hospitality acumen over the coming years. The current '*best in class*' operators need to be supported and encouraged to remain in business or else the overall project may be seriously compromised due to a simple lack of beds.

The Bane & Mullarkey 2008 report also highlights the need for an integrated approach to destination development, combining training, product development and marketing. With Fáilte Ireland as the critical strategic partner, there is scope for support and improved capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mountaineering.ie/nearestclub>

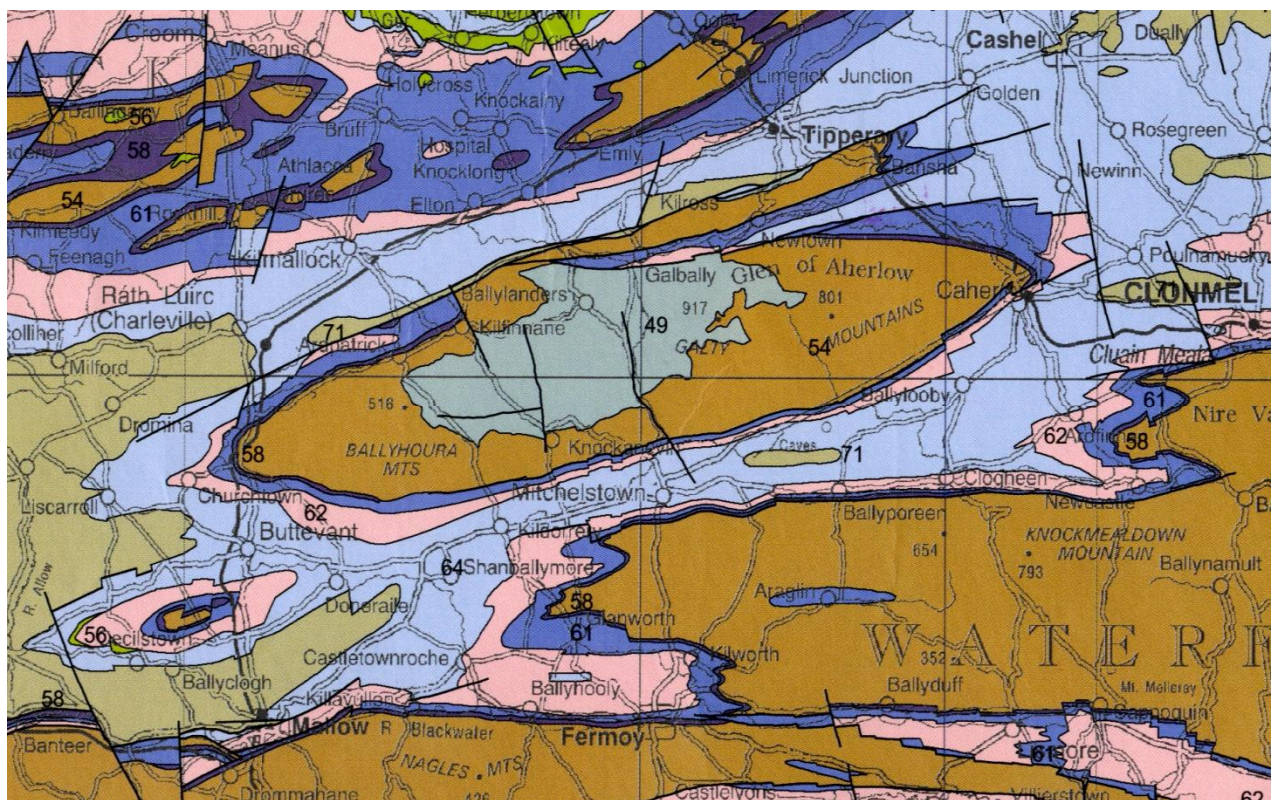


### 3.0 REVIEW OF EXISTING FACILITIES/ INFRASTRUCTURE

The following presents an audit of the existing recreational and tourist infrastructure within the Knockmealdowns area of influence (focussed on Triangles 1 and 2).

#### 3.1 Physical Infrastructure

The Knockmealdowns, Galtee and Comeragh Mountains are formed by anticlinal 'up-folds' of Lower Palaeozoic-aged rocks, primarily cored by the Old Red Sandstone (brown on map) and fringed by the Lower Limestone Shales (dark blue). The valleys between the Knockmealdowns and Galtees are formed of Carboniferous limestones (shown in pink and pale blue), with younger shales and siltstones to the southwest (buff / pale brown). This structure provides the pleasing and cohesive landscapes of geological contiguity in southwest Tipperary.



Map 4: Geological Map of Southwest Tipperary

#### 3.1.1 Access

Tipperary has a full time Rural Recreation Officer (RRO), Mr. Con Ryan, who has been doing excellent work in negotiating access, developing new trails and working with local interest groups to further the recreational amenities of the Knockmealdowns.

The uplands are largely owned by Coillte, the Irish semi-state body for commercial timber production, and the Grubb family, an ex-milling family, who have long established land ownership. Both parties are happy to allow recreational access, with certain provisos relating to environmental sustainability and low impact nature of activities. Where other farmers own land in the lower levels of the mountains, there is reasonable permissive



recreational access, which is well managed by the RRO in full consultation with the landowners. Some landowners are co-operating with the national *Walks Scheme*, administered by the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs through the RRO on the ground. However, the Walks Scheme is likely to be closed to new entrants in 2011, but gains can be made with existing participants.

### **3.1.2 Walking Trails**

There is an excellent array of linear and looped walking trails within the Knockmealdowns, traversing both upland and lowland areas.

#### ***Linear/ Long-Distance Trails***

Three long-distance linear trails converge at The Vee trailhead:

- the approximately east-west *Blackwater (Avondhu) Way* (BAW)
- the *East Munster Way* (EMW, part of the coast to coast path from Dublin to Kerry), and
- the north-south *Tipperary Heritage Way* (THW, goes from The Vee to Cashel) (Map 5).

A further waymarked way traverses the area just to the north, *St Declan's Way*, which follows the footsteps of St Patrick from Cashel to Ardmore, passing near Cahir, while Rinn Bhó Phádraig, from Ardmore to Cashel passes through Ardfinnan. The latter is reputed to be among the oldest ecclesiastical trails in Ireland.

An additional informal linear trail, marked by the *County Wall*, runs along the crest of the Knockmealdowns Ridge from east to west between Waterford and Tipperary counties, with excellent underfoot conditions.

The following critical appraisal may be made:

- The Knockmealdowns trails offer all-weather terrain, with good drainage due to the underlying Old Red Sandstone bedrock. Sections of the northern slopes are forested by commercial Coillte forests, while heather/ bracken is not generally a problem, except on the lower slopes of Knocknascullogue, among others.
- There is currently poor availability of walking maps. There is currently neither integration in promotion of the walks, nor a dedicated website with downloadable maps.
- The THW merges at one section south of Goatenbridge with the EMW, and the latter's signage disappears until Graigue, potentially causing ambiguity for a walker following the EMW trail.
- There is scope for a serviced car park in the foothills just south of Goatenbridge, to act as an alternative walkers trailhead (this would need consultation with Coillte).
- The lack of litter management at The Vee trailhead during peak summer months is both unsightly and environmentally unsustainable.
- There is a disconnect between the walking trails and the local villages – services are not geared either in output/produce or in timing for weekend walkers.

- St. Declan's Way, which enters Cahir, is largely on-road and not ideal for recreational walking. However, sections may be adaptable as a cycling route.
- The County Wall walk, allowing a superb Knockmealdown ridge walk, with views to the Waterford coast is not waymarked, despite many walkers using it. It could be a highly appealing new product, but full access will require negotiation with landowners.
- In terms of development, the trails are in place – they simply need more promotion and map production.

Comparatively, there is a Fáilte Ireland *Centre of Excellence for Walking* in the Galtee Mountains, based in the Glen of Aherlow to the north. This recreational hub had a strong 'driver' in the local Hotel Aherlow, but unfortunately the bed nights in the hotel were insufficient and the hotelier/ 'driver' is currently in receivership. Thus there is 'no quick fix' to developing a recreational hub, and Fáilte Ireland's advisers recommend that an area needs to get the product into shape first and then try to market it....they advise not to get into big infrastructural commitments for walking products in the current climate.

Most elite walkers/ walking clubs will want to climb the mountains peaks, and from The Vee trailhead, there are a number of informal trails following the County Wall up the steep Sugarloaf to Knockmealdown-Knocknagnauv-Knocknafallia eastwards, or alternatively westwards along 630-Knockshanahullion-Knockclugga-Farbreaga and on to Carran Hill (Map 5)

The waymarked ways (Blackwater/ East Munster) in general stay below the 500m contours due to safety considerations in the event of poor weather. However, it can be said, from our experience, that the Knockmealdowns must rank as among the safest ranges in Ireland and as such present an opportunity as a Centre for Training in introductory hillwalking, navigation and map-reading skills etc.

### ***Looped/ Short-Distance Trails***

10 shorter looped walks are developed on the northern slopes of the mountains, between Newcastle and Clogheen, of varying length, grade and challenge (Map 5), from east to west:

1. ***Gleann Beag***
2. ***Knockroe***
3. ***Knocknballiniry***
4. ***Liam Lynch***
5. ***Knockmealdown Lakes***
6. ***Duck Ponds***
7. ***Gortacullin***
8. ***Kilballyboy***
9. ***Glenloug***
10. ***Duag Loop***

These trails have the potential to attract a diverse range of walkers, from beginners to medium level. In the course of the project, all the looped trails (on the Tipperary side of the Knockmealdown mountains) were compiled to a single map platform and are shown on Map 5. The looped trails are of varying length and grades, but are attractive to moderately fit walkers and beginners. The start/finish are linked to the local villages, potentially offering services at beginning and end of walk. However:

- The lowland looped walks will require accessible walking maps, which can be printed locally as downloadable (pdfs) maps from a dedicated website/ web page.

- Services are limited in the local villages, mainly in food provision or 'pub' lunch type menus (within Triangle 1)

### *Walking Festivals*

There are a number of walking festivals held in the Knockmealdowns over the years, with the most popular being the 'Knockmealdown Walk', which attracts almost 200 walkers from all over Ireland during the Easter period. It is hosted by the PEAKS Mountaineering Club, an excellent voluntary club based in Clonmel, with many members living in Knockmealdowns' catchment. The 'Knockmealdown Walks' are graded easy-moderate-hard and encompass an excellent challenge ranging from the southwest of the hills (near Hare's Cross) to the village of Newcastle, for a fee of €25/head. This festival has the potential to become part of a regional calendar of events (e.g. 2 annual festivals in the Galtees / 2 annual festivals in the Nire Valley) if linked to an overall regional 'walking destination' (Triangle 3).

However, there is a limit to accommodation services especially high-quality, approved B&B/ guesthouses and there is no hotel in the immediate catchment area (T1). The Cahir House and Knocklofty Hotels in T2 are not specifically geared to outdoor recreational festivals.

### **3.1.3 Angling**

Three excellent game fishing rivers flow through 'The Vee Valley' (Triangles 1, 2), each of which is subject to an SAC conservation designation, reflecting their high natural heritage status for trout and salmon (Map 3 above). The salmon fishery in particular has the potential to attract a significant number of high-spending fishermen to the area.

In the course of consultations, Inland Fisheries of Ireland (IFI), who are supportive of the Recreational Strategy initiative, confirmed that the River Suir will be open for fishing, but only to a limited extent due to the limited surplus salmon stocks available. Thus this fishery will be re-opened on a 'catch-and-release' basis only from the start of the season (17<sup>th</sup> March 2011), but may open to 'catch-and-keep' for a limited extent on what is known as a 'brown tag fishery', one fish per angler, from approximately the 14<sup>th</sup> of August to September 30<sup>th</sup>, which allows a limited catch of salmon. ***Note that these dates have yet to be finalised.***

There are a number of active angling clubs within Triangle 2, including Ardfinnan and Cahir. In 2010, Cahir was designated as a European Centre of Excellence for Brown Trout (CoE) by Fáilte Ireland, a significant boost to the traditional angling tourism based in the Vee Valley. To gain this status, the Centre must have availability of the fish themselves but also 'infrastructure' such as good access to the river, accommodation, a variety of places to eat etc. As part of the 'easy access' requirement, there are six fishing 'stands' along the river, easily reached from car-parks, and all have wheelchair access – see <http://www.visitcahir.ie/ThingsToDo/ThingsToDoFishing.html>.



*Swiss Cottage –one of angling stands for wheelchair users*

The CoE is being driven by local volunteers, primarily members of the Cahir and District Anglers' Association. Momentum and capacity building are being undertaken to build ownership and knowledge of the angling product among general and specialist service providers, including B&Bs. Guides are being trained on access, rods, gillying etc – already, four guides have been trained as 'gillies' to guide visitors to the best fishing stretches of the rivers, at a cost of €80/day. The daily salmon licence is €21, which for a total of c.€100 gives the visitor a full package. Promotional activities at specialist trade fairs are being undertaken with Fáilte Ireland, and the Valley enjoys guests from Dutch, Belgian and French markets, with a reduction in the traditional British market, and almost no Germans. FÁS are providing courses in website design and maintenance, which the CoE is utilising.

The **River Suir** provides a near perfect environment for the survival and growth of wild brown trout. It is the second longest river in Ireland at 185km, ranging from 25-35m wide, which with its tributaries, drains a total catchment area of 3,610 sq km. Very few rivers can equal it in terms of the overall numbers of trout that it produces, available to the angler. The average size of trout ranges from 0.35–0.9kg ( $\frac{3}{4}$  to 2 lb) in different areas, depending on the habitat. Their lifespan is relatively short and few trout exceed 4 years of age. There are also very good runs of salmon depending on water levels and conditions.

The fishing in the area is controlled by the *Cahir and District Anglers' Association*. This is one of the oldest (over 80 years) and finest clubs in Ireland. They will help with any questions you may have before or during your trip to Cahir email: [mokey.guirey@gmail.com](mailto:mokey.guirey@gmail.com)

**Angling guides** are available with vast experience of the river and its tributaries. Contact Kevin Rowe, Information Officer, Cahir and District Anglers' Association, Reiska Road, Cahir, County Tipperary Tel: 052 7442729 Mobile: 087 6409271 /087 6409271

**Inland Fisheries Ireland** is very keen to support the Recreational Strategy, provided that the conservation of fish stocks is respected within the overall licensing system. It considers that there is huge potential to deliver more recreation through angling and upland adventure. Approximately 3,000 licences are sold annually in the SE region, many of which are used along the lower reaches of the River Suir. Each salmon licence costs €21/day, or €65 for a 21-day licence, which are internationally considered to be good value. IFI recognises that the angling clubs are critical to the monitoring and regulation of rivers, acting as voluntary 'eyes and ears' for the authorities. The ethos of conservation and responsibility for fisheries by voluntary clubs is admirable and should be encouraged and fostered in the implementation of the Recreational Strategy.

### 3.1.4 Cycling

In regular cycling terms, the quiet rural roads of the Knockmealdown hinterlands offers an attractive product and could be modelled on the Kingfisher Route which winds through Leitrim/ Cavan/ Fermanagh. Traffic may be a problem, with high speeds even on rural roads.

**Cycle Hire:** Bicycles can be hired in Ardfinnan within the area, although to date, there has not been a high level of demand according to the service provider.



### **3.1.5 Mountain Biking**

Although, there is potential to develop ambitious, upland **mountain-biking** routes, akin to the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail (<http://www.ballyhouramtb.com>) which offers c. 90km of continuous upland biking paths, this option is not open to the Knockmealdowns given Coillte's strategic national policy of not servicing all mountain ranges with dedicated mountain bike tracks. There are very significant insurance, capital and operational expenditures (upwards of €2 million) to be considered by Coillte and in this economic climate, they cannot extend the network beyond designated zones.



A suggestion was made to develop a lowland mountain trail across the northern slopes of the Knockmealdowns, but again for the same reasons, Coillte cannot permit cycling trail development within their estate.

### **3.1.6 Game Shooting**

The tradition of game shooting is alive and well in south Tipperary, with a number of active gun clubs which, as well as enjoying controlled shooting, have a very strong ethos of game stewardship and conservation measures. In the course of our deliberations, the clubs made a strong submission outlining their concerns. There have been bad experiences of non-club members coming into the area in the past and over-shooting game species.

In particular, the sport does not readily lend itself to 'tourism' as land access is granted on a goodwill nature and is highly unlikely to survive commercial tourism shooting. Additionally, the clubs have made stringent efforts to conserve game species of birds, which can be divided to two groups: replaceable 'captive bred' birds (pheasant, mallard) and those that cannot be replaced easily (snipe, grouse, woodcock and various migratory species of duck). The clubs are opposed to commercial exploitation in any form of the second group, as this would threaten their numbers and conservation status.

Regarding potentially conflicting uses of the mountains, the clubs are concerned by increased numbers of walkers on open mountains during the incubation periods of red grouse (April/May) and first flight of young grouse periods (June/July). If the birds are disturbed and so dispersed, this leaves the family group more vulnerable to predation.

The consultants have considered these points and suggest that they may be dealt with reasonably by responsible interaction among the stakeholders (gun clubs/ walking clubs) through a partnership model.

### **3.1.7 Para-Gliding**

Para-gliding is a minority adventure sport, with scope in the Knockmealdowns for a small active group. It seems that the Sugarloaf mountain on the east side of The Vee offers a favourable updraft on its northern slopes akin to the best on offer in Slievenamon and the Comeraghs. However, landing spots need to be negotiated and this is not always easy especially during lambing season etc. Additionally, this activity may have cause to disrupt roosting or incubating wild fowl, and will equally require negotiation with landowners and other users of the mountains through a partnership model.

### **3.1.8 Kayaking/ Canoeing**

Kayaking is another minority adventure sport which was mentioned during consultations for possible development. It appears however, that there are insufficient 'long runs' for competitive kayaking in the area. However, some respondents mentioned the increase in mountain-lake kayaking, with a combined element of angling in this instance. Farther to the west, near Mitchelstown, some of the Knockmealdown mountain rivers are being used for kayaking, but there is a general feeling of high risk and potential danger in these high energy, deeply incised streams.

Canoeing is already carried out on the lower reaches of the Suir and from Goatenbridge to the Suir along the Tar river. It again is a minority activity, but has potential appeal in these relatively quiet waters for beginner / schools activity. Similarly, rowing is a well established sport in the lower Suir and could have some potential in the Newcastle-Ardfinnan reaches of the river.

With all water-based sporting activities, the insurance premiums are high, which may be prohibitive, especially for a start-up business.

### **3.1.9 Orienteering / Hill Running**

These low impact terrain-running activities are growing sports among those seeking highly challenging physical and mental activity, suited to elite runners, but also to children and active aged. There are a number of clubs based in Cork, Limerick and Waterford, as well as Dublin, which have active programmes from Autumn through to Spring nationwide. These groups form an excellent target market.

There is great scope to emplace a short, permanent orienteering course, based out of The Vee and following the Bay Lough terrain. This could be used as a 'fun' educational activity in map reading, getting youngsters active, while offering an additional way of getting geography students into the outdoors as part of their studies. However, it would require specialist mapping in association with the Irish Orienteering Association ([www.orienteering.ie](http://www.orienteering.ie)).



### **3.1.10 Motorcycling**

Motorcycling is a popular sport among young men, and 1-2 race events are run locally in The Vee with 60-70 bikes involved, as part of the Irish Championship Circuit. There is scope to do more to attract and retain the 'bikers' in the area, even for a weekend, as an added input to the local economy. Hundreds of bed-nights could potentially be filled by visiting motorcyclists per annum with an attractive menu of events and festivals, many of which are already happening.

Currently, all of the motorcycling events held in the Knockmealdowns are organised by the **Youghal Motorcycle Club (YMCC)**. They are run by licensed stewards using the rules of the Motorcycling Union of Ireland (MUI) and the FIM (International Motorcycling Federation). The events have full insurance through the MUI and all competitors must belong to affiliated Motorcycling Clubs. The YMCC has 115 members, of which 65 are active competitors. The ages of competitors range from 7 to 70, with courses graded to suit all abilities.



All of the major events are attended by members of the Irish Trials team. It is an integral part of their training and preparation for representing Ireland overseas at the “*Trial des Nations*” and other events. The Irish Trials team is partly funded by COSPOR.

The Knockmealdowns are an important centre for **Observed Motorcycle Trials**, a sport is similar to equestrian eventing. Although a minority sport in Ireland, it is very popular in Europe, and in England, Scotland, Spain and France it co-exists with other recreational users in areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the Yorkshire Dales, Grampians, Sierra Nevada, and Pyrenees. The Youghal Motorcycle club holds 1 International, 2 National, 4 Provincial and 1 Charity event every year. The international event attracts riders from England, Northern Ireland and the Republic. The National event attracts riders from all over Ireland and the Provincial event attracts riders mainly from Munster but also some from Leinster. The Charity event raised €808 for the Hospice movement in 2010.

The YMCC is a well-managed and responsible organization and does not represent any unregulated, unaffiliated quad/4-wheel drive owners, and do not support their use of the mountain. The club has a strong ethos of conserving the natural environment of the Knockmealdowns, as they have been doing for the past forty years. The club aims to bring enjoyment of the mountain to the widest possible audience, within a safe, sustainable and regulated framework.

Competitions at some of the traditional motorcycling venues on the Galtees and Comeraghs have been curtailed as most of these mountains are now environmentally designated SACs. If restrictions were to be applied in terms of using the traditional motorcycling areas on the Knockmealdowns, where Motorcycle Trials have been held for over 40 years, it is unlikely that the sport would survive.

Motorcycle repairs are available locally in Ardfinnan.

### **3.1.11 Mountain scrambling**

Mountain scrambling is a minority activity, which is often resented by other mountain users. However, there is an annual informal ‘flag to flag’ event run by local enthusiasts. It is considered to be great fun, high energy and very appealing to young men. On the down side, it is potentially disruptive of wildlife and the general quietude of the mountains.

There was a suggestion to have a dedicated track(s) for scrambling to keep it away from other users. As it is already happening, there may be scope for a unique selling point for the Knockmealdowns. However, this is unlikely to be widely supported based on our feedback.

### **3.1.12 Equestrian Pursuits**

The Knockmealdowns have always been considered an invaluable resource for horse owners in the area. Existing roads and trackways are currently used for fittening work for racehorses and hacking for the leisure rider, safe hacking for children on ponies, as well as schooling hunters. Groups of riders often spend an entire day on the mountains, starting from Goatenbridge and travelling to the area above Newcastle and back, while shorter loops on the foothills and the Goatenbridge-Graigue road are also regularly used.

Horse riders would be keen to ensure that any further development of the Knockmealdowns would protect and hopefully enhance their enjoyment of the mountains. While new infrastructure, pathways and other developments would be a welcome addition to the Knockmealdowns, all users of the mountain must be facilitated and allowed to co-exist into the future.

***Current Equestrian Events in the Knockmealdowns:***

The *South Tipperary Harriers*, thanks to generosity of local landowners, hunt an area that encompasses Newcastle, Ardfinnan, Goatenbridge, Clogheen and Ballylooby. Over the past few years the hunt has hosted small groups of visitors from England and Ireland who are keen to experience crossing country in south Tipperary. These visitors have hired horses locally and availed of local accommodation and hospitality, thus bringing revenue to the district. In some cases they have returned to buy horses. Visitors have ranged from friends of hunt members to groups of English hunters and even in one case, a group of ladies on a hen weekend.

An *equestrian charity fundraiser* organised by the hunt club, which followed a route along the Knockmealdowns foothills and farmland, attracted 150 riders, even though only advertised locally. The *Goatenbridge Gymkhana*, supported by local farmers and horse riders, is run during the summer months,

There are two registered *Equestrian Centres* in the district (Triangle 2), namely the Cahir Equestrian Centre (AIRE approved) and the Burncourt Equestrian Centre nearer to Mitchelstown, where horses can be hired. However, these are more suited to fixed events rather than horses for hire for short-stay tourists. The *Ballyrafter Equestrian Centre*, just over the border in Lismore, Co Waterford is a very popular show jumping venue in the region.

*Catriona Murphy – Journalist & Equestrian enthusiast*

***Equestrian Opportunities on the Knockmealdowns***

Failete Ireland has set a target of 100,000 equestrian visitors to Ireland by 2012 in its development strategy for Irish equestrian tourism. Ireland can capitalise on its deep heritage as the “Land of the Horse” to create an important opportunity for tourism growth, with particular potential for rural areas and out-of-season visitors.

- There is an opportunity to package a ‘*Knockmealdowns Hunting/ Rural Pursuit Weekend*’, which could include local accommodation, hunting/shooting, musical entertainment, local food and perhaps a cultural tour. As hunting is mainly a winter sport, this could boost visitor numbers and occupy bed spaces in the quiet season. Visits to the races, festivals, horse sales or top studs in south Tipperary could also be incorporated.
- *Trekking opportunities in the Knockmealdowns*. A significant industry has been developed in the UK around walkways and bridlepaths for horse riders. ‘*Horses Welcome*’ is a scheme set up by the British Horse Society (BHS) Scotland as a self-financing marketing tool for those providing overnight stays for horse and rider. More than 650 miles of signed and mapped riding routes have been opened in Scotland and the Horses Welcome scheme allows business owners along these routes to offer accommodation and other services to riders staying away from home to enjoy the trails. It is believed that horseback riders spend approximately €40 per person per day in local shops, pubs and guesthouses while on holiday.
- *TREC* is a relatively new equestrian sport to Ireland that can be simply described as orienteering on horseback. Riders follow a certain route (12-45km) at given speeds, with checkpoints along the route, while they also complete various obstacles. The foothills and higher slopes of the Knockmealdowns may be suitable for the sport, subject to due regard for other recreational interests and nesting/ roosting seasons of birds.
- In the past, *horse drawn caravans* were available for hire to visitors who would take a horse and cart for day or multi-day trips to the Vee, to Mellary, Cappoquin and beyond. This business model has been successfully revived in a number of counties in Ireland and could be examined in the Knockmealdowns area.
- *Toll Rides*, similar to that operated on the Grey Abbey Estate in Co Down, could be examined. Open from March to October, riders pay an annual fee (€41) for use of 6.5km of specially constructed trackway for horses and riders.





Such models could be examined in the context of integrated recreational strategy.


### 3.1.13 Golf

The Cahir Park Golf Club [www.cahirparkgolfclub.com](http://www.cahirparkgolfclub.com) offers an 18-hole, par 71 golf course set in the Cahir Estate Parklands straddling the River Suir, and is open to visitors all year around. Some of the accommodation providers in the Cahir area will offer golf packages to small groups who wish to play golf in the area. There are a number of other golf courses in the region in Clonmel, Tipperary, Slievenamon etc. offering plenty of variety for the keen golfer.

### 3.1.14 Physical Environment

Increased popularity of outdoor recreation has caused challenges for the sustainable development and management of the Knockmealdowns recreational area:

Activity	Challenges Faced	Photographs of Knockmealdowns
<b>Erosion</b>	Overuse of the most popular paths are leading to erosion of peat / tracks and cause slope instability  <i>e.g The Vee trailhead area, near Bay Lough/ Tipp Heritage Trail/ Blackwater Way confluence – note the highly eroded pathways</i>	
<b>Litter</b>	At beauty spots, littering by general carelessness and fly-tipping (e.g The Vee Trailhead - no litter bins/ recycling points provided)	 
<b>Quad Bikes/ 4WD vehicles</b>	Severe broadening and consequent erosion of tracks Noise pollution for other mountain users  Disruption of nesting/ roosting birds, an issue of key concern to the local Game & Conservation Clubs	

Activity	Challenges Faced	Photographs of Knockmealdowns
<b>Lack of Designations</b>	The Knockmealdowns do not enjoy the same environmental protection as e.g. the Galtees – no SAC/ NHA or SPA designations under environmental law, despite the fact that the mountains contain a number of varied habitats (heath, lakes, blanket peat) and are home to many species of birds which are ‘red-listed’ (e.g. <i>Red Grouse</i> , <i>Cuckoo</i> ).	
<b>Signs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Knockmealdowns are currently poorly signed off the M8 Dublin-Cork motorway, the main tourist access route to the southwest. In fact, the first dedicated sign is at the entry to the R668 road out of Caher – <i>(too late for many motorists)</i>.</li> <li>Mixed signage from Newcastle to Clogheen, with too many ‘brown signs’ causing confusion for non-initiated (Munster/ Blackwater/ Tipp Heritage/ Suir Drive/ local walks).</li> <li>Also confusion between ‘Blackwater Way’ and ‘Avondhu Way’ on OSI Discovery Sh. 74</li> </ul>	
<b>Transport</b>	Weak public transport to mountainous areas of south Tipperary, but daily bus services from Cork through Cloghen-Ardfinnan-Clonmel offer links. Poor access to mountains from towns/ villages apart from car	

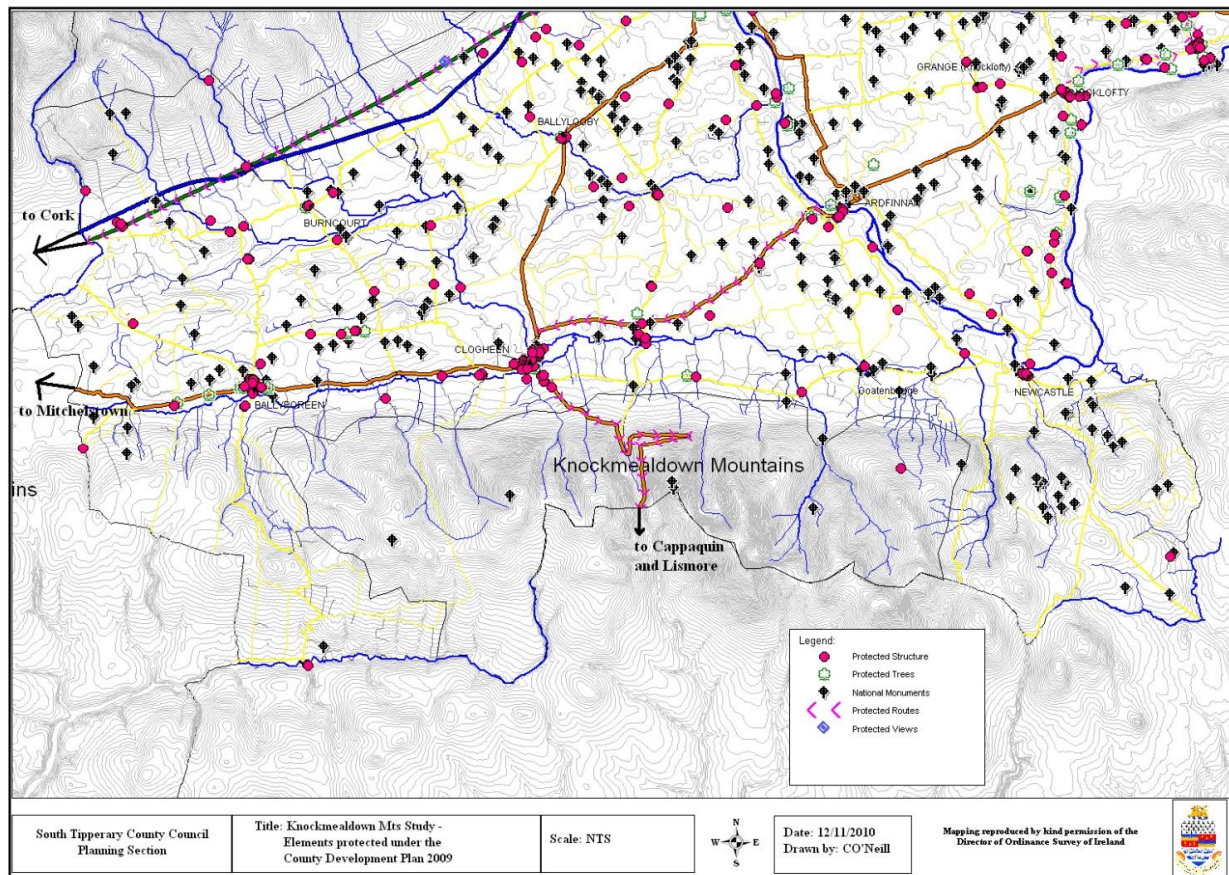
Each of these points can best be managed by the local authorities in collaboration with local stakeholders in a partnership management model, versus in isolation.

### 3.2 Cultural Heritage

The Knockmealdowns area (Triangles 1, 2) has a large array of cultural monuments and features (Map 6), many of which are protected under legislation. A number of national monuments are present in the plain north of the Knockmealdowns, as well as a number of protected structures (mainly buildings of cultural value). Although the mountains themselves do not have large numbers of monuments so protected, a cluster of national monuments occur in the hills immediately south of Newcastle on the eastern extent of the range.

The medieval architectural heritage of the area has considerable merit, particularly in the castles arrayed along the River Tar (*Mark Rylands, pers comm.*), which possibly marked ancient territorial boundaries. Additionally, the old cemeteries and early ecclesiastical sites could potentially offer visitors an element of a cultural heritage trail. With Mount Mellary Monastery just to the south of the mountains in Co Waterford, this ecclesiastical theme could be enhanced to provide a cycling/ driving route.





Map 6. Cultural Elements Protected within the Knockmealdown Mountains catchment area.  
Courtesy: Planning Department of South Tipperary County Council

### 3.2.1 Cultural & Natural 'Honeypot' Attractions

There are two 'honeypot' built and natural attractions critically situated at the two entry points to Triangle 2: Cahir Castle and Mitchelstown Caves, respectively. These are an extremely important part of the tourism product mix in the overall area of consideration.

**Cahir Castle** is run under the management of the OPW, with 4 full-time staff and an additional 7 summer guides. It currently attracts 55,000 people per annum into Cahir, which although impressive, has shown a decrease since 2006 of 18,000 visitors. This may be partly explained by the opening of the M8 Cahir bypass, but also by the economic downturn in subsequent years. Cahir Castle does not have a dedicated sign from the M8 which management feels is a distinct disadvantage (*compared to e.g. Kilkenny Castle, which is signed off the M8 even though it is 30km away*). However, Cahir is signed as a 'heritage town'. Importantly, the Castle attracts large numbers of schools students, with 2,500 admitted freely when the visit is directly linked to curriculum studies.

The OPW also manage the **Swiss Cottage**, once part of the Butler-Charteris Estate, 2km downstream of the Castle along a landscaped trail beside the River Suir, surrounded by native broadleaf woodland. Planted from the 1790's, mature beech, oak, Spanish chestnut, sycamore, laurel, rhododendrons and elder can be seen. The area teems with wildlife. Swans, duck and cormorants are common, as well as red squirrel, pheasant and woodcock.

Management at Cahir Castle are open to collaboration with the Recreational Strategy.

**Mitchelstown Cave** [www.mitchelstowncave.com](http://www.mitchelstowncave.com) is a private, family-run attraction (by the English Family), which is open for most of the year and on request for groups. The opening of the M8 motorway has been instrumental in directing new traffic to them – 10,000 visitors per annum visit the caves, with an increasing number of indigenous Irish visitors, particularly from Dublin (1.5 hours away) and from 'new Irish' communities. Mitchelstown Cave charges €7/adult and €2/child, irrespective of groups etc. The family do very little promotion, and rely largely on word-of-mouth and their website.

The Caves attract an increasing number of Geography students, linked to the Leaving Cert curriculum, but tend to be 'day trippers' (*the students go on to The Vee / Bay Lough to study glacial landforms, then Youghal to study planned urban environment and so home*), as teachers are disinclined to do a 2-day trip, it seems.



This market, with professional development and add-on packaging, could be an attractive one for the Knockmealdowns community. Professional and targeted promotion to the Geography Teachers' Association and at Teachers' Conferences could yield positive results.

### 3.2.2 Cultural Heritage – Music/ Instrument

There is an admirable tradition of music, singing and set dancing in the general Vee Valley, particularly centred around Newcastle-Ardfinnan. A number of pubs offer traditional sessions in the area, while each Friday in winter, there is set dancing in Newcastle community centre.

Interestingly, a violin maker / music teacher is located in the Ardfinnan area, and he was interested in the concept of a 'craft heritage trail' whereby visitors could come to see him at work.

Each Summer in Clogheen, a musical drama, *Draíocht* is performed for 2 nights per week, with traditional music, singing and Riverdance-style performances by local children. Although very popular with local people, it is not widely promoted, but could form the basis of an arts festival combined with guided heritage walks and talks.

### 3.2.3 Cultural Heritage - Language

The district centred on Newcastle village within Triangle 1 is a '*breac-Gaeltacht*', which reflects the fact that *Gaeilge*/ Irish was spoken there as the primary language until the 1950s. It is the only known gaeltacht area in County Tipperary. It retains *comhrá* classes for local people throughout the Winter.

For two weeks in July, primary and secondary school students come to the gaeltacht for immersion in the Irish language. This facility is run by a local teacher(s) during the summer break, and is already a small attraction. However, the latter forms the nucleus of what could be a 'unique selling point' for Knockmealdowns, modelled on *Oideas Gael* in Glencolmkillie in Donegal, or Baile an Fheiritéar in Co Kerry, potentially expanding to cater for adults to learn *Gaeilge* in the mornings, with walking, archaeology & heritage activities in the afternoons. Evenings could provide a showcase of local traditional musicians and dancers.

There is enormous scope to work with Muintir na Tíre's **Celtic Community Links** project to develop a dedicated *breac-Gaeltacht*, centred in the Newcastle-Knockmealdowns foothills area. The local Resource Centre could potentially be used as an administrative centre for



the initiative, with strong supports from Muintir na Tíre staff, community employment resources (CE/ Tús), as well as promotional and linguistic support from Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht, and possibly Education, under the new *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-30*, the recently published 20-year strategy to increase spoken Irish among Irish adults. Additionally, Foras na Gaeilge ([www.gaeilge.ie/forasnagaeilge](http://www.gaeilge.ie/forasnagaeilge)) offer funding to groups and activities to further the spoken language and calls are currently being made for 2011 funding rounds for community. Ireland's national language week *Seachtain na Gaeilge* ([www.snag.ie](http://www.snag.ie)) is planned for 5-17 March 2011, with events happening countrywide. It would be good for Newcastle to plan to be involved in this by 2012. Another angle would be to link cultural and recreational activities, such as walking, trekking, horse-riding etc - current walking tours in the Comeraghs are being offered through Irish and potential exists to expand services to the Knockmealdowns to support the breac-Gaeltacht.

### **Example of Foras na Gaeilge Community Supports (advertised February 2011)**

#### **Foras na Gaeilge: Féidearthachtaí Maoinithe do Ghrúpaí Pobail 2011**

Iarrtar ar ghrúpaí ar mhaith loe an Ghaeilge a chur chun tosaigh cuairt a thabhairt ar [www.gaeilge.ie](http://www.gaeilge.ie) áit a bhfuil treoirínte agus foirmeacha iarratais ar fháil

#### **Pobal agus Gnó**

An Ghaeilge sa Phobal

1. Aidhm: Tacú le grúpaí pobail imeachtaí a reáchtáil leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn ar bhonn logánta.
2. Tacaíocht ar fáil: Suas le €5,000 / £3,500 ar fáil do choistí pobail leis an Ghaeilge a spreagadh agus a úsáid ar bhonn logánta. Ní mór an deontas a bheith caite roimh 29ú Meán Fómhair 2011.
3. Spriocghrúpa: Coistí pobail.
4. Oscailte go dtí 16ú Márta 2011.

#### **An Earnáil Phoiblí agus na hEalaíona**

Scéim na bhFéilte 2011

1. Aidhm: Diríonn an scéim seo ar fhéilte a bhfuil mar aidhm acu na healaíona Gaeilge, na healaíona dúchasach agus oidhreacht na Gaeilge a chothú agus a chur chun cinn trí mheán na Gaeilge nó go dátheangach, mar dhlúthchuid den bhféile, agus ardán a chur ar fáil go hidirnáisiúnta, do phobal na Gaeilge, don mhórphobal agus d'earnáil na n-ealaíon.
2. Stádas: Oscailte Critéir Mhaoinithe Diríonn an scéim seo ar fhéilte a bhfuil mar aidhm acu na healaíona Gaeilge, na healaíona dúchasacha agus oidhreacht na Gaeilge a chothú agus a chur chun cinn trí mheán na Gaeilge nó go dátheangach, mar dhlúthchuid den bhféile, agus ardán a chur ar fáil go hidirnáisiúnta, do phobal na Gaeilge, don mhórphobal agus d'earnáil na n-ealaíon.

#### **Critéir na Scéime:**

1. (a) Ábhar na féile, líon agus tarraingteacht na n-imeachtaí trí mheán na Gaeilge  
(b) Samhlaíocht agus nuálaíocht clár oibre lucht reáchtála na féile,  
(c) Líon rannpháirtithe.
2. Úsáid na Gaeilge i gcomhthéacs na n-ealaíon dúchasach a chur chun cinn aithriseoireacht, amhránaíocht, scéalaíocht, léamh scéalta, puipadóireacht, drámaíocht, scannáin agus litríocht, ealaíontóirí nua a chothú.
3. Úsáid na Gaeilge ar chlár na féile agus ar ábhar bholscaireachta na féile.

### **3.2.4 Cultural Heritage – Food & Crafts**

The Knockmealdowns district is steeped in agricultural history, in dairying, tillage and pasture. However, there is a relatively small number of 'artisan' producers in the area, including Bay Lough Cheese, an emerging organic gardening centre at Kilmaneen

Farmhouse, vegetable growing & sales at English's vegetable shop in Clogheen and a number of excellent craft butchers in Cahir and Clonmel, sourcing local produce for restaurants and supermarkets. There is an excellent Farmers' Market in Cahir each weekend, as well as the Old Granary Craft Centre, which sells locally produced crafts.

There is not a formal network of these producers in place, and it may be that they have yet to reach a critical mass for production and promotional economies of scale. In consultation with the *Tipperary Food Producers Network* (over 30 businesses employing 250 people in the whole of Tipperary), they have made it clear they do not see any opportunity for a sub-county network or brand emerging. It is too small to make an impact in the marketplace and would only confuse the customer and further fracture efforts to build synergy in the artisan food sector.

However there are opportunities on an individual (or small group) basis to enhance skills, boost joint marketing and improve the overall bundling and packaging of offerings from the Knockmealdown region over coming years. All activity in this area should be coordinated with partners such as the *Tipp Food Producers Networks* mentioned above. The craft fraternity also has a sense of working in isolation due to small numbers and current access to limited markets. Soft supports and business mentoring will aid the development of both artisan sectors.

### **3.2.5 Cultural Heritage – Festivals & Events**

A variety of small festivals and events are held in the Knockmealdowns catchment area through the year. These include the following:

- **Knockmealdown Crossing** Walking Festival, Easter, 25km distance, graded walks suited to all, traversing the Knockmealdown Mountains from Hare's Cross to Newcastle (see *Section 3.1.2 above*)
- **Homecoming** in Clogheen, August
- **Draíocht**, Clogheen, July-August
- **Ballylooby Vintage Festival**, last weekend August
- **Newcastle Vintage Festival**, July
- **Newcastle Vintage Rally** - Car/ Tractor rally, Hallowe'en Weekend
- **Cahir Go Léir** Community Festival – held in July/ August
- **Rhododendron Festival**, Clogheen (*now defunct*)
- **Motorcycle Racing** – 2 road events per year
- **Observed Motorcycle Trials**

These events tend to be locally-driven community initiatives, rather than promoted as tourist attractions. However, there is a nucleus of varied activity and cultural attractions, which could be packaged and expanded to make a 'Vee Valley Events Calendar' linked to recreational activities. The Autumn period, which enjoys relatively good weather, could host more festivals nationally.

### **3.2.6 Cultural Heritage – Sports**

The Knockmealdowns lie in the heartland of the Tipperary hurling tradition, with the Ballybacon-Grange GAA Club located in Goatenbridge. However, there is no particular promotion or display of gaelic games in tourism terms, a unique cultural attribute which is potentially highly attractive, particularly for European visitors.

Potential exists to link with the local / regional GAA to develop a strategic partnership to bring GAA games to a new visitor audience. Examples of GAA showcases include *An Poc*

*Fada* in the Cooley Mountains, which has become an annual flagship event. A similarly attractive event(s) could be developed and marketed in the Knockmealdowns.

### 3.3 Community Assets

The Knockmealdown Mountains core communities, Clogheen, Newcastle and Goatenbridge, have a strong community ethos, with a significant number of active volunteers in GAA, Tidy Towns, Muintir na Tíre, ICA, Community Councils, as well as a whole range of voluntary supports to the elderly (e.g. Monday morning '*Listening Service*' in Newcastle), involvement in sporting clubs such as walking clubs (mainly *The Peaks*; also *Ballyhoura Bears*), gun clubs (*Ardfinnan*, *Ballybacon*, *Grange*, *Newcastle*), as well as church activities and choirs. This provides a rich tapestry of community engagement on which to build a sense of 'ownership' of the Recreational Strategy.

#### 3.3.1 Community Resourcing

A number of individuals are involved in multi-activities and there is a danger of 'burn-out' and a need to recruit new membership, especially from among young people. There is a general feeling that during the 'boom' people had less time to volunteer; however, recessionary times may bring mixed blessings of unemployed people with skills and time on their hands.

However, the Recreational Strategy will require a 'driver' to implement the good will and energies of the community and business sectors. Muintir na Tíre has made a generous offer to allocate a project Officer for 1 day per week to drive the Strategy forward with community support (see 3.3.3 below)..

#### 3.3.2 Fragmentation

Much of the activity/recreational tourism effort is currently being undertaken by individual / private sector business interests, with some supports from South Tipperary Tourism Company and South Tipperary Development Company. However, to date this activity has been fragmentary, with no unified vision for the region to date. This feasibility study has been instrumental in bringing people together to articulate their aspirations in a collective community spirit, and provides a basis on which to implement the ultimate Strategy.

#### 3.3.3 Muintir - Celtic Community Links

An important community-based initiative, the **Celtic Community Links**, is highly significant for the Strategy. The CCL is an EU-InterReg project sponsored by Muintir na Tíre, focussed on building links among rural communities on both sides of the Knockmealdown Mountains in Cos. Tipperary and Waterford, and with similar communities in Wales. It specifically aims to use ICT (website specifically) to promote the recreational and educational tourism of the cross-county area and to engage and train a corps of staff and guides to carry it out. The CCL aims to build linkages with services and transport providers (RuralLink, Deise) and to base the 'product' firmly in the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Knockmealdowns area – much as the current round of consultations for the Strategy has identified a niche in integrated language-walking-heritage packages. The CCL aim to target teachers, public servants and a general adult market for language training, with optional add-ons in recreation, culture, agricultural traditions, music and craft trails etc, all packaged as 'The Real Ireland' and sold competitively from April to October through a single web-based, secure platform.

The initiative has a number of benefits: there are two fulltime officers (Mr. Phil Ryan and Ms. Julia O'Halloran respectively) to drive the CCL, with support through Mr. Liam Kelly of Muintir. They have identified similar shortcomings (lack of tourism tradition & business acumen at community level; need for political support; over-reliance on Community Employment schemes; challenge to coordinate all the elements of the package; rural transport etc) but have come up with an imaginative model based partially on the Glencolmille 'Oideas Gael' experience, mentioned above in 3.2.3.

The authors are keen that initiatives such as CCL be linked to the Recreational Strategy in order to build local capacity and ultimate sustainability of the combined initiatives. CCL has offered a part-time Project Officer for 1-day per week to the implementation of the Recreational Strategy, an excellent collaborative offer.

### 3.4 Services & Amenities

There is a modest array of accommodation providers in the Knockmealdowns 'Triangle 1' immediate catchment (see Map 5), primarily in the B&B, Farmhouse, Self-Catering and Camping/Caravanning. Many of these are approved accommodation providers by Fáilte Ireland, but others are operating in the 'grey zone' as unregistered B&Bs.

There are a number of good (award-winning) restaurants, but there is a shortage of moderate priced lunch facilities suited to more European tastes (i.e. non-'take away' chips).

The T1 area lacks a medium sized 3\*-4\* hotel, although the Cahir House Hotel and Knocklofty House are present within Triangle 2. This issue will need to be addressed if the tourism product base is to be lifted above the current level and if some of the key new Product ideas identified in this Strategy are to be realised (see Section 5.5 below).

With the absence of a critical mass of hotels in the target area, more emphasis has to be on supporting the B&B stock. As a whole, the number of B&Bs in Ireland has declined by 25% since 2000 (B&B Ireland, 2010) and South Tipperary is no exception. This trend is driven by a squeeze on profitability due to the abundance of developer-led, medium range hotels across the country, generational issues and changing tastes in the marketplace.

Building upon data collected by Bane & Mullarkey (2006, Fáilte Ireland) we can *project* based on national trends the following accommodation profile for all of South Tipperary:

- **Accommodation / All Categories: Hotel, Guesthouse, B&B, & Specialist**
  - Number of Registered Properties = 80 / Number of Rooms: 820
- **Caravan & Camping** (2006 figure FI)
  - Properties = 4 / Pitches = 142
- **Hostels**
  - Properties = 3 / Rooms = 92
- **Self Catering**
  - Properties = 35 / Rooms = 335

Based on these data, our T1/ T2 areas should aim to develop an expanded 'fit for purpose' accommodation base, based on current strengths. An interesting and welcome trend is emerging within the 'themed' B&B. We have award winning farmhouse, angling and walking orientated homestay accommodation which can be built upon and expanded spatially across the target zones of this strategy.

### **3.5 Public Supports & Partnerships**

The area has a strong base of public support, one of its identified strengths during the recent consultation phase. However, there is a need for a lead agency, most likely STDC, to drive forward the implementation of the Recreational Strategy, through capacity building and managerial leadership - at least in the early stages until community capacity to deliver is built.

Critical partnerships will require to be built locally among public and community stakeholders, including STDC (Leader), South Tipperary Tourism Company, Muintir na Tíre, and the county councils of South Tipperary, Waterford and Cork. The Waterford alliance is particularly critical, given that the southern slopes of the Knockmealdowns lie in that county.

The semi-state bodies Coillte and Inland Fisheries of Ireland are key partners for access to the mountains and fisheries, and both have demonstrated admirable support so far.

Fáilte Ireland (SE Region) will be a key partner 'down the track' in promoting the products and services developed under the Strategy.

Additionally, strategic alliances with the southern Knockmealdowns, Ballyhoura, Galtees and Comeraghs must be fostered from the outset to develop a vision for a collaborative 'Munster Borders' recreational destination of excellence – each sub-region with its own unique selling points.



### 3.6 Market Analysis

The marketing mix of the Knockmealdown Mountains comprises three key components:

- Product mix (what does the product look like, how does it perform, what does it cost?),
- Distribution mix (how do I get and pay for the product) and
- Communications mix (how am I persuaded to buy?).

Each of these aspects has been examined and is summarised below.

Marketing Mix	Knockmealdowns Assessment
<b>Product Mix</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knockmealdowns: unspoiled, scenic, rural setting</li> <li>• B&amp;B &amp; S/C accommodation, moderate (Triangle 2) weak (Triangle1) base</li> <li>• Two flagship projects (Cahir Castle &amp; Mitchelstown Caves) at 'portals'</li> <li>• Outdoor activities, limited educational opportunities</li> <li>• Restaurants good mix / pubs lacking responsiveness to outdoor activity needs</li> <li>• Broader 10-15km catchment has restaurants, shopping, transport, entertainment, pubs - can fill the gaps identified in T1</li> <li>• <b>Comment:</b> weak horizontal and vertical integration of the product mix – weak collaboration among service providers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Response:</b> Redress through workshops to build integration.</p>
<b>Distribution Mix</b>	<p><i>Via:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism directories,</li> <li>• Travel agencies,</li> <li>• Tourist booking offices,</li> <li>• Internet / website</li> </ul> <p><b>Comment:</b> there is no unique 'identity/ brand' for Knockmealdowns</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Brand development by Knockmealdowns partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive packages to be developed</li> </ul> <p><i>Website required</i> – 'One Stop Shop' online booking system must be developed given trends to pre-book and pay online for all-in breaks/ holidays</p>
<b>Communications Mix</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertising brochures, promotions, tourist offices and internet, as part of the SE Region – weak to absent for recreational activities</li> <li>• Cahir Castle, Mitchelstown Caves marketed relatively successfully – need to work with them</li> </ul> <p><b>Comment:</b> No singular Knockmealdowns entity as yet with its own direct promotions /communications 'voice'</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Website/ &amp; promotional products require to be developed, to promote 'uniqueness' of locality</p>

## ***Ireland : Tourism Trends***

The travel trends indicate that there is increased interest in recreational activity and cultural holidays and private tour guides. This is a positive trend for the Knockmealdowns rural activities product.

Trends in the all-island Irish tourist market have been identified.

- Domestic 'short break' weekend breaks of up to three nights have increased.
- Self tailored mini-breaks are just as popular as package holidays.
- There is decreasing interest in self catering apartments, package tours and camping and caravanning around Ireland.
- Twice as many people book online as use travel agents, particularly among the hiking/walking market.
- There is a trend towards educational specialist trip such as archaeology/ wildlife.
- The trend towards owning a country home means that urban dwellers are contributing to the rural economy with higher than average expenditure locally, sometimes purchasing quality craft products for the first home.
- Average spend by domestic tourists in the Republic of Ireland increased significantly over the past few years:
- Golf, angling and hiking/ walking represent significant growth opportunities for service providers/ operators in the Irish market. Despite a fall in markets in the post-2008 'crash' years, the long term trend appears to be positive.

Fáilte Ireland tracks the recreational activities of visitors to Ireland every year (see data in Section 2 above). Hiking/Walking, Angling and Culture & Heritage all feature highly as visitor attractions suited to the Knockmealdown Mountains, as this product mix is readily available in the area of influence. Additionally:

- **Research highlights that of all outdoor activities pursued by visitors, walking is the most popular, as well as being the most important domestic recreational activity in Ireland** - up to 50,000<sup>2</sup> Irish people go walking/ hiking and the market is growing. In addition, walking provides visitors with an opportunity to enjoy a wide range of thematic experiences, including archaeological; historical; island; long distance; moorland; mountain; mythological; waterway; and woodland walks<sup>3</sup>.
- Statistics<sup>4</sup> demonstrate the type of walking holiday sought by international walking tourists:
  - (i) The majority (71%) of overseas tourists who engage in walking/hiking travel either alone or as a party of two persons;
  - (ii) 34% of overseas tourists engage in walking travel alone (which compares with 24% of all overseas visitors travelling alone);
  - (iii) The majority (89%) of overseas walking tourists are unguided; and
  - (iv) Some 59% of international walking tourists walked more than 5km per day – the most popular distance walked.
  - (v) The southeast region attracts only a small percentage of the total international walking market.
- In 2000, research<sup>5</sup> indicated that along the Co Galway section of the Western Way, international package walkers spent an average of €63 per day, while independent

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Western Development Tourism Programme

<sup>3</sup> Themes identified by Fáilte Ireland

<sup>4</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2003) data, quoted in *Walking in the West* study commissioned by LEADER and Western Development Tourism Programme (2005)

<sup>5</sup> National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee (2000)

international walking tourists spent between of €32 - €38 per day. Interestingly, international walking tourists sought comfortable accommodation and good quality food, versus the image of camping/hostel-based frugality.

### **UK Tourism Trends**

Tourism on a UK basis is enormously valuable and growing, despite a number of negative trends in the past decade ('9/11'; foot and mouth; terrorism threats etc). In 2002, the UK tourism industry was worth c. £76 billion, accounting for more than 4% of GDP, employing more than 7.5% (> 2 million) of the working population. This trend continued through the decade, albeit dampened by the recession.

Tourism within the UK is a major industry and in fact more valuable to the economy than international visitors<sup>6</sup>. The most popular activities for domestic UK holiday makers are: visiting heritage sites (29%); walking 2 miles or over (27%); swimming (22%); visiting artistic or heritage exhibits (22%) and watching performing arts (21%).

Although out of date, data provided by the Countryside Agency\* for the **Hadrian's Wall National Trail** indicates an average spend of UK £39 by visitors spending more than one day (i.e. 'long distance' walkers) on the route in 2003. According to the report, in 2003 of the order of 3,720 long distance walkers took an average 6 days to walk the route. These walkers spent an estimated £852,000 in the region. The report also highlights that in 2003 a total of 215,316 day walking visitors spent an average of £7 each, generating over £2.4 million in expenditure.

It is estimated that, although long distance walkers comprised only 1.7% of total walking visitors, they contributed 35% of total walker expenditure along the route. This highlights the greater impact of long distance walkers in expenditure terms. The findings indicate that shorter distance walkers, however, contribute more to the local economy than long distance walkers.

\*Quoted in *Walking in the West* study commissioned by LEADER & Western Development Tourism Programme (2005)

Enormous potential exists to expand the walking trails experience in Knockmealdowns into international attractions. The figures above indicate that Knockmealdowns possesses many of the key activities which appeal to the domestic and international UK visitor, and the marketing strategy must take these factors into account.

Knockmealdowns offers a product mix which can successfully benefit from these trends. Activity based holidays, with good integrated packaging and attendant services for the independent traveller, can prove to be a significant revenue generator for the locality.

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<sup>6</sup> The Tourism Network, 2002

### **3.7 Relevant Performance Data**

There is a dearth of 'hard' relevant tourism performance data for the Knockmealdowns area. However, we can say that:

- Cahir Castle attracts 55,000 people per annum, but this figure is down from 73,000 since 2006.
- More than 2,500 dedicated schoolchildren per annum specifically attend the Castle on curriculum related studies.
- Mitchelstown Caves attracts 10,000 pa, many from the educational market and young immigrant 'new Irish' communities. The M8 motorway opening has been very positive for them in bringing in inter-regional visitors.
- Approximately 3,000 angling licences are sold per annum in SE region – ability to attract more with re-opening of salmon fishery in September 2010
- Potential exists to link angling to other activities for non-fishing partners/ friends – golf, walking/hiking, cycling, heritage etc.



## **4.0 CONSULTATIONS**

In order to identify a strategic approach that best fits the needs and capacity of the Knockmealdowns it was important to record the experience and aspirations of many stakeholders on the ground.

### **4.1 Process**

Over the course of a seven week period (wk 4 Oct - wk 2 Dec) an extensive process of face-to-face and telephonic interviews took place. These interviews can be divided up into:

- Private Sector (broad tourism including accommodation, food and craft/culture)
- Community Sector (within Triangles 1 & 2)
- Special Interest Groups
- Public Bodies & Support Agencies

The terms of reference and backup contact information for the engagement exercise were helpful. All consultees were generous with their time and forthcoming with positive suggestion, proposals and observations. Over forty people (40), including representative groupings like South Tipperary Council Council, were interviewed and their inputs formally recorded to inform all subsequent planning and recommendations. In some cases there has been multiple contact and formal submissions presented e.g. ABGN Gun Club and Muintir na Tíre.

The formal consultations were followed on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010 in Goatenbridge with a stakeholder consultative forum and workshop session. The 38 people who attended demonstrated a commitment to progress tourism in the Knockmealdowns in a more integrated fashion. A final concluding meeting of this forum in January 2011 will present draft copy of the report for comment and discussion.

A summary of the total consultation sessions follows. It employs a conventional SWOT analysis format while incorporating six distinct fields of information namely:-

- Administration & Operations
- Communications & Marketing
- Landscape & the Physical Environment
- Community & Culture
- Business Issues
- Political Environment

As many of the points raised were brought up repeatedly the statements made are often a collective opinion shared by more than one individual or group. The confidentiality of all consultee feedback had been guaranteed.

## 4.2 Gap Analysis

In order to be a recreational destination of choice, the Knockmealdowns need to look at the supply chain for sustainable rural tourism:

### 1. Tourism Resources

Natural features/ cultural heritage/ attractions/ recreational facilities/ special events

which need to be combined with



### 2. Community Infrastructure

Parking/ signage/ drainage/ waste/ transport/ water/ environmental management

and



### 3. Tourism Infrastructure

Accommodation/ Food/ Picnic areas/ Telecoms/ Internet access etc

to develop



### 4. Tourism Facilities and Services

Information / activities/ guiding/ signage/ car/bike rentals/

health & emergency services/ safety/ training/ labour supply

In conducting a SWOT analysis, based on consultations, Knockmealdowns is rich in tourism resources (1) and has components of all others, but the SWOT undertaken has identified specific gaps and strengths in tourism infrastructure (3) and services (4).

The initiative requires a “collaborate to compete” approach by all the service providers to deliver seamless and problem-free, activity-based holiday experiences.

The results of the SWOT analysis are presented below.

### 4.3 SWOT Analysis – Results

*(Note: KMD = abbreviated Knockmealdown Mountains)*

Administration & Operations	Communications & Marketing	Landscape & Physical Environment
<p>Under-used Tourist Office network</p> <p>Community programmes on the ground</p> <p>Technology now more mobile and cheap</p>	<p>Knockmealdowns are a 'known brand' across the country</p> <p>Can 'piggyback' on larger regional destinations</p>	<p>Clean, well-defined, low mountain environment with history of walker access</p> <p>Ease of physical access to large markets</p> <p>Relative ease and cost of maintenance due to terrain</p> <p>Excellent rivers with game angling history</p> <p>Network of villages and larger towns as 'bookends'</p> <p>Proactive attitudes towards environmental conservation among different interest groups</p>
STRENGTHS		
Culture & Community	Business Issues	Political Environment
<p>Apparent willingness to embrace sustainable tourism potential</p> <p>Easily defined communities and relatively easy to reach</p> <p>Traditional culture mostly prevails with 'living' folk ways and practices, including remnant Gaeltacht area (Newcastle)</p>	<p>Strong and successful agriculture sector</p> <p>In current climate some experienced, but unemployed people have incentives to start up micro tourism businesses</p>	<p>Goodwill from all leading public and agency stakeholders to see this KMD's strategy succeed</p>

Administration & Operations	Communications & Marketing	Landscape & Physical Environment
<p>No obvious existing structure / staff to manage programme</p> <p>Poor <i>data</i> collection</p> <p>Could the cost of a 'conventional administration set up' justify itself given the likely financially modest programme of work</p>	<p>Poor quality of existing marketing / promotional material</p> <p>No managed brand &amp; no iconic attraction except The Vee (<i>in Triangle 1</i>)</p> <p>Few packages being sold</p> <p>A skills deficit in relation to destination marketing</p> <p>Low community awareness</p> <p>Little or no joint marketing 'linkage' outside KMD</p>	<p>Surrounded by excellent &amp; competing walking / outdoor destinations</p> <p>Disappointing civic pride in appearances of villages</p> <p>Modest built heritage</p> <p>Litter in low lying areas</p> <p>Poor signage to and on mountains</p> <p>Poor mapping/ map product availability.</p>
WEAKNESSES		
Culture & Community	Business Issues	Political Environment
<p>Questionable community awareness of existing tourism assets</p> <p>No immediate history or folk memory of successful tourism ventures / employment</p> <p>Potential conflicts between key interest groups further up the line</p> <p>Poor engagement with young people of the area in local community / tourism development</p>	<p>No obvious 'tourism champions' to inspire / lead</p> <p>Little evidence of private sector investment over last decade</p> <p>No local model of a sustainable community owned tourism enterprise</p> <p>Tourism development has not been a strategic priority up until now ... you have a 'standing start' situation in the middle of a recession – the likelihood of significant investor-led development unlikely, thus the focus has to be in small, bottom-up micro businesses which are notoriously difficult to sustain</p>	<p>A greater regional and inter-regional demand for limited resources means making the KMD's 'case' all the more difficult</p> <p>Owing to county boundary reasons the inter-county area has been at a development disadvantage</p> <p>The KMD's for various economic and historical reason has not been prioritised by the local authority or Fáilte Ireland - formal political awareness is low - for the business case has not been made and there have been no large private sector drivers making 'a noise'</p>



Administration & Operations	Communications & Marketing	Landscape & Physical Environment
<p>Creatively 'dovetail' the delivery of the programme with an existing community venture(s)</p> <p>Front of house visibility not required at this stage thus backend operations and coordination could be managed from a 'home computer(s)'</p>	<p>Many obvious <i>channels</i> could be used to increase local awareness</p> <p>A dynamic / well managed website will help build momentum &amp; generate sales</p> <p>Enter into joint marketing ventures with larger partners</p> <p>Develop the brand with intelligence</p> <p>Promote niche but lucrative markets like education, Irish language &amp; festival</p>	<p>The Vee as the <i>heart</i> of the core triangle can be enhanced</p> <p>Better interpretation of the physical environment</p> <p>Embrace Waterford side of the mountain, taking in the likes of Mt Mellary &amp; Lismore</p> <p>Enrich the villages as visitor experiences offering the 'real Ireland' through pubs / shops / heritage and history</p> <p>Better integration of the recreational assets (walking, hiking, cycling, angling, etc)</p> <p>Re-opening of salmon fishery in 2010</p>

## Opportunities

Culture & Community	Business Issues	Political Environment
<p>Community &amp; trade expectations are modest avoiding the obvious obstacle of 'promising too much and not delivering'</p> <p>Embed a philosophy of conservation and sustainability in all 'dialogue' relating to tourism development</p> <p>Get the 'tidy towns' on board</p> <p>What role can the GAA (and its history) play?</p> <p>Could 'matched funding' be secured from a regular 'tourism draw'</p> <p>Get young people involved</p>	<p>A joint multi agency / producer / retail response to the <i>deficit</i> in artisan / local food availability.</p> <p>The absence of bed space across all accommodation types is seen as a <i>major inhibitor</i> ... urgent supports need to be offered to help existing operators survive and encourage new entrants</p>	<p>Improve dialogue and linkage across county boundaries</p> <p>Explore joint working between LEADER companies</p> <p>Explore EU twinning opportunities</p> <p>Formally report development over the coming months to elected representatives and development agencies (letter or presentations)</p>

**(Note: KMD = abbreviated Knockmealdown Mountains)**

Administration & Operations	Communications & Marketing	Landscape & Physical Environment
<p>Inadequate resources to deliver an ambitious work programme</p> <p>Capacity issues on the ground inhibits delivery</p> <p>Poor 'buy in' by stakeholders to the work programme</p> <p>No leadership</p>	<p>In a competitive marketplace KMD's can't compete with neighbouring destinations unless they <i>differentiate</i></p> <p>Inadequate resources and capacity with not enough 'product' to sell</p> <p>KMD's low priority ranking by tourism promotion agencies can inhibit growth</p>	<p>Inadequate environmental enforcement (one ranger)</p> <p>Access issues on/to mountains in changing economic climate</p> <p>Water pollution and diminishing stocks</p> <p>Appearance of villages</p> <p>Environmental damage due to uncontrolled usage of Quads/ 4WD</p> <p>Bird species disrupted by recreational users of mountains</p>
Threats		
Culture & Community	Business Issues	Political Environment
<p>Due to no obvious actions tourism is seen 'not to work' in the KMD's momentum is lost and community scepticism emerges</p> <p>Community disputes over priorities e.g. motorised vehicles on mountains or shooting rights</p> <p>Apathy towards the visitor emerges</p>	<p>If this initiative 'fails' it is unlikely to be resurrected and retried for another decade ... the legacy of a failed initiative can run deep</p> <p>Significant private sector investment in the KMD's tourism economy is unlikely in the short to medium term ('we have what we have')</p> <p>The <i>accommodation base</i> further shrinks as the current generation retire, not to be replaced</p>	<p>No political champions emerge</p> <p>Rural development diminishes on the broad political agenda post 2013</p>

## 4.4 Critical Analysis

The particularly positive elements have been the engagement with the process by a wide variety of stakeholders; the manner in which development agencies are committed to regional development in Southwest Tipperary and the overall positive goodwill towards the initiative.

The consultation phase was very instructive in that it encapsulated many issues which had not previously been articulated on a district scale. Amenities, facilities, accommodation, restaurants, transport, guides, food producers and crafts, etc need to combine a series of holiday experiences around recreational and seasonal events, that can be marketed through existing promotional avenues in Ireland and abroad, with public agency supports.

The consultative forum held on 9<sup>th</sup> December was helpful where representatives of local interests prioritised what they would like to see happening in their area, as follows:

Activity	Priority	Timeframe for Short	Development Medium	Long
<b>Walking /Hiking</b>	<b>1</b>	-----		
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>2</b>	-----	-----	
<b>Angling</b>	<b>3</b>	-----	- -----	
<b>Education</b>	<b>4</b>		-----	-----
<b>Festivals &amp; Events</b>	<b>5</b>	-----	-----	
<b>Food &amp; Craft</b>	<b>6</b>		-----	
<b>Citizen Wellbeing</b>	<b>7</b>		-----	-----
<b>Adventure Sports</b>	<b>8</b>		-----	-----
<b>Game/ Shooting</b>	<b>9</b>		-----	-----
<b>Mountain Scrambling</b>	<b>10</b>	n/a		
<b>Requisite Supporting Services Identified</b>				
<b>Management</b>	<b>1</b>	-----		
<b>Branding &amp; Promotion</b>	<b>2</b>	-----	-----	
<b>Mobilising volunteers</b>	<b>3</b>	-----		
<b>New Routes/ Maintenance</b>	<b>4</b>		-----	
<b>Directory of Services</b>	<b>5</b>	-----		
<b>Balanced Interests</b>	<b>6</b>	-----	- -----	-----
<b>Inter-County Partnership</b>	<b>7</b>	-----	- -----	-----
<b>Transport in-out/ Signage</b>	<b>8</b>	-----	-----	

These community priorities have been picked up and elaborated in **Part B – Recreational Strategy** below.

Possible thematic initiatives include “Walking and..”, “Angling and ...”, Farmhouse Holidays with Organic Gardening; Painting; ‘Walk’n’Talk regular walks for citizens to explore local heritage, graveyards, archaeology, foraging etc; development of the ‘breac-Gaeltacht’, Wildlife Weekends; Educational Geography, etc.

The “honey pots” attractions of Cahir Castle and Mitchelstown Caves in Triangle 2, bringing in at least 65,000 people per annum to the area, should complement the core recreational attractions in Triangle 1, and both centres have indicated a ready willingness to collaborate with new community initiatives.

#### **4.4.1 Community Open Forums**

Two public consultation events were held in the course of developing this Strategy to present findings and to seek feedback, as part of the process of building ownership.

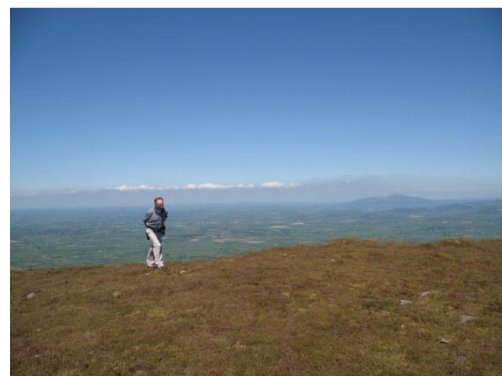
The first meeting was held in early December 2010 in Goatenbridge and the second at the end of January 2011 in Newcastle. The Draft Final Strategy was circulated to stakeholders between the events to allow feedback. Almost 40 people attended both events. Names of those signed-in participants are presented in Appendix C.

As part of the final consultative forum held in Newcastle on 31 January 2011, a group workshop concluded the meeting to define the sorts of skills available among c. 35 participants which could potentially be offered to the implementation of the Recreational Strategy.

It was very interesting to observe the response of the group themselves and to realise the enormous social capital contained within a small group of community actors, in the fields of Community Networking; Finance & Fundraising; Communications & Marketing; Outdoor Skills; Gaeltacht; Food & Crafts; Administration & Organisation; Events Management/ Practical Skills; Education & Training; and ‘Other’ which included drama, storytelling, historic tours, linkages etc. These resources will be vital in the implementation stages and will provide at least an initial boost to morale in terms of what can be achieved.

## Part B

# Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains

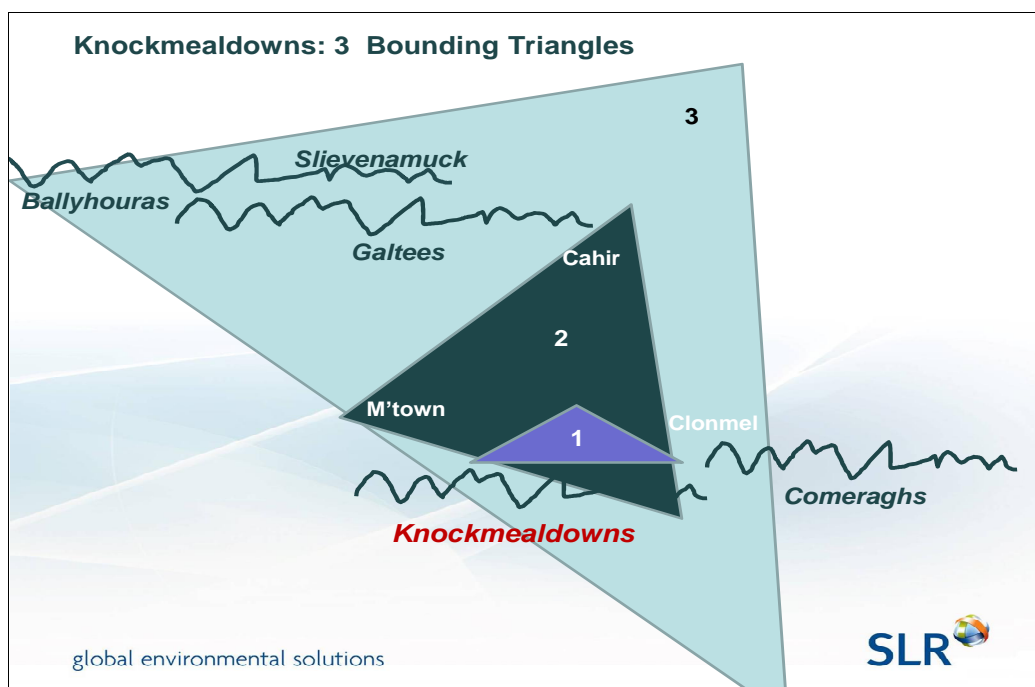




## **This Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains**

*aims to::*

- ✓ **Build a Shared Vision starting in Triangles 1, 2**
- ✓ **Build Regional Strategic Vision within Triangle 3**
- ✓ **Integrate Recreational Products & Services**
- ✓ **Build Capacity in:**
  - *Service Provision*
  - *Soft Infrastructure*
  - *Branding/ Vision*
  - *Marketing & Promotion*
- ✓ **Source Agency support for Training/ Capacity Development**
- ✓ **Source Resources for new Product Development**



*Bounding Triangles of the Knockmealdown Mountains - not to scale*

## 5.0 KNOCKMEALDOWNS RECREATIONAL STRATEGY

### 5.1 The Vision

The vision for the *Knockmealdown Mountains Recreational Strategy* (KMRS) is to create and promote a well-resourced, unique destination '**Knockmealdowns Active!**', focussed on walking, angling, culture and heritage, delivered through community-based enterprises, festivals and events, and underpinned by an educational and sustainable ethos.

### **Knockmealdowns Active!**



**Recreational Products  
Supporting Services  
Resources & Infrastructure**

~~~~~  
**Education & Sustainability**

### 5.2 Strategic Objectives

Ten strategic objectives have been identified, which must be founded on social, economic and environmental sustainability, which are:

1. **Build Driver:** To move beyond a concept, the Recreational Strategy will require a development forum, the 'Knockmealdown Mountains Partnership' to drive the implementation, with membership sourced from latent skills within the community, among actively retired or unemployed personnel with management/ administrative and people skills. A strong coordinator, as 'driver/ manager', will be required.
2. **Build Ownership:** build local awareness and understanding of the Vision to develop a sense of pride and ownership in *Knockmealdowns Active!*, using local press, parish newsletter, 'KMD Active!' notes in local press; websites, twitter etc. Instill an understanding of what the initiative is all about and the potential benefits for the local community.
3. **Build Destination:** To build a stronger collegiality of tourism potential, through village enhancement to match the natural beauty of the area, with critical partnerships among Tidy Towns, Fás, Leader, County Council and community employment schemes, to include e.g. signage upgrades, murals on derelict buildings and litter management, with community organisations. Interpretative panels in villages, showing local walks etc.
4. **Build Alliances:** Knockmealdown Mountains straddle three counties and are consequently a non-priority for any local authority. 'Knockmealdowns Active' must build strong partnerships with Waterford (Knockmealdowns South, Comeraghs), Ballyhoura and Galtees to develop strategic alliances within Triangles 1, 2, 3 levels.
5. **Implement Action Plan:** The driver will implement the Action Plan and will work to achieve the 10 goals, including product and service development, within the recommended timeframes.
6. **Build Capacity:** Integrated and planned capacity building & training will be required to address the deficiencies identified in the feasibility study. Increased tourism business acumen, promotional skills, product development and delivery as well as environmental knowledge will be required. Many of these skills already exist but are fragmentary in delivery.

7. **Develop Communications Strategy:** Design and deliver an effective internal and external communications strategy, based on the indicative Communications Strategy presented in this study. Communicate to audience on responsibilities, actions planned, completed, promotions, with outputs and targets clearly set out.
8. **Secure Resources & Funding:** Resources will be required to implement the *Knockmealdown Active!* strategy into the short-, medium- and longer-terms. Building alliances with public partners such as Leader, Fás, VEC, County Council(s) and other potential supporters/ funders such as the EU InterReg programme will be essential.
9. **Monitor & Evaluate:** Develop a set of community-based targets with which to monitor achievements and to allow progress to be measured. Consider facilitated workshops with community to allow people to develop their own performance indicators.

### 5.3 Organisation & Management

**The responsibility to deliver the Action Plan presented below will require a collective approach among key community, private and public sector stakeholders. The public sector cannot drive initiative this without community and business buy-in.**

Taking cognisance of the implementation history of successful recreational and walking strategies in Ireland, and the current recessionary economic climate, the Strategy will need to utilise existing resources where possible. It is highly unlikely that a full-time 'Driver' could be appointed to the project from new resources. Thus it is recommended that the Rural Recreation Officer (RRO) be appointed as 'driver', with a strong partnership approach adopted in order to deliver the strategic objectives through the Action Plan.

Following the development of the Co. *Waterford Walking Strategy* in 2005, a critical comment was the need to implement 'early wins' to sustain the local enthusiasm generated during the consultative process. Following some delays, the **Comeragh Mountains Forum** has been established, with Working Groups set up to tackle specific issues such as Access, Funding & Resources, Product Development, Training, Walking Festivals, etc, etc. A WG lasts until the work is achieved – it can then be dissolved and resources allocated to the next set of tasks. This model has been successfully adopted elsewhere and would be suited to the rural recreational base and current skills base among stakeholders in Knockmealdowns.

The **Dublin Mountains Partnership** was established in 2009 following public outrage at decimation of high amenity recreational areas, close to Dublin City, due to commercial forestry clear felling. This partnership established a Voluntary Ranger scheme in early 2010, seeking volunteers through newspapers, followed by training and capacity building of rangers over a period of months. The volunteers are asked to give up one weekend day every two months to patrol the mountains, offer guidance to visitors, pick up litter, report infringements, and generally maintain high standards of conservation and ecological protection.

The *Walking Strategy for the Cooley Mountains* was developed in 2008, in response to growing local and tourist demand for recreational facilities in Co. Louth. Since the delivery of the strategy, a **Cooley Forum** has been set up and the group has recently completed a range of shorter looped walks from the village of Carlingford, and has achieved 'Centre of Excellence' status from Fáilte Ireland. The local community continue to develop new trails and services, including wheelchair accessible coastal trails, with local authority and Leader support. 20 years ago, the Cooley Peninsula was a backwater with zero tourism potential due to its location along the border. Vision and drive by private sector and community partners have led to its assignation as a European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) in 2008.

### 5.3.1 Organisation: 5 Key Steps

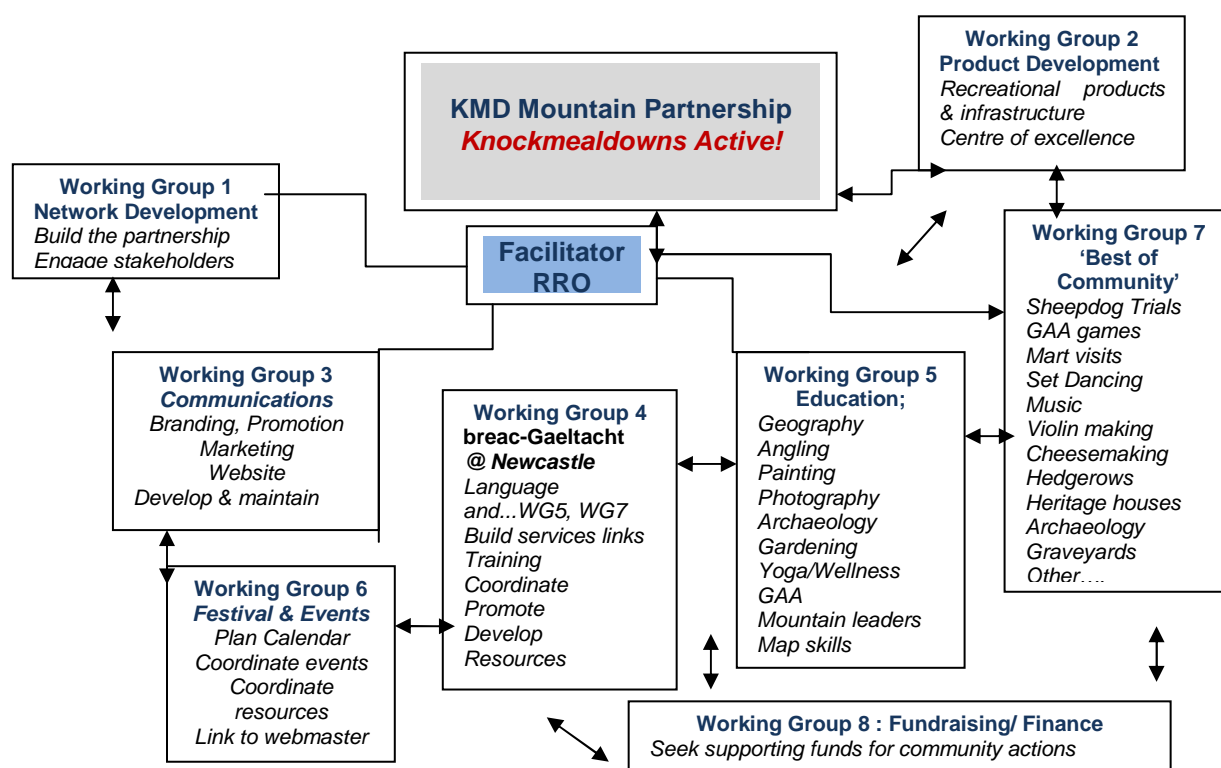
**Step 1: Establish a Knockmealdown Mountains Partnership** from key local individuals and members of stakeholder groups, to represent all of the interests required. This must include (i) community activists; (ii) landowners (iii) private sector actors in accommodation, meals, pub, transport provision; (iii) walking groups and individuals (iv) anglers (v) gun clubs (vi) cyclists /mountain bikers (vii) equestrian and (viii) motorcyclists.

Additionally, representatives of the public partners: (a) Coillte (b) Leader/ Rural Recreation Officer (c) County Council recreation officer(s) (d) Inland Fisheries (e) Training agencies – VEC, Fás (f) Tourism agencies – STTC, Fáilte Ireland, and other agencies (such as Foras na Gaeilge) as may arise should form part of the partnership. Critically, strong rural development organisations such as Muintir na Tíre will play a crucial role in delivery.

**Step 2: Appoint a ‘driver’ as Facilitator/ Manager:** it is recommended to use the services of the existing, effective Rural Recreation Officer to develop the Partnership network, coordinate activities, call meetings, manage expectations and drive the implementation of the Strategy. This can be based in Newcastle in agreement with the community council, with practical and administrative support from Muintir na Tíre’s Celtic Community Link (*already offered*).

**Step 3: Agree the Vision and Action Plan** among stakeholder members. Ensure clarity of vision, with clear and agreed actions and timeframes for delivery.

**Step 4: Establish small flexible Working Groups** to achieve specific aims and outcomes. Recruit members actively where skills are required. Suggested WGs are as follows:



There are critical latent skills available within the Knockmealdown community, which could be actively tapped to encourage new entrants to community development and activism. In particular, retired or unemployed professionals with knowledge, business acumen and managerial skills, and young people with energy, ideas and IT skills, may be successfully

harnessed in administration, walking product development, web and related IT promotion, etc under the guidance of the Partnership's working groups.

**Step 5: Implement the Action Plan** and key targets as set out in the Strategy to deliver the vision of '*Knockmealdowns Active!*'

### 5.3.2 Legal & Financial Issues

It is recommended that a phase of community development needs to take place to build a sense of ownership and common purpose. In order to access funds, it is recommended that in the early stages, the South Tipperary Tourism Company may act as a legal entity with which to draw down the requisite capacity-building and training funding. Subsequently, a legal entity, ideally a private company limited by guarantee, or a co-operative, would be the best option for an organisation of this size to procure ongoing funding. A company bank account must be established and tax clearance obtained from the Revenue Commissioners.

### 5.3.3 Resourcing

The biggest commitment which will be required is time, which can best be accessed through the proposed 'Knockmealdowns Mountain Partnership', using the 'Working Group' model.

Much of the proposed developments (Section 5.4, 5.5 below) focus on 'soft' issues versus 'hard' infrastructural developments for the Knockmealdown Mountains. Thus much of the resourcing will focus on developing the *Knockmealdowns Active!* network, training, capacity building, study visits and so on. Each item is costed below.

If the current Rural Recreation Officer can be appointed to facilitate the overall initiative, then the *Active!* network has an excellent chance of moving ahead according to the schedule set out below.

Public sector support in the form of South Tipperary Development Company, can finance 100% of community based training, so long as it is channelled through a legal entity. The VEC and Fás both offer an array of suitable courses and training programmes which can be accessed through the initiative. The Community Employment Scheme and the newly introduced *Tús* 'back-to-work' scheme can also be utilised through Fás as necessary. The *Tús* programme in particular may offer an excellent way to attract young people into community tourism and recreational development.

The recently published Government *Stráitéis 20 Bliain* to develop the Irish language may provide new avenues of funding to develop the breac-Gaeltacht idea in Newcastle, as it appears that Udarás na Gaeltachta's remit may be extended beyond existing gaeltacht boundaries. See [www.gaeilge.ie/forasnagaeilge](http://www.gaeilge.ie/forasnagaeilge) for ongoing community funding calls.

Additional avenues of training and product enhancement funding such as 'festivals and events' can also be accessed through Fáilte Ireland, while the County Enterprise Board is also supportive of new rural enterprise.

### *Muintir na Tíre*

Muintir na Tíre is very active in Southwest Tipperary and through its current EU-InterReg funded Celtic Community Link (see Section 3.2.3 above), has offered to support the recreational strategy through a part-time Project Officer for 1 day per week.. This is a unique opportunity to develop strategic cross-county (Waterford-Tipp) rural tourism, based on the natural and cultural assets of the inter-region.



The Celtic Community Link project are keen to become a partner in community-led tourism in both counties, particularly across the Knockmealdowns. CCL have offered help in the following:

1. Helping to bring the community groups and activists together to get local 'buy-in'.
2. Helping to establish a local management group
3. Use of ICT technology to assist in developing a Knockmealdowns Active web site
4. CCL would like to see a 'team' of local people employed through the new TÚS back-to-work program to provide to essential services that implementation of the strategy will require such as local administration and reception duties, a tour guide service, walks and/or cycling trails development, web site updating and further development. CCL would help local groups such as Newcastle Community Council, Ardfinnan Community Council, Clogheen Tidy Towns to apply for this TÚS program. TÚS places will be through S.T.D.C. and we understand that the Knockmealdown management group could apply for these places through the S.T.D.C.
5. The CCL project is unique in that it is active at both sides of the Knockmealdowns which is essential for developing activities in the larger 'triangles' of tourism (T2, T3) activity. Lismore heritage town and castle, Mount Mellarey, Blackwater valley and other well known amenities could then be part of overall plan for Knockmealdowns over time.
6. Leading a sub-group in Newcastle area to assess development of the breac-Gaeltacht potential of the area. We need to assess how the new 20 year Irish Language strategy (*Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030*) will influence this aspect.
7. Meeting with activity providers, food providers, artisan food producers and accommodation providers in a wider area as part of building a larger menu of activities and tourist bundles for Knockmealdown area. This is the groundwork which it is very hard to see a volunteer or local activist having the time to meet all concerned.

This is an excellent offer of assistance in the key start-up phase of the Knockmealdowns Recreational Strategy. The timing is excellent, so long as the reporting lines and funding required are all 'clean' for co-funding purposes. This generous offer by Muintir na Tíre should be considered at the very first meeting of the 'Knockmealdowns Active' Partnership Forum.

## 5.4 Complementary Facilities & Infrastructure Development

There are key hard' and 'soft' products to be developed as part of this Strategy. The 10 items listed below will vary significantly in costs and development time, which are presented in the next section with actions, costs and timeframes for delivery (Section 5.5).

|    | Product Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Comment                                                                                                                                 |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P1 | Enhance and add value to existing product offerings.<br>Walking, cycling, angling, shooting, kayaking LINKAGES                                                                                                                                                                                               | Training, mentoring; capacity building, signage, sustainability                                                                         |
| P2 | Agree <b>Knockmealdown Active! Brand</b> and product offering<br>Develop a 'fit for purpose' website to promote recreational base to broader audience<br>Build capacity to keep website up to date                                                                                                           | Muintir CCL personnel to act as 'webmaster'(?)                                                                                          |
| P3 | Empowerment of Accommodation providers: three groups:<br>A. Registered B&Bs/ Self Catering<br>B. Unregistered B&Bs/ Self-Catering<br>C. 'Pop-up' B&Bs for events (unreg)<br>Training and capacity building with Fáilte Ireland – 'walkers welcome', packed lunches, local foods –<br>Collaboration/ Packages | Study Visits to other 'destinations' to see how product is being transformed to meet needs of recreation users<br>- Leader/ Fás support |
| P4 | Develop physical maps & products for walking / hiking/ cycling/ angling – web friendly, downloadable at Tourist Offices/ B&Bs                                                                                                                                                                                | Mapping complete – need graphic design                                                                                                  |
| P5 | Develop 10 'Must See and Do!' in Knockmealdowns ( <i>Triangles 1,2</i> ).<br>Build 'Events Calendar' of festivals & events<br>Develop simple downloadable products to promote activities                                                                                                                     | Downloadable events guides<br>Co-ordinate regional approach<br>Natural heritage guides<br>Training - VEC/ Fás                           |

|            | Product Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Comment                                                                                                                                |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>P6</b>  | Develop linear 'ridge-top' County Wall Walk (2 nights/3 days) with service packages (B&B, baggage transfer, lunch, dinner, pick-up) – integrated, seamless product<br>See <a href="http://www.westhighlandsway.com">www.westhighlandsway.com</a> for example of best practice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Work with service providers to develop suitable, costed packages.                                                                      |
| <b>P7</b>  | For non-elite 'citizen walker', develop a fixed monthly programme of 'Walk & Talk' with guide – walks in archaeology, heritage, botany, herbs, mushrooms, foraging etc. Helps to develop a sense of 'our place' and knowledge base which can be passed on to visitors<br>Train local guides/ leaders to bring groups (active retired/ educational) to see/do.....use latent community skills                                                                                                                                   | Make this cheap & cost effective to encourage older participants                                                                       |
| <b>P8</b>  | Develop 2-day Educational Packages based on Geography syllabus – glacial landforms (Vee/ Bay Lough), karst, caves (Mitchelstown) and urban geography (Cahir).<br>Can be expanded for adults under Action A9 (see below)<br>Build links with accommodation, food and transport suppliers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Leaving Cert Geography syllabus requires students to conduct field studies<br><br>County Dev Board/ VEC                                |
| <b>P9</b>  | Develop Newcastle ' <i>breac-Gaeltacht</i> ' as a re-emerging, unique cultural attraction – develop packages for adults, linked to walking-hiking-heritage items in Triangles 1, 2.<br>Build on existing base of teenage 2-week classes, comhrá, set-dancing – but need to develop sophisticated supporting services.<br>Apply for funding to government promotional agencies – <i>current funding rounds for 2011 are being called</i> – see <a href="http://www.gaeilge.ie/forasnagaeilge">www.gaeilge.ie/forasnagaeilge</a> | Explore funding options under Dec'10 20-year Government Strategy to increase use of Gaeilge/ contact Dept. Gaeltacht/ Foras na Gaeilge |
| <b>P10</b> | Develop an outdoor Flagship Capital Project – for example:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training Centre for Mountain Leadership</li> <li>- 'Tree Canopy Adventure Park'</li> <li>- Whitewater Kayaking' course,</li> <li>- permanent 'Orienteering Course' at Vee, or</li> <li>- other family-friendly adventure park</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                | Explore options with local stakeholders – source resources and political support.<br>County Dev Board/ STCC/ WCC/ VEC                  |

## 5.5 Action Plan

There are key actions to be taken, particularly in capacity building and new product & services development to meet the Objectives:

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                          | Product No. | Timeframe | Delivery                       | Cost €           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>A1.0 Recruit membership</b> – ask willing partners to participate in a training programme to develop the KMD ability to ‘collaborate to compete’ on a regional level                         | <b>P0</b>   | Immediate | Facilitator<br>Muintir na Tíre | Time             |
| <b>P1, P3</b>                                                                                                                                                                                   |             |           |                                |                  |
| <b>A1.1. Upskilling to Add Value to Service Providers (SPs)</b><br>3 mentoring sessions for 6 providers:<br>Comprehensive audit of 6 x SP<br>Enhance product/service<br>Review session & modify |             | Year 1    | Leader/<br>Ireland             | Failte<br>20,000 |
| <b>P1,P3</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    |             |           |                                |                  |
| <b>A1.2 Study Visits</b> to ‘best-in-class’<br>Develop collegiality/ collaborate to compete attitudes among SPs                                                                                 |             | Year 1    | Leader                         | 10,000           |
| <b>P2</b>                                                                                                                                                                                       |             |           |                                |                  |
| <b>A2. Build capacity in website &amp; maintenance</b><br>Appoint webmaster ( <i>Muintir CCL team?</i> )                                                                                        |             | Year 1    | Fás/VEC                        | 2000             |

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Product No. | Timeframe | Delivery                     | Cost € |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|------------------------------|--------|
| <b>P4,P5, P6</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |             |           |                              |        |
| <b>A3. Walking Maps &amp; Products</b><br>Develop maps, map downloads<br>Website – simple, clear<br>Develop events calendar                                                                                                     |             | Years 1,2 | Leader/ RRO<br>with<br>Clubs | 10,000 |
| <b>A4. Train 10x guides</b> in group leadership & local knowledge<br>for non-elite walkers/ active retired/ schools in ‘soft skills’/<br>communication/ safety issues<br>Link to Angling Centre of Excellence / gillie training | <b>P7</b>   | Years 2,3 | Fás, Clubs                   | 15,000 |



|                                                              |           |            |                  |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|----------------|
| <hr/>                                                        |           |            |                  |                |
| <b>A5. Develop 'breac-Gaeltacht'</b>                         |           |            |                  |                |
| Facilitated group scoping session                            |           |            | Muintir na Tíre  |                |
| 'Gaeltacht+Walk+Heritage'                                    |           |            | Community        | 20,000         |
| <i>Phase 1 – Planning, Organisation</i>                      | <b>P9</b> | Early 2011 | Leader           |                |
| Capacity requirements for delivery                           |           |            | Fás/ VEC         |                |
| Coordination – who?                                          |           |            | Foras na Gaeilge |                |
| Who, when, how, how much, who is market?                     |           |            | DCEGael          |                |
| Locate teachers/ muinteoirs                                  |           |            |                  |                |
| Build accommodation base                                     |           |            |                  |                |
| Walks, heritage places, transport                            |           |            |                  |                |
| Develop culture evenings (music, dance, comhrá)              |           |            |                  |                |
| <i>Phase 2 – Marketing &amp; Promotion</i>                   |           | May 2011   | Leader           | 10,000         |
| Marketing to target audience (adults, public servants)       |           |            | Foras na Gaeilge |                |
| <i>Phase 3 – Pilot</i>                                       |           | July 2011  |                  | 20,000         |
| Early delivery of small scale                                |           |            | Do.              |                |
| <i>Phase 4 – Scaled up Gaeltacht</i>                         |           | July 2012  | STCC (via CDP)   | 30,000         |
| Continued expansion & improving delivery                     |           |            |                  |                |
| <hr/>                                                        |           |            |                  |                |
| <b>A6. Geography Education</b>                               | <b>P8</b> | Years 2-5  | Leader           | 25,000         |
| Identify & Train geographer                                  |           |            | Fás              |                |
| Package assets (Vee/Cave/Cahir)                              |           |            | VEC              |                |
| Packages services                                            |           |            |                  |                |
| Promote to 50-75km radius (Wd,Lk,Ck,KK)                      |           |            |                  |                |
| Map out activities/timing/sched                              |           |            |                  |                |
| <i>Day 1: Cave-Cahir-Vee</i>                                 |           |            |                  |                |
| <i>Overnight – local accomm</i>                              |           |            |                  |                |
| <i>Day 2: Adventure Walk/ Map reading/ orienteering @Vee</i> |           |            |                  |                |
| <b>Sub-Total 1 - Cost</b>                                    |           |            |                  | <b>162,000</b> |

|                                                                                                                   |     |           |                 |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>A7 Outdoor Flagship Activity</b>                                                                               |     |           |                 |                |
| <b>Details to be fleshed out by Community forum</b>                                                               |     |           |                 |                |
| Mountain Training Centre                                                                                          | P10 | Year 3-5  | Leader Clubs    | 100,000        |
| Tree Canopy walk                                                                                                  |     |           | Fás             |                |
| Permanent Orienteering Course                                                                                     |     |           |                 |                |
| Cycling Trails                                                                                                    |     |           |                 |                |
| Knockmealdowns Ecclesiastical Trail (with Co Waterford) to encompass Mt Melleray- Abbeys/ Ecclesiastical features |     |           |                 |                |
| <b>A8 Build Strategic Alliances with Galtees, Ballyhoura, Comeragh Mountains</b>                                  |     |           |                 |                |
| Each to develop own products                                                                                      |     | Years 2-5 | KMD             | 10,000         |
| Develop co-products                                                                                               |     |           | Partnership     |                |
| Co-marketing & promotion of new “ <i>Munster Borders</i> ”                                                        |     |           | CoCos           |                |
| Destination                                                                                                       |     |           |                 |                |
| Co-development of UNESCO Munster Borders Geopark                                                                  |     |           |                 | 50,000         |
| <b>A9 Secure Funding &amp; Resources</b>                                                                          |     |           |                 |                |
| Community partnership to allocate resources to seeking funds, building partnerships & strategic alliances         | All | Years 1-5 | KMD             | 20,000         |
| Ongoing activity .....RRO to drive (with Muintir CCL?)                                                            |     |           | Partnership     |                |
|                                                                                                                   |     |           | Leader          |                |
|                                                                                                                   |     |           | STCC            |                |
|                                                                                                                   |     |           | Fás             |                |
|                                                                                                                   |     |           | VEC             |                |
|                                                                                                                   |     |           | Muintir na Tíre |                |
| Explore twinning with EU rural sub-region                                                                         |     |           |                 |                |
| <b>Sub-Total 2 Cost</b>                                                                                           |     |           |                 | <b>180,000</b> |
| <b>TOTAL COST</b>                                                                                                 |     |           |                 | <b>342,000</b> |

## 5.6 Marketing, Promotion and Communications

Consistent, smart and effective communications will greatly smooth the pathway to successfully delivering and marketing the overall Knockmealdowns' recreational strategy. 'Communications' should be principally thought of as the *language and tools* used to link and build up local networks / individuals, while connecting and selling to the visitor is a secondary objective. In other words we need to communicate effectively among ourselves first before we can *sell* the Knockmealdowns with confidence to the outside world.

By *communications*, we mean the employment of public relations, traditional marketing, e-marketing and selling tools and techniques in an integrated manner.

### 5.6.1 Marketing & Communications

The whole marketing & communications role in tourism destination development is fast changing. Traditional methods such as print and conventional advertising are being seriously questioned on a cost benefit basis. Old skills and inherited knowledge need to be updated. Modern developments in everyday technology and their adoption by the majority of people across all accessible markets, socio-economic classes and generations are certainly a 'plus' when devising a communications plan from scratch for '*late start*' recreational destinations like the Knockmealdowns. However there are major obstacles and limitations to be overcome such as:-

- ❖ the lack of any existing 'Knockmealdowns' brand and poor overall product awareness across all likely markets ... effective brand building should be seen as a 'long game' which begins with a number of considered small steps.
- ❖ the lack of any centralised consistent digital information on existing customers (i.e. an all inclusive *contact databases* which is well managed)
- ❖ the lack of capacity / skills on the ground to consistently deliver a multi faceted and importantly time consuming communications plan
- ❖ in the absence of *market ready product* of scale, external communications are compromised and heavy expenditure is questionable ... a truism: you cannot sell what you don't have...
- ❖ there is an absence of *research data* on the ground which could give us genuine customer feedback / trends thus aiding product design and helping inform key decisions
- ❖ there is no history of *joint or cross marketing* in the immediate region
- ❖ Critically, the Knockmealdown Mountains register relatively lowly in the development priorities of key support agencies. This is challenging at a time of shrinking budgets.

**To refine a plan that delivers quantifiable results from the beginning we must examine:**

- ❖ the likely 'tools' that can be mobilised by a *community-focused, tourism destination enterprise with no trading history behind it* and with modest agency support in the current economic climate.
  - ❖ the best options for managing this activity on the ground and
  - ❖ finish with the actual robust communications, marketing and public relations strategy that is fit for purpose.

### 5.6.2 Tools & Capacity:

The likely **communications 'tools'** needed in the context of this Strategy embrace a number of familiar and possibly new media. The menu and deployment guidelines by the Knockmealdowns' administration can be summarised on the following tables:

| Category                                                                                                                                                                                   | Audience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Management &amp; Group Networking Tools</b> e.g. email, SMS, and website                                                                                                             | All <i>internal</i> partners who make up the Knockmealdowns 'family'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Simply question all partners as to what media they would prefer to receive information through for example SMS may work for notice of meetings while Agenda & Minutes may be emailed. Be ready to change things in the early days to see what works best for the objective is the effective & transparent delivery of the strategy.<br><b>Keep overhead costs to a minimum and execution simple and effectively.</b>                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>2. Website</b><br><br><i>Note:</i> both available <a href="http://www.knockmealdowns.ie">www.knockmealdowns.ie</a> & <a href="http://www.knockmealdowns.com">www.knockmealdowns.com</a> | Should be for <i>both</i> internal and external audiences. This will be the primary platform used to deliver the overall strategy into the medium / long term.                                                                                                                                             | Initial design should reflect need to consistently grow in relation to the roll out of the brand, graphic style and content over coming years. One person with the necessary skills, time and enthusiasm should have 'ownership' of the site. There should be an overall web strategy with targets which should be reported back to the group on a regular basis.<br><br>Review the 'history' of similar <i>sister</i> sites regionally and thematically. What are the 'best practice' sites e.g. <a href="http://www.ballyhouracountry.com">www.ballyhouracountry.com</a> |
| <b>3. Public Relations</b><br><br><i>".. the best ink is free ink .."</i>                                                                                                                  | Broad and varied including the local community via local press and radio, key decision makers / agencies via letter / email, special interest groups via group email / ezines, general and travel media via Press Releases and personal contact and through all these initiatives the potential customers. | Set targets as to who, when and with what you focus on key groups as there is only so much a voluntary organisation can do.<br>Keep the 'messages' consistent.<br><br>Build up a 'relationship' with people who respond positively to your message.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| Category                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Audience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Advertising                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | General awareness raising, brand building and marketing further up stream. Could be targeted like a Google Ad-words campaign. May be local through the local media or global through an advert in a Tourism Ireland magazine BUT in all cases it is paid for thus the copy/graphic are your responsibility and consistency is essential.                                                                                                                            | Value for money.<br>Consistent message.<br>Focus on media outlets that work therefore evaluation of results is critical to inform decision making.<br><br>Advertising requires creation of a compelling message and supporting visuals, appropriate media placement, fulfilling inquiries, and measuring effectiveness. Consumers are so barraged with messages from the media that a <i>KMD destination message</i> registers only if you repeat it and thus more ongoing expenditure. Consequently it is most probably this medium is a medium term strategy when product has been fully developed and more resources available.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 5. Social Networking<br><br><b>Note:</b> Recognised as the most <i>cost effective marketing tool</i> today with the American Association of Online Marketing (2007) stating that for every \$1 spent there was a probable ROI of over \$46+ | Likely social sites are Facebook, Twitter, My Space (over 55yrs), You Tube (video) and Flickr (picture gallery).<br><br>To secure fans / followers requires knowledge and time or else the results will disappoint. Well managed and you will drive traffic and build up a relationship with a large community of loyal repeat customers. It is cost effective and instant communications. See <a href="http://www.dingle-peninsula.ie">www.dingle-peninsula.ie</a> | Firstly <b>set your objectives</b> clearly (e.g. grow followers by 20% per month, deliver 25% more booking per year, images uploaded, inputs recorded); <b>Know your customer</b> online for example if Facebook is your 'catch all' then perhaps you could facilitate fan pages and manage a group site. Perhaps some modest Facebook advertising could help in the initial months; <b>Know how to talk and what to talk about</b> ... this will likely be a learning experience for the person tasked with doing it but they need to know how to deal with negative comment and to listen not just talk; finally because this is such a fluid medium we should always be looking at gathering information on <b>how effective or otherwise our efforts have been</b> (including the amount of time we have put into up-keeping each social media account)<br><br>Are there a couple of members of the 'family' that would be willing to write a regular <b>blog</b> on topics such as the environment, local cultural happenings throughout the seasons, outdoor activities update and advice / tips? |



| Category | Audience                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6. Print | Some key pieces of print will eventually be required like a simple generic destination brochure (downloadable as pdf), festival flyers, maps with interpretation, and separate activity sheets (also downloadable) | <p>Make as much print self financing through advertising (keep ratio below 60% copy / 40% advertising). Always have a distribution plan for all printed material. Be consistent in employing the brand across all activity ... there should be a final editorial procedure to ensure this occurs.</p> <p>Finally in the age of greater environmental awareness we should always ask the question if there is another less impactful media we could employ to give us the same results?</p> |

### **5.6.3 WG 3: Communications**

There is an inherent danger in devising a theoretically sound communications strategy that fails due to the inability of those on the ground to understand it and thus deliver it in full. So what measures can be taken to minimise the likelihood of this happening?

The organisational model proposed calls for Working Groups to be formed, one of which will be '*Communications*'. The delivery of the strategy rests on their shoulders.

The composition of this Group will be important from the outset with *experience, intelligence, creativity, and enthusiasm* being key strengths required. A good Chairperson will aid the process considerably. Could the Group entice for example the editor of a local paper or the anchor person from a local radio station; would the County Librarian who works with information technology be interested or someone likewise from the Institute of Technology sector? Is there a retired journalist living in the area? The Group will be set targets and allocated resources to deliver within certain timeframes. Activities will likely be prioritised as there will be an extensive work programme.

Initially it would be an advantage for the Group to have access to some professional mentoring. However a core philosophy should be for the Group to upskill themselves over time through 'doing, delivering & evaluating'. There are enough support agencies in the field to provide the entry level support at a modest cost? In particular the consultations confirmed the willingness of Fáilte Ireland SE and South Tipperary LEADER to work 'creatively' together to raise capacity on the ground. Without a suitable degree of 'hand holding' at the initial stages there would be a high risk of failure.

At inception and in order to 'gel' the Group it would be helpful to have them undertake a study visit to a more mature tourism destination with a similar 'mix' of outdoor products and an organisational structure combining the private, community, special interest and public sectors e.g. Snowdonia in Wales (see [www.visitsnowdonia.info](http://www.visitsnowdonia.info) )

Where possible the Group should 1) work with suitably qualified communications sub contractors e.g. web design, graphic design and search engine optimisation (SEO) and 2) use all *free local channels* to communicate the work and success of the overall initiative e.g. Post Office notice boards, parish bulletins, village notes in papers, 'What's On' listings on local radio, and piggyback on community mail outs by agency partners. Design and manage a liaison programme servicing the three tourist information offices of Clonmel, Cahir and Cashel. Local goodwill and understanding should never be taken for granted and usually only comes about through graft and persistence. There is a constant flow of local information that can be drip fed to a population base of about 50,000 (second triangle) from the breeding /nesting habits of the red grouse on the mountains to the rental of a bicycle built for two!

### **5.6.4 Communications Plan**

#### *The Market*

The economic impact of tourism into the Knockmealdowns has never been seriously calculated due mainly to the spatial deficiency of bed space (hotels / B&B / guesthouses / hostels, caravan & camping). Visitors come, enjoy themselves and then quickly depart leaving little or no financial spin off to the local community. Their expenditure is ad hoc and random. What economic activity exists is limited principally but not exclusively to the high season and comes from transient traffic whether they be walkers, car tourers or culture seekers. There is little or no group overnight activity to speak of. Specific events will attract in visitors e.g. Knockmealdowns Crossing which brings in over 150 walkers each Easter (see [www.peaksmcclonmel.ie](http://www.peaksmcclonmel.ie) ), but few will remain in the area for 24hrs.

From a combination of desk research and broad local consultation we can identify with some accuracy likely existing and future markets for the KMD's 'offering'.

The challenge is to consistently reach these potential visitors with a 'message' delivered through the most suitable medium that encourages them to think positively about the KMD's and visit now or in the near future. This process is akin to personal relationship building. They include (*no ranking*):-

- |                                       |                                            |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Car Tourers - Domestic             | 6. Self Guiding Culture & Heritage Seekers |
| 2. Car Tourers - International        | 7. Visiting Family & Friends               |
| 3. Day Walkers / Non-Group Domestic   | 8. Outdoor Activity Enthusiast - Domestic  |
| 4. Day Walkers / Group - Domestic     | 9. Angler - Domestic & International       |
| 5. Festival & Events Goers - Domestic | 10. Game Sports - Domestic & International |

## Communications Action Plan

*Note: KMD is used as an abbreviation throughout for Knockmealdowns*

| Action                      | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                       | Responsibility       | Cost                                                              | Weighting & Timeframe                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <b>Branding Exercise</b> | Create logo & all necessary <i>entry level</i> branding material including guidelines for use                                                                                                | Communications Group | €2000<br><br>(design & guidelines)                                | Essential<br><br>Q1/Year 1                                                                                        |
| 2. <b>Website</b>           | Design an attractive and functional site employing new brand - agree hosting, SEO and content management<br><br>Note:<br>Including Photo Library creation and management in this initiative. | Communications Group | €4,000<br><br>(design and <i>all</i> backend supports for Year 1) | Essential<br><br>Q1/Year 1<br><br>The most important single initiative to <b><i>get right and keep right.</i></b> |

| Action                                                     | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Responsibility                                                                                                                                        | Cost                                                                          | Weighting & Timeframe                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>3. Social Networking Initiatives</b>                    | Identify media most suitable ... keep modest & simple. Create accounts and establish sites with copy/pics..Train & task those who will manage this initiative. Monitor well                                                                                          | Sub Group 1<br>Communications/<br><b>Awareness</b><br><br>[2/3 skilled people max]<br><br>Note: Some people may wish to be in more than one Sub Group | €1,000 / Year 1                                                               | Essential<br><br>Q1/Year 1                 |
| <b>4. Community Awareness Programme</b>                    | Design a simple programme to 'speak' clearly to the local community. Use all free outlets. Be imaginative and daring. Target 2 distinct tourism related messages per months from local papers to bulletin boards. Start with Monthly KMD Notes for local papers X 2. | Sub Group 1<br>Communications /<br><b>Awareness</b><br><br>[same people as above]                                                                     | No Cost                                                                       | Essential<br><br>Q1/Year 1                 |
| <b>5. Joint &amp; Cross Marketing Initiatives / Wave 1</b> | Support private / community ventures link with new partners both within and outside the area to deliver specific and simple joint marketing e.g. shopping centre promotion, joint advertising activity with accommodation provider.                                  | Sub Group 2<br>Communications/<br><b>Packaging</b><br><br>[3 experienced people max]                                                                  | €1500<br><br>Year 1<br><br>Support 2 pilot initiatives<br><br>Monitor returns | Desirable<br><br>Q4/Year 1 or early Year 2 |

| Action                                                           | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Responsibility                                                       | Cost                                                                                                                                                                                             | Weighting & Timeframe                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>6. Educational Packaging &amp; Direct Marketing Programme</b> | Design simple schools packages using existing resources. Combine contact names from operators who currently service this market and send attractive / value for money packages at correct times to schools in a target zone of 2hrs drive of KMD's. Desktop publish | Sub Group 2<br>Communications/<br><b>Packaging</b><br><br>[as above] | €3,000<br><br>(spread over 2 years)<br><br>Set clear targets on numbers and spend<br><br>Note:<br>Cost includes mailing & cost of hosting key teachers on an educational overnight in the KMD's. | Desirable<br><br>Q3/Year 1<br><br>Pilot only / review results |
| <b>7. KMD's Active - Outdoor Activities Packaging Programme</b>  | Design and print A5 full color specific activity flyers for wide distribution and pdf download. Should contain map, descriptions, all inclusive prices and contact info. Start with walking / angling & cycling                                                     | Sub Group 2<br>Communications/<br><b>Packaging</b><br><br>[as above] | €3,000<br><br>(50% cost contribution from featured partners thus total cost €4,500)                                                                                                              | Desirable<br><br>Q4/Year 1 or early Year 2<br><br>Pilot       |



| Action                      | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Responsibility                                                                        | Cost                                                                                                                                                            | Weighting & Timeframe        |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 8. Maps & Signage / Wave 1  | A gap analysis indicated priority initiatives to be undertaken immediately in both areas - <b>coordination</b> may be all that is needed as outside agencies may take responsibility to deliver as a commitment to the overall KMD's programme                                                                                                  | Sub Group 3<br>Communications/<br><b>Agency Liaison</b><br><br>[2 experienced people] | €1500<br><br>Year 1<br><br>Support 2 separate pilot initiatives<br>signage X 1<br>maps X 1<br><br>Monitor returns                                               | Essential<br><br>Q2/Year 1   |
| 9. KMD's Festivals Magazine | Produce a simple free KMD's branded 'newspaper' featuring all the festival of the area over the coming year ... possibly do in partnership with a local paper and funder through advertising sales - the paper can can distribute as an insert into its title with a run off being available for wide distribution during the rest of the year. | Sub Group 4<br>Communications /<br><b>Printing</b><br><br>[3 people max]              | €1,000<br><br>[to pump prime the newspaper]<br><br>There will be more hours employed by this group than any other as data collection and editorial eats up time | Desirable<br><br>Q1 / Year 2 |

| Action                                          | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Responsibility                                                                        | Cost                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Weighting & Timeframe                      |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 10. KMD's Generic Brochure                      | A once off generic destination print piece for wide distribution through FI and other channels. Will be useful for fulfilling enquiries / doing trade - consumer shows. Shelf life X 3 years. This is the peak initiative of all promotional activity.                                                                                                                  | Sub Group 4<br>Communications/<br><b>Printing</b><br><br>[as above]                   | €5,000<br><br>12,000 copies                                                                                                                                                                             | Desirable<br><br>Year 2                    |
| 11. Familiarisation Programme for Trade & Media | Target two distinct groups of trade operators and travel media to come and spend 24hrs in the area. A whistle stop tour of all that is good and can be sampled in the KMD's. The exercise of planning and delivering a Fam Tour can be used again of other initiatives like a VIP visit or the EU Twinning Initiative. FI / SE are a key partner in making this happen. | Sub Group 5<br>Communications / <b>PR</b><br><br>[2/3 hospitality experienced people] | €1,500<br><br>Year 1<br><br>Monitor returns through coverage given etc<br><br>Note: the KMD's trade would be expected to offer support 'in kind' of a certain number of complementary bed-nights /meals | Desirable<br><br>Q4/Year 1 or early Year 2 |

| Action                                                                                      | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Responsibility                                                       | Cost                                                                                             | Weighting & Timeframe                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 12. PR Packs for distribution                                                               | Full color A4 folder to hold KMD's promotional material. Ensure that all packs are distributed to a named list of outlets e.g. tourist offices and check regularly to see if more are required. Be <b>proactive in distribution</b> of all promotional material.                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Sub Group 5<br>Communications / <b>PR</b><br><br>[as above]          | €1,000 / Year 1<br><br>4000 folders                                                              | Desirable<br><br>Q4/Year 1 or early Year 2 |
| 13. KMD's Ezine - Design and Distribution                                                   | Generate a short, newsy yet informative quarterly electronic magazine to go to all on KMD's contact database. Use free design software. Try to make it 'interactive' seeking feedback, running a competition etc                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Sub Group 5<br>Communications / <b>PR</b><br><br>[as above]          | No Cost                                                                                          | Desirable<br><br>Q4/Year 1                 |
| 14. Customer Database - design & management                                                 | Combine / merge whatever existing contact databases / lists exist from partners. Scrutinise to ensure data is current. Be fully aware of data protection legislation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Communications<br>Group<br><br>[as above]                            | No cost.                                                                                         | Essential<br><br>Q1/Year 1                 |
| 15. Database Marketing - "Come Home & Visit Your Family" / Wave 1 Returning Emigrants Theme | Invite the community to submit names / contact data (post/email) with basic profile information all ow KMD to send out a 'personalised invitation' inviting emigrants home. May be linked to event, festival or season. Build up the list over time. Send Christmas card. Invite them to become fans on our Facebook page. Build many individual relationships for behind every emigrant is ten family and friends only too willing at some stage to 'come home'. | Sub Group 1<br>Communications/<br><b>Awareness</b><br><br>[as above] | €750<br><br>Be prepared to offer a grand prize of a return ticket Ireland/ Mainland Europe or NY | Desirable<br><br>Q4/Year 1                 |

| Action                                        | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Responsibility                                                                                                                                                                                             | Cost    | Weighting & Timeframe                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16. EU Twinning Initiative                    | This initiative has become fashionable across Europe again. The KMD's are well placed to benefit by linking with a destination with a more developed tourism product that have overcome some of our challenges. The objective is both PR and greater tourism activity. There are some successful models for capitalising on twinning arrangements like joint conferences and packaging up to sell through their local media etc. | Sub Group 2<br>Communications/<br><b>Packaging</b><br><br>[it would be desirable to have full participation from the hospitality sector and all partner agencies in designing this initiative]             | No Cost | Desirable<br><br>Early Year 2<br><br>Note: the EU Parliament Office in Dublin would be a good 'first call' see <a href="http://www.europarl.ie">www.europarl.ie</a> |
| 17. Group Marketing & Communications Training | It would be advisable to have two distinct types of upskilling 1) sub group mentoring and 2) specific bespoke training seminars on topics like e-marketing including managing a website, packaging and branding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Communications Group<br><br>Note: Partners support (agencies) will be necessary to make this happen. Regular reviewing of skill deficiencies will identify quickly what areas training support is need in. | €4,000  | Essential<br><br>Q1/Year 1 to mid Year 2                                                                                                                            |

| Action                                             | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Responsibility                                                                                                                                                               | Cost                                                                                                          | Weighting & Timeframe       |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>18. Host Rural Tourism Conference</b>           | A <i>smart</i> approach to pulling partners / sponsors together is to host a modest (up to 100 delegates)themed conference. It also delivers good quality PR and could be a means to announce the formal ‘arrival’ of the KMD’s after the initial wave of work is complete.                                                                       | Communications Group<br><br>Note: Other partners are likely to be keen to be seen to be involved / supporting such as LEADER and FI along with probably private sponsorship. | €5,000<br><br>Sponsorship of another €5,000 should be set as a target along with €2,500 in registration fees. | Desirable<br><br>Q3/Year 1  |
| <b>19. Marketing &amp; Communications Planning</b> | Objectives are seldom reached without a considered plan. This outline could firm the basis for the initial activity but it will need to be refreshed on an annual basis. Some initiatives will be removed or tweaked while others removed or inserted BUT there should always be a plan and its process and targets evaluated to aid performance. | Communications Group<br><br>Note: Should only undertaken when a suitable body of work has been undertaken such as delivery of the ‘essentials’ in this action plan           | No Cost<br><br>Note: All material to be produced ‘in house’                                                   | Essential<br><br>End/Year 1 |

| Action                                            | Category / Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Responsibility                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Cost    | Weighting & Timeframe       |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| <b>20. Monitoring, Evaluation &amp; Reporting</b> | A distinct part of any plan is monitoring how actions are being delivered and the evaluation of their impact / results. These findings should be simply built into an annual 'tourism report' which reflects on the year past and previews the year ahead. A summary version is for community consumption while a more detailed one is for trade and partners. It is delivered by the Chair. | Communications Group<br><br>Note: It would be helpful to have someone individual on the Group who is professionally involved in 'figures, data collection and presenting reports'. The whole process of collection and analysis need to be honest, consistent and transparent or else the whole exercise is a waste of time and could undermine the whole venture. | No Cost | Essential<br><br>End/Year 1 |



### 5.6.5 Costing Commentary

The figures quoted in the Communications Action Plan are prudent guidelines based on real sourcing experience.

The **Essential Activity** = €12,500 for approx. 18 months activity, with  
**Desirable Activity** = €21,750 over the same period. The Total Cost = €34,250

This budget will likely need to be made up from the supporting public agencies. There are a small number of income generating opportunities e.g. web advertising or sponsorship along with a modest sum that can be generated from 'membership fees' but these should possibly be seen as creating a 'war chest' rather than displacing core public funding.

However, the main trade / community contribution is in *time* committed to delivering a large work programme, which will be beyond the comfort zone of many (but achievable by all, working collectively). The core intention underpinning this overall approach is for the Communications Group to *do it themselves, take responsibility*, but obviously with all the necessary agency supports in place to maximise the chance of success.

### 5.6.6 Operational Delivery of Plan

This is an ambitious work programme for a newly formed body with little or no 'history' behind it. It will likely be driven by 6-8 informed and committed individuals who can work well together, under a good Chair and have access to the *skeleton resources* to make it all work.

Early 'successes' are important, thus the programme identifies key actions at the beginning that should be achievable and which can be built upon. Quality, consistency and maintaining group cohesion are more important than quantity and 'burn out'. The *menu* of actions presented above is deliberately flexible.

There is no escaping the reality that a part time super-administrative resource would help 'bed down' things down and service the Working Groups, but that person is not costed in this plan. Neither is the basic office set up (physical space, computer & printer along with storage and supplies) - however this may be 'hosted' by a partner (trade or public; possibly Muintir's CCL) over the initial stages. We suggest possibly at Newcastle Community Resource Centre as a starting point, or at the Fás Office in Clogheen.

It is important to have all strands of the trade and community buying into the process from the beginning (there is firm evidence this is happening), but equally important is the identification of the *right people* who will give of their time over the coming 24 months and longer.

The greatest possible start along a long road for the KMD's is to build a competent and energetic team who will take full ownership of the Recreational Strategy and Communications Plan.

## **5.7 Monitoring & Evaluation**

The community partnership must establish verifiable targets at the outset. While many regard this as a waste of time, it sets out clearly what must be done, by whom, by when and at what cost.

A facilitated workshop to develop the monitoring criteria and how they might be readily evaluated would be a good early action of the Partnership.

M&E will allow targets to be set and provide positive feedback of achievements, or areas which require redress. It is a highly motivational activity and is strongly recommended.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A Feasibility Study for the development of a Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains was carried out in late 2010 by SLR Consulting. The study involved field scoping, desk review and extensive consultations with stakeholders ranging across the community, private and public sectors. A public forum was held at the end of the consultative process to ensure that stakeholders were happy with the general conclusions and thrust of the Strategy.

### 6.1 Conclusions

The Knockmealdown Mountains enjoy under-exploited recreational potential in a beautiful, rural landscape, within 80km of major urban centres. The area has extensive, albeit fragmented, supporting services, which require both capacity and confidence building. The geographical area of influence was broken into three local (Triangle 1/ T1), sub-regional (Triangle 2/ T2) and regional (Triangle 3/ T3) scales for ease of reference. T1 is focussed on the three core communities of Clogheen, Goatenbridge and Newcastle in the foothills of the Knockmealdown Mountains, while T2 includes Ardfinnan, Cahir and west towards Mitchelstown. T3 has a more strategic regional focus.

The following SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) summary of the Knockmealdowns' current capacity to develop as a recreational tourism destination is based on the combined local, regional and national consultative and research data.

#### Strengths

- ❖ Clean, unspoilt environment. The natural beauty of the area is its biggest attraction to visitors. Respondents to consultations expressed concern that tourism should "not kill the goose that lays the golden egg" i.e. that all care must be taken to respect and preserve the natural environment.
- ❖ Strong sense of heritage and its potential to attract visitors.
- ❖ Good array of linear and looped walking trails, suited to the non-elite walker/ hiker.
- ❖ Rural Recreation Officer in place.
- ❖ Excellent potential for integrated outdoor activities: walking, hillwalking, angling, cycling, kayaking/ canoeing, equestrian trails which can be packaged collaboratively to achieve economies .
- ❖ Cahir is a 'centre of excellence' for angling tourism, with high quality game fisheries in the Suit, Tar and Duag rivers.
- ❖ Gun clubs are pro-actively engaged in game conservation and environmental monitoring.
- ❖ Public transport: Bus Eireann services routes daily through T2, from Cork to Clonmel with onwards links to Kilkenny and national destinations
- ❖ T2 'honeypot' attractions of Cahir Castle and Mitchelstown Caves attract 55,000 and 10,000 visitors respectively and more can be done to retain visitors in the area.
- ❖ Positive public support has been offered for private/ community initiatives.
- ❖ **Positive response among all consultees to the Recreational Strategy bodes well for the future.**

#### Weaknesses

- ❖ Knockmealdowns straddle three countries and thus not a priority for any local authority.
- ❖ There is no distinctive "Knockmealdowns Mountains" brand;
- ❖ No central point at which visitors can access tourism information; no central website.
- ❖ Walking trails are locally over-exploited with erosion of most popular near The Vee.
- ❖ Single NPWS ranger for south Tipperary; thus under-resourced capacity to monitor environment/ litter/ oversee trails and use of 4WD/ scramblers
- ❖ Current accommodation base in Triangle 1 is insufficient to hold a critical mass of visitors in the area, particularly with no 3\*-4\* Hotel

- ❖ Accommodation base in T1/ T2 is fragmentary, with no history of collaborative marketing
- ❖ Rural pubs available, but with limited / no food provision
- ❖ Signage is weak from Cahir, Clonmel and Lismore and particularly off the M8 motorway, a critical tourist corridor linking Dublin and the SouthWest.
- ❖ Traffic speeds are dangerous for cyclists along the main roads
- ❖ Poor maintenance along parts of the Tipperary Heritage Way
- ❖ Limited activities for families, particularly children under-10;
- ❖ Limited evening/ cultural activities for young adults/ adults
- ❖ **A fragmentary approach exists to tourism by a range of operators**

### Opportunities

- ❖ Potential to develop a unique brand, with capacity to resonate key attractions to develop the area as a vibrant recreational centre.
- ❖ Service providers willing to participate and work collaboratively, with public supports.
- ❖ Packaging/ bundling of attractions & services, such as short breaks and weekends based on the range of accommodation/ activities/ walking/ trekking/ angling/ equestrian/ golf etc, with service providers and key attractions, linked to festivals and events.
- ❖ New product ideas such as *breac-Gaeltacht*, walking festivals and educational/ environmental programmes. These will need to be teased out in terms of pragmatic considerations such as personnel, accommodation base, access, insurance, training requirements and capacity to deliver.
- ❖ Both heritage facilities at Mitchelstown & Cahir Castle would like to strengthen their educational outreach programmes/ community linkages.
- ❖ Links to other outdoor recreational initiatives at regional levels, to create a Munster Borders 'Destination'
- ❖ Build on existing low level seasonal (angling, walking) & cultural events (Draóicht, Gaeltacht, Rhododendron, etc.),
- ❖ **Build partnerships among existing community and voluntary organisations, with public sector supports**

### Threats

- ❖ Sustainability of defined "Driver" to implement the Knockmealdown Mountains Recreational Strategy in a commercially sustainable fashion.
- ❖ That service providers will not rise to the challenge of collaboration and packages development (training will be required).
- ❖ Visitor trends towards short break holidays in urban areas, versus longer leisurely holidays in rural areas
- ❖ Daytrippers to Cahir Castle / Mitchelstown Caves give poor return to local economy
- ❖ Decline in the B&B sector, coupled with the perception that Fáilte Ireland grading for accommodation providers is too stringent for SME operators, which may discourage new service provider entrants.

**>> More integration and less fragmentation is required, at all levels**

While the recreational base is largely in place, the existing fragmentation of products and services must be overcome. Activity will focus on developing a partnership approach to walking/hiking, angling, culture and heritage, adventure sports and ancillary supporting services, within an environmentally sustainable framework.

This can be 'driven' through the facilitation of the Muintir na Tíre's offer of a part-time project Officer, supported by the community and the existing Tipperary Rural Recreation Officer, within the framework of a Knockmealdown Mountains Partnership approach.

The feasibility study, through the consultation and discussions, has aimed to develop a workable Recreational Strategy, largely based on existing human and financial resources. The key

elements (Triangles 1, 2) can be delivered for €162,000, which with an additional Communications budget of €34,500 would cost less than **€200,000**, over 3-5 years. If a more ambitious target is set, to include a more regional approach (Triangle 3) and large capital item, would bring the total cost to **€376,500**.

The authors are extremely impressed with the level of commitment shown by all stakeholders, community, public and private, which will ensure that the recreational strategy has an excellent chance of delivery.

## 6.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- ✓ The **Knockmealdown Mountains Partnership (KMP)** be established in early 2011, encompassing interest groups from landowners, community groups, activities (walking, cycling, angling, biking, shooting, paragliding, kayaking etc), service providers (accommodation, food, pubs, transport etc) and key public agencies (STDC, STTC, South Tipp CoCo, Coillte, Inland Fisheries, NPWS, etc), training agencies (Fás, VEC) and community employment schemes.
- ✓ KMP to be facilitated by a part-time Muintir na Tíre Project Officer, supported by community leaders and the *Rural Recreation Officer* of the South Tipperary Development Company;
- ✓ Establish a private company limited by guarantee in order to have a legal entity to procure funding. Establish a bank account and obtain tax clearance from Revenue. Early actions to be financed through the conduit of the South Tipperary Tourism Company, until the private company limited by guarantee is established.
- ✓ Working groups be established as recommended in the Strategy to address specific tasks and goals; training supports to be provided to the leaders of those groups.
- ✓ Internal & external Communications & Marketing Plan enacted through 2011-2015
- ✓ Funding applications be placed with STDC and other public funding agencies, including Fás, VEC, County Enterprise Board, Fáilte Ireland, etc, as applies;
- ✓ Focus on early building of network, to deliver 'soft' capacity, with subsequent focus on new products and services as set out in the Action Plan;
- ✓ An early facilitated branding exercise, '*Knockmealdowns Active!*' or some such brand, should be agreed and a marketing and promotional campaign delivered as recommended in the Communications & Marketing Plan contained herein;
- ✓ New products & services to be developed through the KMD Action Plan 2011/2012,
- ✓ Ongoing building of regional alliances to commence early building of a 'Munster Mountains' or 'Munster Border' recreational destination of excellence.
- ✓ Monitoring & evaluation (M&E) be carried out annually to provide benchmarking and sense of achievement.

## **7.0 CLOSURE**

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Ireland with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of the Client; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

SLR disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.



## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A**

### **Map 5 – Recreational Infrastructure : Knockmealdown Mountains**

## **Appendix B**

### **List of Consultees**

| Name                                     | Location/ Organisation                                                    | Contact N°                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Isabel Cambie                            | South Tipp Development Company                                            | <a href="mailto:isabel@stdc.ie">isabel@stdc.ie</a>                                                                                          |
| Con Ryan                                 | South Tipp DC – Rural Recreation Officer                                  | <a href="mailto:con@gleann.net">con@gleann.net</a>                                                                                          |
| Eileen Horgan                            | South Tipperary Tourism Company                                           | South Tipp Co Co                                                                                                                            |
| Kevin & Bernadette O'Donnell             | 052 6136231<br><a href="mailto:info@kilmaneen.com">info@kilmaneen.com</a> | Farm Farmhouse/ Organic Garden                                                                                                              |
| John English                             | Mitchelstown Caves                                                        | 052 7467246                                                                                                                                 |
| Séan Breen                               | NPWS Ranger, South Tipp/ East Cork                                        | 087 2646441                                                                                                                                 |
| Mary O'Brien<br>Liam Cleary<br>Dan Lynch | Coillte Regional Manager<br>Coillte – South Tipp<br>Coillte - South Tipp  | 021-4307978 / 087-9632820<br><a href="mailto:mary.obrien@coillte.ie">mary.obrien@coillte.ie</a><br>LC/DL @ Kick-off meeting                 |
| John O'Neill                             | Lambert Coach Hire, Ardfinnan                                             | 052 7466215                                                                                                                                 |
| Mark Rylands                             | Resident, Goatenbridge area<br>Member ABNG Gun Club                       | 086 8119571                                                                                                                                 |
| Liam & Patsy Roche                       | Tinsley House B&B, Cahir<br>Chair of Angling Committee<br>Walker/Guide    | 052 7441947<br><a href="http://www.tinsleyhouse.com">www.tinsleyhouse.com</a>                                                               |
| Marjorie Flynn<br>Marian O'Dwyer         | ICA & Muintir na Tire, Newcastle                                          | 087 7592564<br>087 1254882                                                                                                                  |
| PJ English                               | Clogheen Tidy Towns – Fruit & Veg supplier/ shop                          |                                                                                                                                             |
| Suzanne Campion                          | Inland Fisheries Ireland (SE region, Clonmel)                             | 052 612 3624/ 087 2690183<br><a href="mailto:Suzanne.campion@fisheriesireland.ie">Suzanne.campion@fisheriesireland.ie</a>                   |
| David McInerney                          | Inland Fisheries Ireland (Director, Clonmel)                              | 087 205 4910                                                                                                                                |
| Daithi de Forge                          | Coillte                                                                   |                                                                                                                                             |
| Georgina Ferguson                        | B&B two Rivers                                                            | 052 74 65499<br><a href="mailto:Gina2rivers@eircom.net">Gina2rivers@eircom.net</a>                                                          |
| Mattie Lonergan                          | Goatenbridge                                                              | 087 6497083                                                                                                                                 |
| Joan Butler                              | Glenview Lounge, Goatenbridge                                             | 052 7466450                                                                                                                                 |
| John O'Mahoney                           | Cycle Hire, Ardfinnan                                                     | 052 7466112<br><a href="mailto:Mahoneybike1@eircom.net">Mahoneybike1@eircom.net</a>                                                         |
| Gerry O'Mahoney                          | Musician Ardfinnan                                                        | 087 7756 834                                                                                                                                |
| Mike Allen                               | Fiddle Maker/ Walker                                                      | 052 7466979<br><a href="mailto:jusetto@live.co.uk">jusetto@live.co.uk</a><br><a href="mailto:mikeallen@eircom.net">mikeallen@eircom.net</a> |
| Cariona Neary                            | Faite Ireland Advisor of Walking Hubs<br>Recreational Walker              | 086 805 6669                                                                                                                                |
| Padraig Casey                            | Ballyhoura Development                                                    | 063 91747                                                                                                                                   |
| Bernard Lennon<br>Nuala                  | PEAKS Walking Club                                                        | 086 2937220<br><a href="mailto:blennon@eircom.net">blennon@eircom.net</a><br><a href="http://www.peakscionmel.ie">www.peakscionmel.ie</a>   |
| Johnny Brunnock                          | Waterford Co Co – Community Services                                      | 058 21169                                                                                                                                   |
| Eleanor Morrissey                        | Manager Cahir Castle                                                      | OPW Supervisor, <b>Cahir Castle</b>                                                                                                         |
| Catherine Long                           | Ballyhoura Bears/ local resident                                          | 052 7466115<br><a href="mailto:Catherine.lng@gmail.com">Catherine.lng@gmail.com</a>                                                         |
| Lily O'Neill                             | B&B Goatenbridge                                                          | 052 7466113                                                                                                                                 |
| Greg Kenny                               | Near Knocklofty Hill, Old Grange                                          | 052 6138347                                                                                                                                 |

| Name                                                   | Location/ Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Contact N°                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sinead Carr</b><br><b>South Tipp County Council</b> | Sinead Carr, Director of Services,<br><i>Planning Community &amp; Enterprise</i><br>Sonja Reidy <i>Senior Exec Planner</i><br>Michael Lynch <i>Senior Exec Planner</i><br>Jim O'Mahony <i>Senior Planner</i><br>Eileen Horgan, Comm & Enterprise/<br>South Tipp Tourism Company | 086 7998889<br><a href="mailto:sinead.carr@southtipperarycoco.ie">sinead.carr@southtipperarycoco.ie</a> |
| <b>Eimer Murphy</b>                                    | Ryans Trad Pub                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 087 171 4456                                                                                            |
| <b>Mattie Magrath TD</b>                               | TD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 087 818 4307                                                                                            |
| <b>Dick and Ann Keating</b>                            | Bay Lough Cheese Clogheen,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 054 7465275                                                                                             |
| <b>Triona McGrath</b>                                  | Newcastle, Sec Tidy Towns                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 052 6136352                                                                                             |
| <b>Pat Whelan</b>                                      | Tipperary Food Producers Network                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 087 2433100<br><a href="mailto:pat@jameswhelanbutchers.com">pat@jameswhelanbutchers.com</a>             |
| <b>Declan/Breda Brennan</b>                            | The Hermitage, Clogheen. B&B and Restaurant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 052 7465876                                                                                             |
| <b>Kathleen Noonan ,</b>                               | Parsons Green Open Farm, Clogheen,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 052 65290 <a href="mailto:office@clogheen.com">office@clogheen.com</a>                                  |
| <b>Eimear Whittle</b>                                  | Failte Ireland South East,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 086 6000650<br><a href="mailto:eimear.whittle@failteireland.ie">eimear.whittle@failteireland.ie</a>     |
| <b>Ned O'Connor</b>                                    | County Manager South Tipperary County Council                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | meeting                                                                                                 |
| <b>Gary Breen</b>                                      | Failte Ireland, Regional Tourism Manager, SE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | M: 086 2253431                                                                                          |
| <b>Georgina Ferguson</b>                               | Two Rivers B&B, Clogheen.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 0527465499                                                                                              |
| <b>Peter Ward</b>                                      | Tipp Food Producers Network/ Country Choice, Nenagh                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | M: 087 7931113                                                                                          |
| <b>Dermot Gannon,</b>                                  | Old Convent, Clogheen.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 0877431886. 052 7465565<br><a href="mailto:info@theoldconvent.ie">info@theoldconvent.ie</a>             |
| <b>Ann Kingston</b>                                    | Tourism Advisor, Clonmel Tourist Office, The Main Guard                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 052 6122960                                                                                             |
| <b>John McKenna</b>                                    | Editor Bridgestone Guide                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Email: <a href="mailto:estragon@eircom.net">estragon@eircom.net</a>                                     |
| <b>Liam Kelly</b>                                      | Muintir na Tíre                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <a href="mailto:lkelly@muintir.ie">lkelly@muintir.ie</a>                                                |
| <b>Philly Ryan</b>                                     | Muintir na Tíre – Celtic Community Link (S. Tipp)                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <a href="mailto:PRyan@muintir.ie">PRyan@muintir.ie</a>                                                  |
| <b>Julie O'Halloran</b>                                | Muintir na Tíre – Celtic Community Link (Waterford)                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <a href="mailto:johalloran@muintir.ie">johalloran@muintir.ie</a>                                        |
| <b>Seamus Butler</b>                                   | ABNG Gun Club <a href="mailto:sebutler@iol.ie">sebutler@iol.ie</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 052 7466383/ 0879049280                                                                                 |

## **Appendix C**

### **Attendees at Consultative Forums**

- 1. Goatenbridge 9/12/10**
- 2. Newcastle 31/01/11**



## Knockmealdowns Recreational Strategy

### Consultative Meeting 1 – ‘Knockmealdowns Active’

7pm, 9 December 2010, Glenview Lounge, Goatenbridge

Y = Participants Attended 9/12/10 -

N = Participants Invited– Not Attend

|    |                      |   |                                                                                                                           |                              |
|----|----------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1  | Kevin O'Donnell      | Y | <a href="mailto:info@kilmaneen.com">info@kilmaneen.com</a>                                                                | 052 613 6231                 |
| 2  | Bernadette O'Donnell | Y | Kilmaneen Farmhouse <a href="mailto:kilmaneen@eircom.net">kilmaneen@eircom.net</a>                                        | 052 613 6231                 |
| 3  | Marjorie O'Flynn     | Y | <a href="mailto:marj.o.flynn@gmail.com">marj.o.flynn@gmail.com</a>                                                        |                              |
| 4  | Marion O'Dwyer       | Y | <a href="mailto:marbodwyer@eircom.net">marbodwyer@eircom.net</a>                                                          | 087 1254882                  |
| 5  | John O'Mahoney       | Y | <a href="mailto:mahoneybike1@eircom.net">mahoneybike1@eircom.net</a>                                                      | 086 8762525                  |
| 6  | Liam Kelly           | Y | Tipp Muintir - <a href="mailto:lkelly@muintir.ie">lkelly@muintir.ie</a>                                                   | 086 6000751                  |
| 7  | Philly Ryan          | Y | Celtic Community Link /Muintir<br><a href="mailto:pryan@muintir.ie">pryan@muintir.ie</a>                                  | 087 6270661                  |
| 8  | Julie OHalloran      | Y | Ballycumber Muintir <a href="mailto:j.ohalloran@muintir.ie">j.ohalloran@muintir.ie</a>                                    | 087 6369146                  |
| 9  | Georgina Ferguson    | Y | Two Rivers <a href="mailto:_gina2rivers@eircom.net">_gina2rivers@eircom.net</a>                                           |                              |
| 10 | Mark Rylands         | Y | Kildanoge, Ardfinnan <a href="mailto:clashlee@eircom.net">clashlee@eircom.net</a>                                         | 086 811 9571                 |
| 11 | PJ English           | Y | Clogheen Tidy Towns <a href="mailto:p.jenglish@hotmail.com">p.jenglish@hotmail.com</a>                                    | 087 7984929                  |
| 12 | Martha Beardmore     | Y | Sec PEAKS, Knocklofty<br><a href="mailto:mpbeardsmore@eircom.net">mpbeardsmore@eircom.net</a>                             | 087 9107201                  |
| 13 | Con Ryan             | Y | Rural Recreation Officer <a href="mailto:con@gleann.net">con@gleann.net</a>                                               |                              |
| 14 | Isabel Cambie        | Y | Manager STDC <a href="mailto:isabel@stdc.ie">isabel@stdc.ie</a>                                                           | 087 2219817                  |
| 15 | Eileen Horgan        | Y | <a href="mailto:eileen.horgan@southtippcoco.ie">eileen.horgan@southtippcoco.ie</a>                                        | 052 61 34822                 |
| 16 | Margo Kelly          | Y | PEAKS <a href="mailto:margo.ky@gmail.com">margo.ky@gmail.com</a>                                                          | 087 2541397                  |
| 17 | David McInerney      | Y | Inland Fisheries, Clonmel<br><a href="mailto:david.mcinerney@fisheriesireland.ie">david.mcinerney@fisheriesireland.ie</a> | 052 61880055                 |
| 18 | Dick O'Donnell       | Y | Clogheen                                                                                                                  | 087 1496078<br>or(1486078??) |
| 19 | Mary O'Brien         | Y | Coillte Reg Recreational Officer<br><a href="mailto:mary.obrien@coillte.ie">mary.obrien@coillte.ie</a>                    | 087 9632820                  |
| 20 | Alan Cullagh         | Y | Anglesea St, Clonmel                                                                                                      |                              |
| 21 | Michael Sullivan     | Y | Granges, Clogheen                                                                                                         | 086 8210172                  |
| 22 | ??Karl Sullivan ??   | Y | Grange, Clogheen (??) – can't read writing                                                                                |                              |

|    |                        |   |                                                                                                                  |                              |
|----|------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 23 | Philip Walsh           | Y | Kildonogue Ardfinnan                                                                                             |                              |
| 24 | Paul Butler            | Y | Hymenstown, Cashel                                                                                               |                              |
| 25 | Douglas (?) Butler     | Y | Hymenstown, Cashel                                                                                               |                              |
| 26 | Michael Phelan         | Y | Monksgrange                                                                                                      |                              |
| 27 | Nora Phelan            | Y | Monksgrange <a href="mailto:nphelan@eircom.net">nphelan@eircom.net</a>                                           | 086 8389619                  |
| 28 | Patrick O'Sullivan     | Y | Ardfinnan                                                                                                        |                              |
| 29 | Seamus Butler          | Y | Ardfinnan Gun Club <a href="mailto:sebutler@iol.ie">sebutler@iol.ie</a>                                          | 052 7466383/<br>0879049280   |
| 30 | John Butler            | Y | ST CoCo.                                                                                                         | 087 2600795                  |
| 31 | Catherine Long         | Y | Ballyhoura Bears/ Ballylaffin, Ardfinnan<br><a href="mailto:catherine.lng@gmail.com">catherine.lng@gmail.com</a> | 086 831 6583                 |
| 32 | Catherine McCarra      | Y | Newcastle, <a href="mailto:catherinemccarra@gmail.com">catherinemccarra@gmail.com</a>                            | 087 9817091                  |
| 33 | Martin Lonergan        | Y | Working at Glenview...                                                                                           |                              |
| 34 | Joan Butler HOST       | Y | Glenview Lounge, Goatenbridge                                                                                    | 052 7466450                  |
| 35 | Liam Roche             | N | Angling excellence: <a href="mailto:info@tinsleyhouse.com">info@tinsleyhouse.com</a>                             | <i>Apologies sent</i>        |
| 36 | Dermot Gannon          | N | The Old Convent Clogheen<br><a href="mailto:info@theoldconvent.ie">info@theoldconvent.ie</a>                     | 087 7431886/<br>054 7465 275 |
| 37 | PJ & Kathleen Noonan   | N | Parsons Green <a href="mailto:office@clogheen.com">office@clogheen.com</a>                                       | 086 250 4283                 |
| 38 | Pat Whelan             | N | Craft Butcher - <a href="mailto:pat@jameswhelanbutchers.com">pat@jameswhelanbutchers.com</a>                     |                              |
| 39 | Gerry O'Mahoney        | N | 087 7756834                                                                                                      |                              |
| 40 | Des Dillon             | N | Artist                                                                                                           | 086 0813555                  |
| 41 | Triona Casey/ McGrath  | N | Newcastle Tidy Towns 052 6136352                                                                                 | 087 9525770                  |
| 42 | Dick & Ann Keating     | N | Bay Lough Cheese                                                                                                 | 054 7465275                  |
| 43 | Declan & Breda Brennan | N | The Hermitage, Clogheen - <i>no reply</i>                                                                        | 052 74 65876                 |
| 44 | Laurence McCarra       | N | Bus hire                                                                                                         | 087 202 0613                 |
| 45 | Eimer Whittle          | N | SE Faighte Ireland<br><a href="mailto:eimear.whittle@faighteireland.ie">eimear.whittle@faighteireland.ie</a>     | <i>Apologies sent</i>        |
| 46 | Dan Lynch              | N | Coillte <a href="mailto:dan.lynch@coillte.ie">dan.lynch@coillte.ie</a>                                           | <i>Apologies sent</i>        |
| 47 | Liam Cleary            | N | Coillte <a href="mailto:liam.cleary@coillte.ie">liam.cleary@coillte.ie</a>                                       | <i>Apologies sent</i>        |
| 48 | Sean Breen             | N | NPWS Ranger                                                                                                      | 087 264 6441                 |

|    |                    |   |                                                                                         |                                      |
|----|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 49 | Suzanne Campion    | N | Inland Fisheries Board 052 612 3624 /                                                   | 087 269 0183                         |
| 50 | Eleanor Morrissey  | N | Cahir Castle                                                                            |                                      |
| 51 | John English       | N | Mitchelstown Caves                                                                      |                                      |
| 52 | Mattie McGrath TD  | N | <a href="mailto:mattie.mcgrath@oireachtas.ie">mattie.mcgrath@oireachtas.ie</a>          | <i>Apologies sent</i>                |
| 53 | John & Breda Moran | N | Ballyhoy B&B Clogheen – Gardens                                                         | 087 6360296                          |
| 54 | Tony Musiol        | N | Chair – South Tipp Tourism                                                              | <i>Apologies sent</i>                |
| 55 | Greg Kenny         | N | On hols – kayak, walk, cycle, PE Teacher                                                | <i>Apologies sent</i>                |
| 56 | Mike Allen         | N | Violin Maker - <a href="mailto:jusetto@live.co.uk">jusetto@live.co.uk</a> /             | 052 74 66979                         |
| 57 | Bernard Lennon     | N | PEAKS Mountaineering Club<br><a href="mailto:blennon@eircom.net">blennon@eircom.net</a> | 086 2937220<br><i>Apologies sent</i> |
| 58 | Eimer Murphy       | N | Ryans Pub leasee                                                                        |                                      |

|                                                                                   |                   |                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |                   | <b>KNOCKMEALDOWNS RECREATIONAL STRATEGY</b>                   |
|                                                                                   | <b>EVENT</b>      | <b>CONSULTATIVE FORUM 2</b>                                   |
|                                                                                   | <b>Date/ Time</b> | <b>7.00pm 31 January 2011</b>                                 |
|                                                                                   | <b>Location</b>   | <b>Newcastle Muintir na Tire Community Hall, Co Tipperary</b> |

|    | <b>NAME</b>        | <b>Address</b>                           | <b>Phone / mobile</b>     | <b>Email</b>                               |
|----|--------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Maurice O'Dwyer    | Gorrancurry, Newcastle, Clonmel          | <b><u>087-1254882</u></b> | <b><u>marbodwyer@eircom.net</u></b>        |
| 2  | Kevin O'Donnell    | Kilmaneen                                | <b><u>086 3541700</u></b> | <b><u>kilmaneen@eircom.net</u></b>         |
| 3  | Mary O'Brien       | Coillte, Kinvara Hse, Dublin Hill, Cork. | <b><u>087 9632820</u></b> | <b><u>mary.obrien@coillte.ie</u></b>       |
| 4  | Edward Condon      | Limecourt, Clonmel                       | <b><u>087 2578279</u></b> | <b><u>edwcondon@gmail.com</u></b>          |
| 5  | Christy Maher      | Shanrahan, Clogheen.                     | <b><u>086 2761360</u></b> | <b><u>maherchristy@yahoo.ie</u></b>        |
| 6  | Maurice MacNamara  | Ardfinnan                                | <b><u>086 8220711</u></b> | <b><u>mauricemacnamara1@eircom.net</u></b> |
| 7  | Michael Tobin      | Duella Road, Cashel.                     | <b>086 8586625</b>        |                                            |
| 8  | Michael Desmond    | Deerpark, Ballymaearby                   | <b>087 7539276</b>        | <b>comeragh2@gmail.com</b>                 |
| 9  | Seamus Butler      | Marlhill, Ardfinann.                     | <b>087 9049280</b>        | <b>sebutler@iol.ie</b>                     |
| 10 | Breda Brennan      | The Hermitage, Clogheen                  | <b>087 2494184</b>        | <b>brebrennan@eircom.net</b>               |
| 11 | Cllr. Marie Murphy | Kilballyboy, Clogheen                    | <b>086 8261387</b>        | <b>cllrmarie.murphy@southtippcoco.ie</b>   |
| 12 | Martin Lonegan     | Goatenbridge                             | <b>087 6497083</b>        | <b>murtylonegan@eircom.net</b>             |

|     |                     |                                        |                     |                                                                              |
|-----|---------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13  | Eimear Whittle      | Waterford.                             | <b>086 6000650</b>  | <b>eimear.whittle@failteireland.ie</b>                                       |
| 14  | Breda Lonergan-Ryan | Newcastle                              | <b>087 9957563</b>  | <b>bredalryan@gmail.com</b>                                                  |
| 15  | Jim Wilson          | Deerpark, Lismore                      | <b>087 2538143</b>  | <a href="mailto:jswilson@eircom.net">jswilson@eircom.net</a>                 |
| 16. | Eddie Mason         | Ballyvera                              | <b>087 9418843</b>  | <a href="mailto:Mason.eddie@126.com">Mason.eddie@126.com</a>                 |
| 17. | Tony Musiol         | South Tipperary Tourism Company        | <b>087 2483052</b>  | <a href="mailto:tonymusiol@gmail.com">tonymusiol@gmail.com</a>               |
| 18. | Helen Nugent        | Ardfinnan Community Council            | <b>052 7466923</b>  | <a href="mailto:helencnugent@gmail.com">helencnugent@gmail.com</a>           |
| 19. | Greg Kenny          | Grange                                 | <b>086 8244752</b>  |                                                                              |
| 20. | John Hogan          | Ballyduff                              | <b>086 3684542</b>  | <a href="mailto:watertankhouse06@eircom.net">watertankhouse06@eircom.net</a> |
| 21. | Philip Ryan         | Celtic Community Link/ Muintir na Tíre | <b>086 6064883</b>  | <a href="mailto:pryan@muintir.ie">pryan@muintir.ie</a>                       |
| 22. | Francis Carrigan    | Ardfinnan, Clonmel.                    | <b>086 2345745</b>  |                                                                              |
| 23. | Isabel Cambie       | STDC                                   | <b>087 2219818</b>  | <a href="mailto:Isabel@stdc.ie">Isabel@stdc.ie</a>                           |
| 24  | Con Ryan            | Rural Recreation officer               | <b>087 055 6465</b> | <a href="mailto:con@gleann.net">con@gleann.net</a>                           |
| 25. | Gerard Walsh        | Ballysaggart, Com. Dev. Group          | <b>058 54676</b>    | <a href="mailto:Walsh.gerry@hotmail.com">Walsh.gerry@hotmail.com</a>         |
| 26. | Matthew McGrath     | TD                                     |                     | <a href="mailto:mattie@oireachtas.ie">mattie@oireachtas.ie</a>               |
| 27. | Kevin Roche         | Ballysaggart, Com. Dev. Group          | <b>058 54155</b>    |                                                                              |
| 28. | John Marsh          | Goatenbridge, Ardfinnan                | <b>086 8070710</b>  |                                                                              |
| 29  | Liam Kelly          | Muintir Na Tir                         | <b>086 6000751</b>  | <a href="mailto:lkelly@muintir.ie">lkelly@muintir.ie</a>                     |

|    |                   |                                  |                                               |                                                                                    |
|----|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 30 | Caitriona Murphy  | Freelance journalist/ Equestrian | <b>085 7192155</b><br><b>Tel: 052 7445347</b> | <a href="mailto:Caitrionamurphy1@gmail.com">Caitrionamurphy1@gmail.com</a>         |
| 31 | Catherine McCarra | Newcastle                        | <b>087 9817091</b>                            | <a href="mailto:catherinemccarra@gmail.com">catherinemccarra@gmail.com</a>         |
| 32 | Kathleen Noonan   | Parsons Green                    |                                               | <a href="mailto:Kathleen.noonan@eircom.net">Kathleen.noonan@eircom.net</a>         |
| 33 | John O'Mahoney    | Ardfinnan                        | <b>086 8762525</b>                            | <a href="mailto:mahoneybike1@eircom.net">mahoneybike1@eircom.net</a>               |
| 34 | Tony              | Ardfinnan                        |                                               | c/o John O'Mahoney                                                                 |
| 35 | Marian O'Dwyer    | Newcastle Muintir/ ICA           | <b>087 1254882</b>                            | <a href="mailto:marbodwyer@eircom.net">marbodwyer@eircom.net</a>                   |
| 36 | Mark Rylands      | Kildanoge, Ardfinnan             | <b>086 811 9571</b>                           | <a href="mailto:clashlee@eircom.net">clashlee@eircom.net</a>                       |
| 37 | Eileen Horgan     | South Tipp County Council        |                                               | <a href="mailto:eileen.horgan@southtippcoco.ie">eileen.horgan@southtippcoco.ie</a> |

**View from Knockmealdown Mountain, looking north toward Sugarloaf**

**Co. Tipperary**

**May 2010**

