

## The Belfast Hills Partnership



## Belfast Hills Recreation Development Plan Oct 2010



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## BELFAST HILLS RECREATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Recreation Audit of the Belfast Hills was carried out by Belfast Hills Partnership staff in 2009 to find out exactly what recreational activities were taking place in the area. Linked with this were visitor surveys carried out on sites at Divis and Cave Hill. Both of these revealed a strong demand for recreation in the hills, but a lack of any planned or strategic approach to developing facilities or opportunities for most forms of recreation in the Belfast Hills.

In an effort to address this, the Partnership has compiled a 2010 Recreation Development Plan which sets out the results of the above reports, the strategic context within which the Belfast Hills and the Partnership works and the objectives and aims for developing recreation strategically. Those recreational activities existing within the hills were rated against key criteria such as estimated size of market, environmental and economic impacts and whether the hills were best suited to such activities. On this basis six recreation activities were identified as suitable for active development, namely:-

- Walking
- Road Cycling
- Orienteering
- Geocaching
- Fell Running
- Organised Pitch Sports

Belfast Hills Partnership will actively promote and develop these activities but will also support other activities in partnership with other bodies provided they have no negative impact on the Belfast Hills.

A programme of work is set out to promote and develop these activities and the potential partners required to execute this programme and meet the aims of our Recreation Plan are identified.

## Introduction

Outdoor recreation activities are characterised by their use of and access to the natural resource. Each year, some 1.5 billion day visits are made to the UK countryside and seaside, and 2.5 billion day visits are made to urban parks (statistics taken from the CRN report “A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing”). Outdoor recreation is therefore a major rural industry with an increasingly important role in sustaining rural areas and landscapes. The Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) is a body that was set up in 2005 to take a hills-wide perspective and to develop a coordinated vision for various activities that occur in the Belfast Hills, including recreation. Situated to the west and north of the Belfast conurbation, the Belfast Hills is a site for access and recreation for a local population of up to 600,000 people, roughly a third of the Northern Ireland population.

In keeping with the Belfast Hills Access Code, the primary purpose of a Belfast Hills Recreation Development Plan is to ensure that Outdoor Recreation takes place in a sustainable way so as not to damage the resource upon which these activities rely. This Development Plan closely aligns with the NI Countryside Recreation Strategy<sup>1</sup> and its implementation will meet targets adopted in the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport & Physical Recreation 2009-2019<sup>2</sup>.

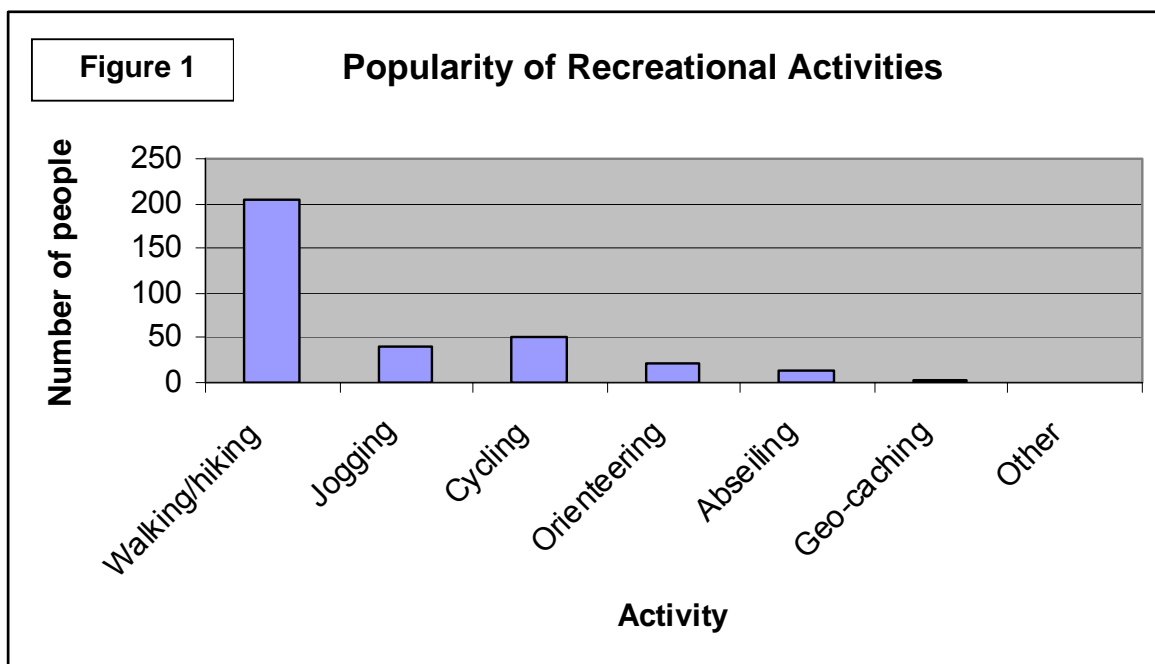
There are other reasons why a development plan is desirable including:

- To strategically manage Recreation and access within the Belfast Hills
- To outline BHP policy on Recreation and its development
- To develop awareness of Recreation opportunities within the Belfast Hills
- To describe needs and opportunities, shared objectives and actions
- To develop partnerships between interested parties and through these optimise skills, knowledge and available resources
- To provide a reference document for future development of the Belfast Hills
- To recognise the importance of Recreation development as an intrinsic part of the visitor and tourism product of the Belfast Hills
- To raise awareness of the role of Outdoor Recreation as a means of improving the health of residents in the Belfast Hills and surrounding areas
- To act as a bidding document for potential funding.

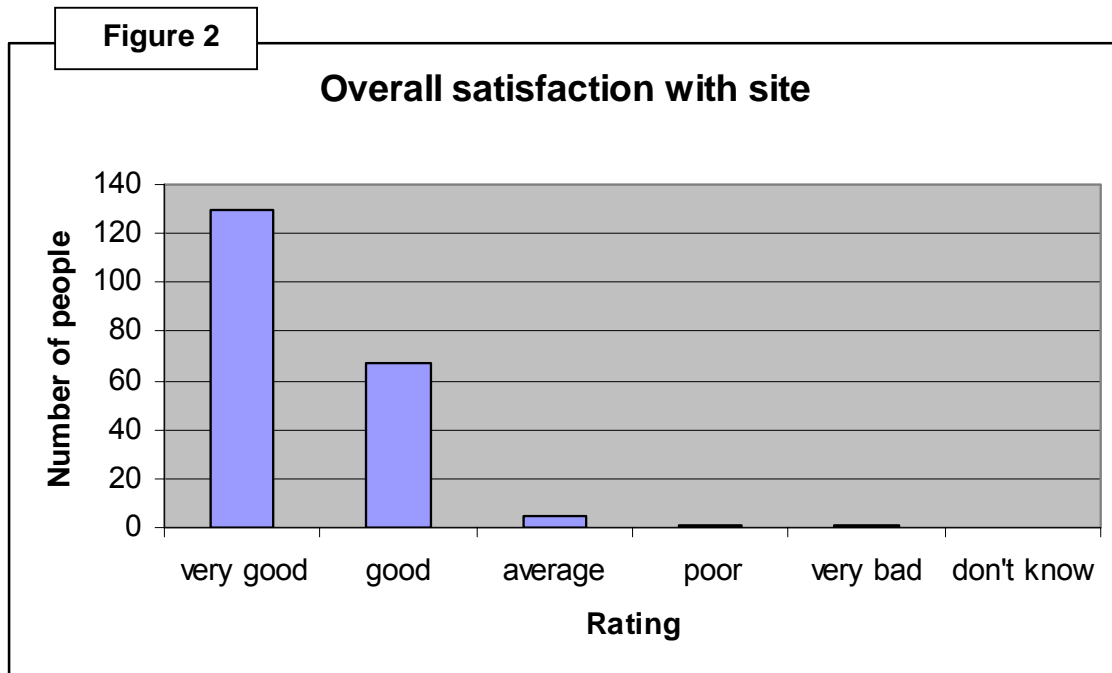
## Current Status

In summer 2009 the BHP carried out a questionnaire with 204 visitors to Divis Mountain and Cave Hill Country Park, two key areas for recreation in the Belfast Hills (Appendix 1). It should be acknowledged that the questionnaire is not without its limitations e.g. it was carried out on sites where the main users would naturally be walkers due to current restrictions in provision of other recreational activities. Nevertheless this presented us with a great opportunity to explore the recreation needs of existing Belfast hills users.

The majority of people when questioned regarding what activities they would like to do within the Belfast Hills stated Walking/Hiking (204 people). The next most popular activity listed was Cycling (51 people) followed by Jogging (40 people), Orienteering (14 people), Geocaching (4 people), while listed as 'other potential activities' was Motor Biking (1 person). See figure 1.



Overall satisfaction with the sites was a resounding ‘very good’ or ‘good’ from these recreational users. However when asked about any improvements that they would make to the sites a number of suggestions were given. The most common suggestions were relating to signage – both directing people to the site, and signage once on the site, showing trails and information relating to the site. Various infrastructure improvements were also suggested



including more bins, seats and toilets. Path improvement and more paths, including paths for bikes were also desired. These needs must be addressed to improve the recreational facilities for visitors in the Belfast Hills.

## Strategic context and partners

Information was requested from the following organisations for their position & long term plans relevant to the Belfast Hills.

- Belfast City Council (BCC)
- Lisburn City Council (LCC)
- Newtownabbey Borough Council (NBC)
- Antrim Borough Council (ABC)
- NI Countryside Recreation Strategy
- Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN)
- The National Trust (NT)

## **BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

### **Belfast City Council Countryside Recreation Strategy<sup>3</sup>**

N.B. Info provided from the draft BCC Countryside Recreation Strategy

- Investigate access to public places in the Belfast Hills in partnership with local landowners
- Establish walking links from West Belfast, North Belfast and Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park to the Belfast Hills
- Develop a walking route across the Belfast Hills which will in the long term form part of the Ulster Way

### **Belfast City Council Open Space Strategy<sup>4</sup>**

Connecting open space was highlighted as important.

- Cavehill to Belfast Lough
- Belfast Hills to City Centre

For Country Parks the following needs were identified:

- develop management plans, including issues such as signs, historic features, cultural events, public information and habitat management
- improve links to surrounding environmental resources
- tackle antisocial behaviour in Cavehill Country Park

## **LISBURN CITY COUNCIL**

Leisure Services Departmental Strategy 2006-2009<sup>5</sup> (rolled over)

- Countryside Purpose:

To work in partnership with relevant agencies to support countryside initiatives including the promotion of public access

- Section objective:

To encourage and promote the use and enjoyment of the countryside

Whilst the Council does not own any land in the Belfast Hills it liaises closely with the organisations in the Lisburn area that provide public access, namely Colin Glen Trust, Ulster Wildlife Trust and The National Trust.

## **ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **'Active Antrim' : 2020 Vision, Recreation Strategy<sup>6</sup>**

- Antrim Borough boasts significant natural assets including Lough Neagh, Belfast Hills, Crumlin Glen, Six Mile Water River and Ram's Island. Considerable progress has been achieved in recent years in opening up these assets to the public and creating greater awareness of what our countryside has to offer.
- The Council is committed to continue engaging with our community and stakeholder groups. This joined up thinking will help the Council move forward with the delivery of the Strategy in a way that best meets the needs of our community.

## **NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

- Newtownabbey Council actively promotes walking and outlines the associated health and wellbeing associated benefits of walking, for instance on the Council website
- A link to both the Belfast Hills Walking Map and Guide and the Woodland Trust's website is provided, encouraging people to walk in Carnmoney Hill and beyond (NBC, 2010)
- Newtownabbey Borough council has invested substantially and proactively in the purchase and management of areas for outdoor access and recreation, particularly at Carnmoney Hill. Further opportunities to expand on this depend on the results of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015 enquiry which may result in development in lower areas of the hill in exchange for upper areas of the hill being given over to the Council for recreational purposes.

## **NI COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION STRATEGY<sup>1</sup>**

This was formulated in 1998 and was reviewed in June 2009. This review made several recommendations. Although the 1998 Strategy is still applicable, two of the main recommendations are relevant to this document:-

- *There is a clear lack of 'recreation demand' data and related research to provide justification for policies, programmes and investments. This should be addressed to allow proper and considered arguments and decisions to be made.*
- *There is a need to continue to identify and develop research to develop a sound evidence base for subsequent progress on a new Outdoor Recreation Strategy.*

The vision of the 1998 Strategy was: “To develop and sustain a vibrant countryside recreation culture in which responsible and well informed people enjoy high quality, sustainable and appropriate activities in an accessible, well managed yet challenging environment; where landowners and managers are welcoming and there are accompanying benefits to local communities both in social and economic terms.”

There were three principles underpinning this vision:

- Mutual respect between all interested parties
- Sustainable access
- Quality of the experience.

The Countryside Access and Activity Network (CAAN) was established as a result of the 1998 strategy.

### **COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND ACTIVITIES NETWORK (CAAN)**

- The CAAN vision is to ‘inspire outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland’. This is to be underpinned by mutual respect among all interested parties, sustainable access and quality of experience
- Facilitate partnerships to deliver sustainable outdoor recreation
- Develop good quality strategic long distance walking routes & way marked ways

### **THE NATIONAL TRUST**

#### **Open Countryside Document<sup>7</sup>**

- The Trust provides access to its land and provides for many activities. It aims to continue to do so. It also aims to respond, with others, to the demand for more access, in appropriate places.
- Sustainable management underpins the permanent preservation of the countryside and enables access to continue and change to be anticipated.
- Effective planning is an essential component of sustainable management. This should extend beyond Trust boundaries and be carried out in partnership with others.

## **Recreation in the Belfast Hills 2009**

An audit of recreational activities present in the Belfast Hills was carried out in 2009 within BHP. Although comprehensive at the time, BHP staff are aware that this is a rapidly changing area and therefore other activities may now also exist.

### **LAND**

#### **Walking**

By far the greatest recreation use of the Belfast Hill public sites, there are over 500,000 visits to sites for walking per annum. This has risen steadily as new sites and opportunities have arisen, but personal safety fears and safety of vehicles in car parks are issues for many.

In association with this activity are general dog walking and greyhound training. There is a set of kennels and track near Wheeler's Road. Finally, there are traditional hunting with dogs activities along the urban fringes in particular.

#### **Road Cycling**

There have been biannual versions of the motorcycle Ulster Grand Prix along a similar route. With the opening up of access to Divis and the Black Mountain, these and other cycle races have included sections up to the top of Divis and back.

#### **Orienteering**

Both Colin Glen Forest Park and Belfast Castle/Cave Hill Country Park have Ecotrail programmes with designated orienteering trails for public use (Ecotrails, 2010<sup>8</sup>). There is a strong orienteering following in the Belfast region although this is usually associated with distant sites such as the Mourne and Glens of Antrim areas. Personal safety seems to be a particular issue for this group who will often be using valuable equipment e.g. electronic control points.

Lagan Valley Orienteers are very active and have recently held events at Cave Hill and Colin Glen Forest Park. They have expressed an interest in mapping out Divis and the Black Mountain for future events.

Cave Hill, both the high open land and the forest, has been mapped and used by Lagan Valley Orienteers for club events and also for introduction events held in the spring or

autumn. The lower forested area around the Castle has an Ecotrail i.e. a permanent orienteering trail and an environmental trail.

Colin Glen Forest Park also has an Ecotrail. It has been used once for an introductory event. You can view ecotrails on the following website [www.ecotrailni.com](http://www.ecotrailni.com)<sup>8</sup>  
Most of the open area within the boundary has limited features and hence has not been considered for an orienteer map.

### **Geocaching**

A relatively new activity, there were over 30 geocaching sites in the wider Belfast Hills area rising to 63 in December 2010 (see Appendix 3). These are presently small scale with a limited but growing following. Some are off public sites and therefore present access issues, however geocachers appear to be particularly keen not to disturb sites.

### **Fell Running/Cross Country**

Regular fell running and athletic training takes place, in particular North Belfast Harriers traditionally have a long distance route across the hills.

There have been organised Fell Running Events at Cave Hill but as a minor event compared to more regular National and International events.

Most sites are also used regularly by joggers, runners and training fell runners.

### **Off-road Cycling**

Most sites show evidence of some off-road cycling, in particular mountain biking. There are numerous mentions of Cave Hill on various biking websites and good numbers of mountain bikers present most weekends of the year. This has presented concerns over conflict with pedestrian users and Belfast City Council is seeking solutions to segregate these activities.

### **Horse Riding**

Off-road horseriding and associated stabling and services are often presented as a model recreational use and farm diversification option for urban fringe areas. To date only Divis and the Black Mountain have been approached about this. An equestrian business existed until recently at the top of the Glenside Road.

Trotting horse and buggy also takes place in the Glenside/ Ballycolin/ Flow Bog Roads area.

### **Abseiling**

There have been sponsored abseiling events planned and assessed for health and safety at Cave Hill but these have all been cancelled due to insufficient uptake. Police Rescue Teams also use the site for training in abseiling.

### **Mountain Boarding**

With at least one commercial venue in the Mourne area, this has not been seen in the hills to date. No suitable areas have as yet been identified.

### **Rock-climbing**

Various bodies have suggested that the low quality of highly friable basalt rock in the hills means that rock-climbing is unfeasible at sites such as Cave Hill and various large quarries. Site visits by experts would ascertain whether this is the case.

### **Field Sports**

The entire issue of game shooting is difficult to obtain information about in the Belfast Hills. There are certainly no shoots as would have occurred at one time on Divis and the Black Mountain, Cave Hill and Colin Glen, all sites managed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for game. There have been reports of requests by hunts for landowner permissions in the western and southern end of the hills.

What might arguably be perceived as a modern version of such sports is combat simulation gaming such as paintballing, or laser/pellet games. There is a 'Laser skirmish' site operating just west of Cave Hill on the Aughnabrack Road (Tryskirmishing, 2010<sup>9</sup>).

### **Motorbike Racing**

This represents one of the most popular and visible sporting fixtures in Northern Ireland with a long history of racing based at Dundrod pits on the Hannahstown Road. It presents both an example of the size recreation events in the hills can reach, and also numerous instances of the detailed issues and solutions required, e.g. working relationships with land owners and residents, for such major recreation events. Although the race itself lasts only one week in the year visitors come throughout the year to see and drive the circuit, with informal use of the pits occurring.

## **Camping**

There are no formal campsites in the Belfast Hills, however 'illegal' camping does occur, with known cases on Divis, the Cave Hill and Carnmoney Hill.

## **Scrambling**

There are many examples of unauthorised scrambling along the urban fringe in particular, at Colin Glen, Glenside, Divis and the Black Mountain, Whiterock, Ligoniel, Cave Hill and Carnmoney Hill, although some of these may be road motorbikes being driven on pedestrian paths. There does seem to be a field close to the horseshoe bend on the upper Crumlin Road for which land owner has given permission for scrambling.

## **Quads**

These are seen regularly across public and open sites across the urban fringe and are viewed as a safety and nuisance problem. PSNI have recently been working with Belfast City Council to prevent use of quads in public parks.

## **4x4s**

Despite an awareness of interested individuals and groups in adjacent areas, we have had difficulty in identifying 4x4 recreation in the hills. We have recently been informed of both NI Land Rover Club and 4 Wheel Drive Club events in and around the northern parts of the hills. These are all organised with the permission of the landowner and event permits if required will have been issued from the MSA (Motor Sports Association)

## **Clay Pigeon shooting**

There has been a Sunday clay pigeon shoot in the Rumbling Hole quarry for many years, reportedly by the Norglen Clay Pigeon Shooting Club.

There was also a similar shoot in the Eastwood's Hannahstown Road quarry/landfill site but this appears to no longer occur.

## **Powered skateboards**

There have been occasional sightings of this on public sites throughout the hills but this seems to be on a more casual basis and at low levels.

## **AIR**

### **Kite Flying**

A number of such events, formal and informal, have been held at Divis and the Black Mountain. There are a number of good spots in the Belfast Hills for kite flying but also a number of power lines and other hazards to be avoided.

### **Hang Gliding/Paragliding**

There is a hang gliding group who claim to have ownership/ landowner permission to launch from the northern end of Divis and the Black Mountain, namely Gilbert's Hill facing towards Glencairn/north Belfast. They have sought permission from the National Trust who have concerns such as health and safety issues. This is under active consideration and a response is awaited.

### **Microlight flying**

This does occur in the Belfast Hills with some users actually supplying photos to the Partnership. None take off from or land in the hills.

## **WATER**

### **Coarse Angling**

Flooded quarries and old mill ponds at sites such as Glenside and Ligoniel are being fished for coarse fish such as perch and roach. There are no formal clubs on these sites to date although one at Ligoniel is becoming more active and may formalise soon.

### **Game Angling**

There is a certain element of unauthorised angling for trout and salmon in Colin Glen and further downstream. There continues to be good populations of these in the Colin river, hence the ongoing concerns about water quality and potential pollution along this river system.

## **Other activities**

There are more than likely other recreational activities occurring in the Belfast Hills without our knowledge. Others mentioned as occasional past activities or suggestions include skiing (Divis in the 70s and Budore in 80s), roller blading, archery, model aircraft flying and corporate games/team building activities. Zorbing potential is also being explored. Other activities occur in the Belfast Hills which may not formally be recognised as a recreational activity, these include bird watching, photography, painting and other specialist activities.

Existing activities and issues associated with them are not necessarily an indication of future activities and opportunities – new and unexpected ones are appearing regularly.

From this audit of recreational activities, discussions with users and site managers the following common issues have emerged:

## **Common Issues**

- There is a lack of services such as adequate footpaths, cafés, parking, guided walks, rural transport and other infrastructure.
- There is a need to co-ordinate recreational activities across the hills.
- There is the need to attract tourists who visit Belfast City, but never venture into the hills.
- The Belfast Hills area is not generally perceived as an activity venue or where a holiday or short break could be enhanced by activities.
- Accommodation providers should be more aware of activity opportunities and the needs of users.
- There is a general lack of comprehensive information to alert people to activity opportunities or to direct them to appropriate sites in the Belfast Hills.
- There should be more directional and information signage which would both inform and help to raise the profile of activities. This should include BHP branding.
- There is a lack of opportunity for people to “come and try” with provision being primarily orientated towards the club member or experienced participant.
- There is a relative scarcity of activity events throughout the year.
- There is a need for more opportunities for people with disabilities and special needs.

- There is a need for identification and promotion of designated sites for specific activities.
- Access to recreation opportunities is restricted for the non car user.

## **Key Aims**

The Recreation Development Plan aims to work in Partnership with others to:

- Acknowledge the needs and opportunities that exist in the Belfast Hills for countryside recreation and outdoor activity, while raising awareness of the Belfast Hills and promoting their positive image
- Promote and assist in providing access in a strategic manner to recreational activities which have a good product fit and growth potential
- Promote countryside recreation as a means of improving the health of residents and farming communities in the hills and the surrounding areas
- Improve information and interpretation services related to recreation within the Belfast Hills. Consider having signage that is bilingual.
- Improve access links across the Hills, providing connections to the City Centre, Cave Hill Country Park and the Lough Shore. Seek to influence, actively promote and facilitate the development of plans such as for the Ulster Way or a route across the whole of the Belfast Hills.
- Improve and promote recreation facilities for visitors to the Belfast Hills including tourists, the local community and people with a range of disabilities.
- Develop positive recreation use while reducing antisocial behaviour. This should be associated with economic benefit for the local community.
- Seek to ensure that the quality of the Belfast Hills' habitats, is not negatively impacted by recreational use of the hills

## Priority Recreation Activities

Recreation activities were scored by members of the BHP Recreational Subgroup which is made up of community groups, farmers, council representatives and conservation organisations. This was done in order to assess which activities the Partnership should positively develop and support. Activities were scored either positively or negatively on a scale of 1-5. Positive attributes were scored based on Health Benefits, Accessible to local community, Number of Users, Product Fit to the Belfast Hills, Growth potential, Tourism economic benefit, Image for Hills. Negative attributes were scored based on Antisocial behaviour associations, Negative Impact on other economic activities, Other Recreation conflict, Safety and Negative Environmental impact. Activities that are highlighted in red are those who received a negative score, indicating that they are deemed unsuitable by the Recreational Subgroup to occur in the Belfast Hills and should be discouraged.

Activity	Final Total	Response	
Walking	55	Actively promote and develop	
Road Cycling	46		
Orienteering	43		
Geocaching	41		
Fell Running	40		
Organised pitch sport	37		
Kite Flying	28	Actively supported by BHP	
Off-road Cycling/ mountain biking	27		
Horse Riding	23		
Abseiling	20		
Coarse Angling	17		
Mountain Boarding	16		
Combat games	15	Supported if promoted by a partner organisation	
Adventure sports	15		
Hang Gliding/ paragliding	12		
Game Angling	11		
Motorbike Racing	7		
Rock-climbing	6		
Field Sports	3		
Microlight flying	-2		Activities to be discouraged unless changes to management
Scrambling	-2		
Quads	-3		
4x4s	-4		
Clay Pigeon shooting	-4		
Powered skateboards	-25		

The results are shown above, with the activities highlighted in green scoring most highly, followed by those highlighted in yellow and orange. It was decided that the green activities (top 6) will be actively promoted and developed, the yellow activities will be actively supported by the Partnership, and the orange activities supported if promoted by a partner organisation.

It was felt important to emphasise that red activities would also be supported by the Board, but only where substantial changes had been made to the way these recreational activities were managed and carried out.

Top six activities:

1. Walking
2. Road Cycling
3. Orienteering
4. Geocaching
5. Fell Running
6. Organised pitch sports

A more detailed analysis of the top six activities to be promoted within the Belfast Hills is provided below. This specifically looks at current infrastructure, general usage and potential users, awareness and promotion of the activity within the Belfast Hills. Key developments and potential partners are also listed.

## **WALKING**

### **Infrastructure**

In 2008 there was an estimated 82 km of walking routes in public sites within the Belfast Hills of generally good if variable quality. 2009 saw the opening of the 16km walking routes from Divis Mountain to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. Use of these walking routes requires good transport, car parks, information, seating and shelter. Some erosion is present at Cave Hill, Slievenacloy and Divis due to both usage and weathering by the elements.

Some key path links within sites are still needed.

### **Usage and Markets**

There are very high numbers which are continually increasing. Three aspects of usage are the high importance of walking to the general health of the great majority of the population, the very high proportion of walkers who do so informally and the particular importance of walking as recreation for less able. This broad and highly informal usage must be borne in mind when assessing the market. There are also organised walking clubs which must be provided for. The large potential market which does not have ready access to a car needs to be catered for in terms of direct walking links and public transport.

### **Awareness and Promotion**

Compared to other local areas such as Lagan Towpath or our major parks, walkers have been less aware or willing to walk in the Belfast Hills. Nevertheless with the efforts of BHP and in particular its partners this has changed dramatically with new sites and visitors appearing all the time. New infrastructure, high numbers of leaflet maps and public events have helped greatly with this, as has word of mouth. There are ongoing issues of perceived personal safety and theft from cars or vandalism. There is also a continued clamour for a high quality walking map for the whole of the Belfast Hills with much more detail than those produced at present by BHP.

The BHP produced an access code specific to the Belfast Hills in conjunction with local farmers, community groups, council access officers and recreational users to advise people how to look after both the hills and themselves – see Appendix 2.

## **Partners**

The site managers are all heavily involved in providing and maintaining walking routes and paths as a key element of their work. While there is a high level of informal walking on these routes, there is also a wide range of walking and rambling clubs with a high proportion of long distance walkers. These are key partners in terms of marketing and feedback, as well as CAAN and its planning and promotion strengths. A strong emphasis on walking is also evident in the work of local Council Access/Recreation Officers, while community health organisations push their specific interest in the health aspects of walking.

## **Development – key directions**

Based on audits, surveys and partner needs we have identified the following aspect of development

- More footpaths and improved facilities and signage
- More access links between and within sites
- Existing and new paths designed to be sustainable and minimise environmental damage
- Quality schemes – Waymarked Ways, Walkers Welcome
- Improved detailed maps (Ordnance Survey quality map)
- Promotional materials and insertions in key NI promotional materials and websites
- More high profile events
- Ranger service looking at security and management

## **ROAD CYCLING**

### **Infrastructure**

The Belfast Hills contain a number of major and minor routes across and around all of our main hills. Many of these therefore feature a range of slopes and stretches highly suitable for casual recreational road cyclists often seen on the road at the weekend. Although the area may not be large enough to contain entire routes, it does lead on to other suitable areas to the north and west.

The main concern with infrastructure would be safety with regard to cyclists and other road users and how encouragement of road cycling could be balanced with road safety for those of varying ability and experience.

### **Usage and Markets**

The market has been characterised by a continuing increase in road bike ownership but a decrease in the proportion of road journeys by bicycle. This is usually explained by the major concerns over road safety as motor vehicle traffic has steadily increased.

A high proportion of recreational road cyclists e.g. weekend run individuals and club cyclists live in the metropolitan area and require 50-150 km routes. Some degree of slope and difficulty is actively sought in these routes, hence the potential for the hills. The proportion of individuals and clubs is not known.

There are also occasional organised time trial and road races linked with the motorbike Grand Prix route and more recently with races ending with a section across the National Trust Black Mountain property and up to the top of Divis Mountain. Some of these also have a charity fund raising aspect, with a number from starting points such as Lamh Dhearg car park.

### **Awareness and Promotion**

There are a number of clubs promoting the sport aspect of this activity; otherwise this does seem to be a fairly solitary form of recreation dependent on word of mouth for routes etc. There is also often an overlap with off-route trails e.g. Cave Hill. A large number of routes are now appearing on the internet.

### **Partners**

Cycling Ulster

Sustrans

Cyclists' Touring Club

Phoenix Cycling Club, Banbridge Cycling Club

CAAN via their cycleNI website

Road Service

### **Development – key directions and partners**

- Identification of best routes, existing and new, from discussion with clubs
- Promotion of routes and events via joint websites, reviews and press articles. A range of these exist on websites, ranging from fully described routes on major websites to those entered by individuals via GPS information after a weekend run
- Publicity leaflets/web pages/links to web route information. A general leaflet or publication highlighting the potential use of the hills and some info on main roads to use should be considered
- Road assessment, improvements & signage. This will require some input from users outlining why they prefer specific roads
- Site facilities & improvements, particularly for start and stop sites. This may not consist of a great deal more than toilets and good car parking depending on the individual or group requirements. However shop and catering facilities are also popular.

## **ORIENTEERING**

### **Infrastructure**

Permanent orienteering courses are present at Colin Glen Forest Park and Cave Hill Country Park as part of the Ecotrails NI series, and the orienteering maps are available to download from <http://www.ecotrailsni.com> (2010). Site orienteering maps have been updated in 2008 and 2009 respectively due to Lagan Valley Orienteering Clubs use of these venues as part of its "WEE series". Orienteering, particularly for beginners, needs to have a lot of permanent navigational points/features in the landscape to enable a course to be set up. Consequently the suitability of hill sites such as Divis and the Black Mountain is questionable due to its wide expanses with very few features.

For orienteering events to be run there is also a need for car parking/good transport links and ideally toilets.

## **Usage and Markets**

Orienteering is an increasingly popular sport, with Northern Ireland having its own Development Officer from the Northern Ireland Orienteering Association (NIOA) to help promote and develop the sport.

NIOA is a region of the British Orienteering Federation (BOF) and is represented on its council and sub-committees. The association is currently made up of three strategically positioned orienteering clubs. These are Fermanagh Orienteers, Lagan Valley Orienteers and the North West Orienteering Club. The NIOA is concerned with matters such as finance, fixtures, technical, mapping, coaching and international competition. The association is also in membership of the Federation of Irish Orienteering Associations. This organisation allows for co-ordination and co-operation with the Irish Orienteering Association (IOA).

Numerous outdoor activity providers and education centres also provide this service. Generally this sport is carried out as part of a group activity as opposed to individuals visiting the sites independently.

## **Awareness and Promotion**

Lagan Valley Orienteering Club regularly use the Cave Hill Country Park for their events. Colin Glen Forest Park has also been used; however personal safety concerns and marker vandalism have meant that no other events have been held there. No other sites in the Belfast Hills are currently mapped for orienteering.

The BHP held a successful 'Introduction to Orienteering' night at Cave Hill Country Park with the assistance of Helen Baxter from the NI Orienteering Association. This attracted a wide range of individuals to come along and have a go, including family groups. Some TV coverage of this event and other media coverage was also obtained.

## **Partners**

Site managers

NI Orienteering Association

Outdoor activity providers

## **Development**

- More orienteering maps of the hills sites developed e.g. Slievenacloy, Glenside
  - More permanent orienteering courses set up, potentially linking in with Ecotrails

- Encourage use of current Ecotrails
- More orienteering events held in the hills
- Orienteering info on BHP website, including downloadable maps

## **GEOCACHING**

### **Infrastructure**

Geocaching does not require any specific infrastructure as it depends on the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS) device and co-ordinates from a website to locate the cache. There are however certain restrictions as to where you may put a cache, and an emphasis is placed on ensuring that permission has been sought prior to setting up a cache. For example caches are not allowed to be buried, to deface any property or have potential to damage sensitive sites or areas through extra foot fall. An assessor examines and approves all geocaches before they are activated on the Geocaching website (2010) [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com)<sup>10</sup> .

Due to the varying ability of GPS devices to pick up satellites under cover it is generally best to select area with no trees or other overhead obstructions, however this can be viewed as part of the geocaching challenge!

### **Usage and Markets**

Geocaching is a worldwide activity with caches across the UK, Europe, Asia, USA and beyond. As of April 2010, there are over one million active geocaches over the world. Geocaching is an increasingly popular recreational activity, appealing to all age groups as it enables people to explore new areas with the added element of treasure hunting fun! As well as local users tourists may be attracted to an area to try to find its geocaches.

### **Awareness and Promotion**

The official Geocaching website is <http://www.geocaching.com> which provides people with all the information needed on how to geocache, buying a GPS, finding caches etc.

In 2009 the BHP initiated a Belfast Hills Series of 14 different geocaches spread across the public sites within the Belfast Hills with the help of some local geocachers. This was done through the official Geocaching website, with links from the BHP website. From July to September 2009 approximately 23 different people visited over half of these sites,

many of whom were first time visitors to the Belfast Hills. This event attracted some radio and press coverage. BHP staff has also done a TV interview for the BBC on Geocaching.

### **Partners**

Site managers

Geocaching enthusiasts

### **Development**

- Hosting of Introduction to Geocaching days to enable people to find out more about this activity without having to make the initial relatively expensive purchase of a GPS
- Encouraging more geocaches to be placed and maintained in the Belfast Hills.
- Hosting a 'meet up' event for geocachers
- Include in Have a Go Day events
- Raise awareness via the BHP website

## **FELL RUNNING**

### **Infrastructure**

Fell runners, also known as mountain runners, run long distances over rough hillsides on terrain such as rough grasses, rocky paths, sheer hillside tracks and deep descents. No additional infrastructure is presently needed on sites however medium and long running events require over 12 miles of off road slopes. if these are to happen in the Belfast Hills. The fell runners only specialised kit are shoes with large studs for grip.

Fell races are graded according to both their difficulty and distance covered.

**A Category** – averaging no less than 250ft for every mile of climb, and no more than 20% of total distance on road

**B Category** – averaging no less than 125ft for every mile of climb, and no more than 30% of total distance on road

**C Category** – averaging no less than 100ft for every mile of climb, and no more than 40% of total distance on road

**Short (S)** Under six miles (9.6K) in length.

**Medium (M)** Between six and 12 miles (19.3K) in length.

**Long (L)** More than 12 miles in length.

## **Usage and Markets**

Fell running as a sport is very much a spin-off from clubs which are essentially either running or orienteering clubs. Of about 50 running clubs in Northern Ireland, 20 have members who are regular and consistent interested fell runners. These are not uniformly distributed across the country, but concentrated in the east of the Province such as greater Belfast, South Down and Larne. Events and training therefore tend to be concentrated in the east. While training is essentially an individual and casual (in an organised sense) thing, big events such as a championship can attract up to 150 runners with typically 100 spectators. Organised events are primarily centred around official races and there are several championships and race series in Ireland.

## **Awareness and Promotion**

Within the Belfast Hills the North Belfast Harriers club would regularly run as part of their training programme. There is also an annual Black Mountain Run from the Whiterock Road side of the hills. Generally speaking there is a fear in landowners' minds that they are liable to damages and claims if they give access, although it should be noted that events carry their own insurance. There are also concerns about markers and regular routes affecting wildlife habitats.

## **Partners**

NI Mountain Running Association

Outdoor NI website – via CAAN

Belfast Association of Rock climbers and Fell runners (BARF)

Rohan McMahon – “26 extreme”

## **Development – key directions**

- Hosting of more fell running events in the hills
- Provision of OS style maps which outline areas with public access for running, including downloadable maps on BHP website and others
- Opening of more access routes in the hills to provide long distance courses
- More positive liaison with land owners/managers

## **PITCH SPORTS**

### **Infrastructure**

Pitch sports include football, rugby and Gaelic games such as hurling and camogie. There are various pitches both within and close to the Belfast Hills, namely the Lamh Dhearg pitch in Hannahstown, Gort na Mona pitch, Donegal Celtic Park playing fields and pitches associated with the Forth River Park (Clarendon Park) and the Valley Park.

### **Usage and Markets**

Donegal Celtic playing fields have a capacity for 3,000 spectators while the other pitches within the Belfast Hills generally have only standing space surrounding the pitch, and are instead primarily for training and local matches. These clubs have been a success in helping to finance the promotion and development of field sports, particularly Gaelic games, and maintaining facilities has provided members and the local community with many hours of entertainment.

### **Awareness and Promotion**

Use of sports pitches within the Belfast Hills is generally limited to the local community or individuals with a connection to the teams that play on these pitches.

### **Development – key directions**

Advertise the presence and usage of these pitches on the BHP website

### **Partners**

Sport NI

Local Councils

Clubs and governing bodies

## Programme of work required to achieve key aims

**This Programme of work outlined below is both a key tool to obtaining ‘buy-in’ from potential partners and agencies and an essential part of meeting the aims of the Recreation Development Plan. Enlisting partner support and involvement is a vital precursor to its execution.**

1. Acknowledge the needs and opportunities that exist in the Belfast Hills for countryside recreation and outdoor activity, while raising awareness of the Belfast Hills and promoting their positive image

Action	Mechanism	Potential Partners	Funding sources
Produce information regarding the different facilities and recreation activities available in the hills along with appropriate contact details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make available on the BHP website</li> <li>• Pass on information to tourism board and other relevant partners</li> <li>• Provide bilingual signage or in a range of languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity providers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> <li>• Tourism board/Belfast Visitor Convention Bureau</li> </ul>	RDP Tourism Board
Encourage events relating to the various recreational activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the BHP events programme</li> <li>• Host a major walk or activity each year to maximise publicity</li> <li>• Promote the hills as a venue with relevant clubs</li> <li>• Encourage other site managers in the hills to host these events</li> <li>• Provide temporary signage for events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity providers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Sport NI</li> </ul>	BCC parks grant HLF
Raise wider awareness of the Belfast Hills for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce publicity information for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity providers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> </ul>	Part of core funding

recreation	the media, relevant websites and for guidebook writers etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	
Improve information available online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further develop the BHP website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity providers</li> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	Part of core funding
Ensure that providers of visitor information locally are aware of available activities in the hills and how to get there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a training session for staff from the Visitor &amp; Convention Bureau</li> <li>• Produce an information booklet/sheet designed for bureau staff with further info</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	Part of core funding

2. Promote and assist in providing access in a strategic manner to recreational activities which have a good product fit and growth potential

Action	Mechanism	Potential Partners	Funding sources
Promote walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More footpaths and improved facilities and signage</li> <li>• More access links</li> <li>• Quality schemes – Waymarked Ways, Walkers Welcome</li> <li>• Improved detailed maps</li> <li>• Promotional materials and insertions in key NI promotional materials and websites</li> <li>• More high profile events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• walking and rambling clubs</li> <li>• CAAN</li> <li>• local Council Access/Recreation Officers</li> <li>• community health organisations</li> <li>• landowners</li> </ul>	RDP monies HLF landscape project Landfill tax money
Promote Road Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of best routes, existing and new, from discussion with clubs</li> <li>• Promotion of routes and events via joint websites, reviews and press articles. A range of these exist on websites, ranging from fully described routes on major websites to those entered by</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CycleNI organisation and website (part of CAAN)</li> <li>• Cycling Ulster</li> <li>• Sustrans</li> <li>• Local Cycling Clubs</li> <li>• Sports NI</li> </ul>	RDP monies HLF landscape project Landfill tax money

	<p>individuals via GPS information after a weekend run</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity leaflets/web pages/links to web route information. A general leaflet or publication highlighting the potential use of the hills and some info on main roads to use should be considered</li> <li>• Road assessment, improvements &amp; signage. This will require some input from users outlining why they prefer specific roads</li> <li>• Site facilities &amp; improvements, particularly for start and stop sites. This may not consist of a great deal more than toilets and good car parking depending on the individual or group requirements.</li> </ul>		
Promote Orienteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More orienteering maps of the hills sites developed</li> <li>• More permanent orienteering courses set up, potentially linking in with ecotrails</li> <li>• More orienteering events held in the hills</li> <li>• Orienteering info on BHP website, including downloadable maps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• NI Orienteering Association</li> <li>• Outdoor activity providers</li> </ul>	<p>RDP monies HLF landscape project Landfill tax money British Council for orienteering</p>
Promote Geocaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting of Introduction to Geocaching days to enable people to find out more about this activity without having to make the initial relatively expensive purchase of a GPS.</li> <li>• Encouraging more geocaches to be placed and maintained in the Belfast Hills.</li> <li>• Hosting a 'meet up' event for geocachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Geo caching enthusiasts</li> </ul>	<p>RDP monies HLF landscape project Landfill tax money</p>

Promote Fell Running	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting of more fell running events in the hills</li> <li>• Provision of OS style maps which outline areas with public access for running, including downloadable maps on BHP website and others</li> <li>• Opening of more access routes in the hills to provide long distance courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NI Mountain Running Association</li> <li>• Outdoor NI website via CAAN</li> <li>• BARF – Belfast Association of rock climbers and fell runners</li> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Landowners</li> </ul>	RDP monies HLF landscape project Landfill tax money
Promote pitch sport			Sport NI

3. Promote countryside recreation as a means of improving the health of residents in the hills and the surrounding areas

Action	Mechanism	Potential Partners	Funding sources
Encourage Health Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the walks available through the BHP website emphasising health benefits</li> <li>• Offer to take walk leaders and community group leaders on a tour of some of the sites in the hills to enable them to take others on walks in the hills</li> <li>• Hold events with an emphasis on healthy walking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Outdoor activity providers</li> </ul>	Health Promotion agency Part of core funding
Help people associate mental health benefits with the Belfast Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through encouraging participating in various recreational activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Outdoor activity providers</li> </ul>	Part of core funding

4. Improve information and interpretation services related to recreation within the Belfast Hills. Consider having signage that is bi lingual.

Action	Mechanism	Potential Partners	Funding sources
Produce an 1:25,000 scale recreational map of the Belfast Hills showing public access and visitor facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce in conjunction with the site managers across the Belfast Hills</li> <li>• Make available for purchase through normal map outlets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• OSNI/LPS</li> </ul>	RDP HLF NITB
Provide an audio tour of the Belfast Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This may be site specific or car tour across the whole of the hills</li> <li>• Carried out in conjunction with the various site managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	RDP HLF NITB
Increase web info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce web info on activities available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Outdoor activity providers</li> </ul>	RDP HLF NITB
Belfast Hills signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informing people that they are entering/leaving the Belfast Hills</li> <li>• Common signage to help give the area a sense of identity</li> <li>• Possible tie in with townlands in the hills</li> <li>• View points installed with interpretative signage</li> <li>• Range of languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Local community Groups</li> <li>• Councils</li> <li>• Roads Service</li> </ul>	RDP HLF NITB

5. Improve access links across the Hills, providing connections to the City Centre, Cave Hill Country Park and the Lough Shore Seek to influence, actively promote and facilitate the development of plans such as for the Ulster Way for a route across the whole of the Belfast Hills

<b>Action</b>	<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>	<b>Funding sources</b>
Initiate a strategic approach to access links in the Belfast Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compile a Strategic Access Links Plan</li> <li>• Consult with Community Groups, Landowners, farmers, Councils and tourist bodies</li> <li>• Integrate into HLF LPS Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Partners</li> <li>• NITB</li> <li>• Councils</li> <li>• NIEA</li> </ul>	HLF
Connect Slievenacloy with Colin Glen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of the Cemex quarry to enable access by BHP or a partner</li> <li>• Management agreement in place with appropriate partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Council access officers</li> <li>• Landowners</li> </ul>	Alpha Programme Ulster Garden Village In kind contributions
Obtain access from Ligoniel to Cave Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to Water Service regarding access through their land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Council access officers</li> <li>• Ligoniel Improvement Association</li> <li>• Landowners</li> </ul>	HLF
Access to Divis Mountain from Whiterock		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Council access officers</li> <li>• Landowners</li> </ul>	HLF
Access signage from Belfast Zoo to Carnmoney Hill and beyond to the Lough shore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to BCC, NBC and woodland Trust regarding signage and connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Council access officers</li> <li>• Belfast Zoo</li> <li>• Landowners</li> </ul>	HLF
Links from Divis to Ligoniel		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Council officers</li> <li>• Landowners</li> <li>• Ligoniel Groups</li> </ul>	HLF

6. Improve and promote facilities for visitors to the Belfast Hills including tourists, the local community and people with a range of disabilities.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>	<b>Funding sources</b>
New paths/waymarked ways across the hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take into consideration the report 'barriers to participation' produced by CAAN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> <li>• Council access officers</li> </ul>	RDP HLF Landfill tax credits
Upgrade current eroded paths within the hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out an assessment of path quality</li> <li>• Prioritize paths to be upgraded with site managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Walking and cycling clubs</li> </ul>	RDP HLF Landfill tax credits
Improve facilities for people with a range of disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where gradients permit improve path quality and access to the site to enable wheelchair usage</li> <li>• Investigate sensory walks with audio interpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> <li>• Sensory Trust</li> </ul>	RDP HLF Landfill tax credits
Provide directions to sites including public transport options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• via the BHP website and leaflets</li> <li>• Consider bilingual signage and use of various languages for ease of use by all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	RDP HLF Landfill tax credits
Have additional Brown Signs directing people to the sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with Roads Service/Councils to discuss this matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• Roads Service</li> <li>• Councils</li> </ul>	RDP HLF Landfill tax credits

7. Develop positive recreation use while reducing antisocial behaviour. This should be associated with economic benefit for the local community

Action	Mechanism	Potential Partners	Funding sources
Ensure users are aware of approved and non sanctioned activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via the BHP website, site managers, good signage etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	Via Core funding
Monitor recreational use and address any arising conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate holding a users/providers forum</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for comments by the general public e.g. via the website or questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> </ul>	Via Core funding
Address nuisance activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to engage with individuals involved in these activities</li> <li>• Education of people in the area via schools, community groups, media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• PSNI</li> <li>• Local Community</li> <li>• Local Youth workers</li> <li>• Schools</li> </ul>	Via Core funding

8. To seek to improve habitat quality of the Belfast Hills, ensuring that this is not negatively impacted by recreational use of the hills

Action	Mechanism	Potential Partners	Funding sources
Carry out habitat and species surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through students, BHP staff or experts depending on availability and funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• QUB &amp; UU</li> <li>• Quercus</li> <li>• NIEA</li> </ul>	HLF NIEA
Ensure that no paths or waymarkers direct people towards sensitive habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on a comprehensive knowledge of path locations and habitat quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> </ul>	
Promote the Belfast Hills Access Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via the BHP website, links with Walk NI website and general</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site managers</li> <li>• CAAN</li> <li>• Council access officers</li> </ul>	Via Core funding

	distribution of the leaflet along with the walking map and guide		
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## Conclusions

There is great scope for positive development of the above outlined recreational activities. BHP should proactively push the top 6 recreational activities.

An emphasis should be placed on joint working which is strategic and coordinated. This is particularly the case in terms of the possible access links between sites. Although this is primarily relevant to walking, it is essential that a strategic plan which assesses and prioritises potential key links and includes consultation with key interest groups is drawn up. This is especially important given the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme funding.

It is vital that a Hills Ranger Service or a minimum of formal co-ordinated management systems would be in place not only to maintain the facilities but also give a presence for public safety.

Although the central focus is the top 6 recreational activities BHP must ensure that other activities are not forgotten and are promoted as opportunities arise.

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## Appendix 1

### BELFAST HILLS VISITOR SURVEY On behalf of the Belfast Hills Partnership

Interviewer: .....  
 Date: .....(Please record if this is a bank holiday or other special period)  
 Day of week:.....Time: .....  
 Weather conditions: .....  
 Area on site where interview took place: .....

Hello, my name is ..... and I am doing a survey of visitors across the whole of the Belfast Hills on behalf of the Belfast Hills Partnership to allow them to assess visitor needs and make improvements accordingly. May I ask you a few questions? (It will take about 5 mins). *Show people map of sites*

a. I just need to check first - Are you aged 16+ ?

Yes	Go to Q1
No	Thank and close interview

1. How often do you visit this site?

Everyday	
About once a week	
About once a month	
About 2-6 times per year	
Irregular	
First visit	

2. If they have visited before ask – when do you mainly visit the site? (can tick more than one option). If they state a time please note this.

Weekdays		Everyday
Weekends		
Holidays		
During public events held on site		
Other (specify)		

3. What form of transport did you use to get to the site today?

Walked	
Car	
Bus	
Taxi	
Other (specify)	

4. Which of the following best describes the type of group you are with today?

Alone	
With family and/or friends	
Part of a club or organisation	
Other (specify)	

Including yourself how many people are in your group?.....

5. Overall how long do you think you are going to be here today?

Under 1 hour	
1 – 3 hours	

3 + hours	
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6. What activities are you planning to do/have you done in the site today?

Walking	
Walking the dog	
Cycling	
Jogging	
Other (specify)	

7. Where do you normally live? (If they state a place note this).

N. Ireland – give post code	
Non N.I. – give country	

If visiting why are they here? Visiting family etc?

If have others in the group find out where the group are from.

N. Ireland – give post code	
Non N.I. – give country	

8. Where did you get information about the site/area you are visiting? (can tick more than one)

Live locally/ Local knowledge	
Word of mouth	
Brochure/ Tourist Info Centre	
Internet	
Advert in paper/magazine	
Other (specify)	

9. I am going to read out a list of items which you generally find in parks please state how you think this park performs in the aspects that apply to you.

	V.good	Good	Average	Poor	V. bad	Don't know
Signage to get to site						
Car Parking						
Availability of public transport						
Information Boards						
Self guided trails						
High quality paths						
Benches						
Toilets						
Organised events						
Feeling of personal safety						
Obvious staff presence						
Cleanliness/lack of litter						

What improvements would you like to see on site?

Overall how satisfied are you with this site?

Very satisfied	
Quite satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Quite dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	
Don't know	

This questionnaire is anonymous, however to make the most use of this information we need some background information on you if that's ok.

10. Which age group are you in?

1	16 - 24	
2	25 - 39	
3	40 - 59	
4	60 +	

11. Which of these descriptions fits you best?

Student	
Full-time employed	
Part-time employed	
Looking for work	
Home duties	
Retired	

12. What is your highest level of formal education?

Secondary School	
Technical College	
University Degree	

13. Which of the following ethnic backgrounds would you describe yourself as belonging?

White		Other Asian	
Irish Traveller		Black Caribbean	
Mixed		Black African	
Indian		Other Black	
Pakistani		Chinese	
Bangladeshi		Other (specify)	

**Thank you for your assistance (give pen/pencil as a small token of thanks).**

16. Record gender

Male		Female	
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## Appendix 2;-

# Belfast Hills Access Code

1. **Plan ahead-** know where to walk, what to wear and how to minimise waste.
2. **Be safe-** pay attention to signs, weather conditions & traffic levels.
3. **Understand Access-** know where you are allowed to go and leave gates as you find them.
4. **Minimise impact-** take litter home, extinguish matches & cigarettes carefully, don't pollute water.
5. **Control dogs-** Please keep dogs on a lead especially near farm animals.
6. **Respect the countryside-** don't disturb or feed wildlife.
7. **Consider others-** don't interfere with livestock, crops or machinery. Minimise noise.

### Plan ahead-

**Much of the Belfast Hills is above 300 m and liable to sudden poor weather.**

- Ensure that you know where you are allowed to walk
- Have suitable clothing, footwear and equipment
- Bring a plastic bag to bring home any litter or dog mess
- Try minimising litter by removing excess food packaging at home
- Listen to and heed the weather forecast

### Be safe-

**The terrain in the Belfast Hills varies from good paths to rough and steep terrain.**

- If possible go walking with others
- Pay attention to warning signs, they are there for your protection
- Take care when walking on country roads, where possible walk in single file facing traffic
- When driving on country roads, slow down, as you may be endangering local people, visitors and wildlife
- Don't go if weather conditions are beyond your experience
- Bring a mobile phone or ensure that someone knows where you are going and when you are coming back.

### Understand Access-

**Roughly 30% of the Belfast Hills is open to access.**

- Know where you are allowed to go and not. Always respect the land owners wishes.
- Keep to paths and other durable surfaces.
- Walk quietly in fields where there are animals, so not to cause them stress or endanger yourself.
- Use gates and stiles. Damage caused to fencing can allow animals to stray.
- If you must climb a gate always do so on the hinged end.
- Leave gates as you find them.

### Minimise Impact-

**The Belfast Hills contain some of the finest scenery in Ireland, however it is a vulnerable natural resource and must be protected.**

- Take ALL litter home, even items which are biodegradable as they take a long time to break down and are unsightly. Litter such as glass, tins and plastic bags can be dangerous to people, livestock, and wildlife.
- Guard against risk of fire especially during dry weather. Put out all matches and cigarettes carefully. Never throw cigarettes out of a car window.

- Do not pollute water. Do not interfere with water troughs which provide clean water for livestock.

### **Control Dogs-**

#### **Much of the Belfast Hills is working farm land and so has cattle grazing in the fields.**

- Dogs should be kept under control so that they do not disturb or scare other individuals, farm animals, or wildlife. Please put your dog on a lead.
- By law farmers are entitled to destroy a dog that injures or worries their animals.
- Don't let your dog wander where it may disturb birds that nest on the ground or other wildlife, as eggs and young will soon die without their parental protection.
- Dog mess is unpleasant and can spread infection, always clean up after your dog and dispose of the mess responsibly.

### **Respect the countryside-**

#### **The Belfast Hills are mainly basalt and limestone, and have heather moorland, wet grassland and wooded glens.**

- Leave all natural places as you find them. Don't uproot, plant or pick plants.
- Keep in mind unwanted plants, animals and diseases can be spread on boots etc, so wash them after every trip.
- Observe wildlife from a distance, but don't attempt to approach or follow.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times such as when they are mating, nesting or raising young.
- Do not feed wildlife as this damages their health, alters their natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

### **Consider others-**

#### **Make the Belfast Hills a place for everyone to enjoy.**

- Respect and consideration both of other recreational users and people who live and work in the countryside makes the countryside a pleasant place for everyone.
- Think on the needs of others e.g. Don't block gateways or driveways.
- Do not interfere with livestock, machinery or crops as they are valuable, also interference with animals or machinery could endanger you.
- Report anyone who is vandalising property or land to the police.
- Keep out of the way when farm animals are being moved. Follow directions from the farmer.
- Do not make unnecessary noise which may annoy others or frighten farm animals and wildlife. Enjoy the sounds of nature.

**Appendix 3. Geocaches in and around the Belfast Hills –updated December 2010**  
**Total of 63 geocaches identified.**

<b>CACHE: Name, Owner and Identifier</b>	<b>Dates: latest and finds</b>
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership No1 - Dunaney Lane</a> by modejaal (GC1V4QK)	13 Oct 10 27 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership No2 - Pondlife</a> by modejaal (GC1V4QM)	13 Oct 10 24 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership No3 - Belfast Viewpoint</a> by modejaal (GC1V4QQ)	13 Oct 10 27 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership No4 - The Linear Walk</a> by modejaal (GC1V4R1)	13 Oct 10 27 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership No.5</a> by Belfast Hills Partnership (GC1V4QG)	30 Aug 10 25 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership No.6: The Gamekeeper's</a> by SkiMcD (GC1V1YQ)	29 Aug 10
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.7 – Cratered!</a> by SkiMcD (GC1V4A7)	14 Sep 10
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.8: Long Barn</a> by SkiMcD (GC1V5G2)	25 Oct 10
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.9</a> by SargeNI (GC1V310)	29 Aug 10 01 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.10</a> by SargeNI (GC1V31B)	12 Sep 10 01 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.11</a> by SargeNI (GC1V31P)	12 Sep 10 30 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.12 - Ballycoll</a> by SargeNI (GC1V30E)	10 Sep 10 24 Jul 09
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No. 13</a> by skimcd (GC181ZX)	10 Sep 10
<a href="#">Belfast Hills Partnership Series No.14</a> by Belfast Hills Partnership (GC1V3KY)	18 Jul 10 22 Jul 09
<a href="#">Cavehill Trail 1: The Green Sheep</a> by Sinbadfriends (GC2J5Z8) Ulster, Ireland	17 Nov 10 25 Nov 10
<a href="#">Cavehill Trail 2: Treebeard's toes</a> by Sinbadfriends (GC2GTYA) Ulster, Ireland	17 Nov 10 25 Nov 10
<a href="#">Cavehill Trail 3: There's more than one way up!</a> by Sinbadfriends (GC2GTZZ) Ulster, Ireland	17 Nov 10
<a href="#">Cavehill Trail 4: High Beeches</a> by Sinbadfriends (GC2GV0Z) Ulster, Ireland	17 Nov 10 25 Nov 10
<a href="#">Ulster Grand Prix 1 - The Pits</a> by Step_7 (GC1Z062) Ulster, Ireland	12 Nov 10 06 May 10
<a href="#">Ulster Grand Prix 2 - Leathemstown Corner</a> by Step_7 (GC1Z06A) Ulster, Ireland	19 Nov 10 07 May 10
<a href="#">Ulster Grand Prix 3 - Cochranstown Corner</a> by Step_7 (GC1Z068) Ulster, Ireland	12 Nov 10 07 May 10
<a href="#">Ulster Grand Prix 4 - Wheeler's Corner</a> by Step_7 (GC27J99) Ulster, Ireland	12 Nov 10 06 May 10
<a href="#">Ulster Grand Prix 5 - The Hairpin Bend</a> by Step_7 (GC1Z066)	14 Nov 10

Ulster, Ireland	07 May 10
"Mirror,Signal,Manoeuvre" by EYEBRIGHT (GC2E95B)	24 Oct 10
	31 Aug 10
<a href="#">3 Mile</a> by modejaal (GC1Q9HV)	07 Nov 10
	24 Nov 09
<a href="#">A LITTLE PIECE OF MOTORING HISTORY</a> by celticbadger (GC1KTEN)	16 Nov 10
<a href="#">A place with a view too</a> by jingwe (GC15VW7)	07 Nov 10
	24 Mar 08
<a href="#">A Street with a view.</a> by Step_7 (GC29NA5)	14 Nov 10
<a href="#">AnneW's Cache</a> by Thimbleful (GC26FMW)	08 Nov 10
	29 Apr 10
<a href="#">Badger comes to Belfast on his Rambles</a> by celticbadger (GC2FJC8)	27 Oct 10
<a href="#">Badgers Rambles 1 CARNTALL RESERVOIR</a> by Celticbadger (GC1RT1R)	08 Nov 10
	29 Apr 10
<a href="#">Bellevue Zoo View</a> by Sinbadsfriends (GC1V8TE)	13 Nov 10
	27 Jul 09
<a href="#">Castle on the Cave Hill</a> by brackyboggers (GC1A9VG)	11 Jun 10
	12 Jun 08
<a href="#">Chimney Cache</a> by modejaal (GC1JTC7)	25 Oct 10
	18 Dec 08
<a href="#">Chloe's cache</a> by Thimbleful (GC2F7MV)	13 Nov 10
<a href="#">Church Micro 759...Carnmoney Parish Church</a> by celticbadger (GC1Z978)	07 Nov 10
	03 Nov 09
<a href="#">Corr, what a view!</a> by modejaal (GC1J2BN)	09 Nov 10
	18 Dec 08
<a href="#">Divis 1</a> by Skyros (GC19ERG)	14 Nov 10
	10 Apr 08
<a href="#">Duck Pond</a> by modejaal (GC1Q9)	07 Nov 10
	25 Sep 09
Edward Nashton???? by Step_7 (GC28RQC)	13 Oct 10
<a href="#">End of the Line</a> by Step_7 (GC2A87M)	05 Nov 10
	17 Sep 10
<a href="#">Far side of the Moon</a> by Cipher7 (GCE78E)	3 Nov 10
	20 Jun 08
<a href="#">Finger tight !!</a> by weswest (GC2FXK3)	24 Oct 10
<a href="#">Inclined Retainer</a> by Thimbleful (GC2DA4Z)	13 Oct 10
	13 Oct 10
<a href="#">Leta Me Asky You Dis ...</a> by Frezeluberz (GC24W4Q)	17 Sep 10
	14 Oct 10
<a href="#">Lost at Cave Hill</a> by Aznip (GC2BJKA)	17 Sep 10
<a href="#">Lucky Dip</a> by Frezeluberz (GC2AAXK)	(1 Oct 10)
<a href="#">Nobody Nose</a> by The Changing Man & Jillbo (GCVH6G)	23 Apr 10
	21 Sep 08
<a href="#">Obfuscate</a> by Frezeluberz (GC24W4R)	06 Nov 10
<a href="#">Patterson's Spade Mill</a> by blackpowerranger (GC1XF5H)	29 Oct 10
	12 Sep 09
<a href="#">REALLY SideTracked - Ballypalady Station</a> by kryten2x4p (GC290BE)	16 Nov 10

<a href="#">Slemish Vista</a> by RosMcC (GC1Q0FV)	06 Nov 10
	09 May 09
<a href="#">Stoneyford Reservoir</a> by RosMcC (GCZ0ZA)	30 Oct 10
	06 Oct 07
<a href="#">T is for Trig Point 2 - Lyle's Hill</a> by kryten2x4p (GC2B2RR)	13 Oct 10
	15 Sep 10
<a href="#">The Grange of Molusk</a> by modejaal (GC1MJ3N)	08 Oct 10
<a href="#">The Valley</a> by modejaal (GC1Q9MC)	07 Nov 10
	03 Nov 09
<a href="#">there's only one way up</a> by Robuzzoni (GC1XBJW)	17 Nov 10
	06 Nov 09
<a href="#">Throne Wood</a> by Sinbadsfriends (GC232B9)	13 Oct 10
	13 Jun 10
<a href="#">Trash</a> by RosMcC (GC281J3)	16 Nov 10
	07 May 10
<a href="#">TrigER</a> by modejaal (GC1V4ZX)	05 Nov 10
	27 Jul 09
<a href="#">Turning on the Waterworks</a> by Sinbadsfriends (GC1WN12)	17 Oct 10
	30 Sep 09
<a href="#">Two Mast Cache</a> by porkknocker (GCGP59)	26 Oct 10
	20 Jun 08
<a href="#">Two Trees</a> by kryten2x4p (GC29XR1)	07 Nov 10
	17 Sep 10