

NETWORK *News*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS & ACTIVITIES NETWORK

[ISSUE 18 - AUTUMN 2010]

www.countrysiderecreation.com

Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, North Coast



Ropes and Ladders, Llanberis, North Wales

Inside this issue:

- *Funding Now in Place for Castle Ward Demesne, Blessingbourne Estate and Port Moon Bothy*
- *National Trails Day, a Great Success!*
- *Visions for Magheramorne Quarry*



Funding Now in Place...

Castle Ward Demesne, Strangford

Over £600,000 has been secured to enable work to begin on the development of a multi purpose trail system within Castle Ward Demesne, Strangford.

This ambitious project will put Castle Ward on the map as one of the premier venues for outdoor recreation within Northern Ireland. The trail system of up to 50kms has been designed by Dafydd Davis to include an all-ability trail, and walking, cycling and horse riding trails.

RPS Consulting Engineers has now been appointed to oversee the project, with a view to having work commencing over the

next few months, with the project completed by Spring 2011. The Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) would like to thank all the funders who have committed funding to this project.

Grant aid has been secured through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) Tourism Development Scheme, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) through the Rural Development Programme, the National Trust and Down District Council.



Blessingbourne Estate, Fivemiletown

Blessingbourne Estate, Fivemiletown

Privately owned Blessingbourne Estate looks set to become a key outdoor activity destination in 2011.

Working alongside Nick & Colleen Lowry and in partnership with Dungannon and South Tyrone Council, CAAN is delighted

to announce that all funding is now in place to develop a range of trails through the estate.

Funding has been secured from a range of sources including the Lowry's, NITB's Tourism Development Scheme, the Inland Waterways branch of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), Ulster Garden Villages and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council.

Architrail, led by Phil Saxena who was involved in the design and build of Olympic tracks at Beijing, has been employed to complete the detailed trail design.

The project will be delivered in Spring 2011 and with such a world-class designer on board, there is no doubt that Blessingbourne will become a must-visit cycling destination.

Port Moon Bothy, near Dunseverick Castle

With planning permission granted and work due to start in October 2010, CAAN, together with funding secured from DARD, through their Rural Development Programme and from NITB's Tourism Development Scheme, are giving the old stone building at Port Moon between Dunseverick Castle and the Giant's Causeway a complete makeover and converting it into bothy accommodation for canoeists and other water users.

Ideally situated on the North Coast Canoe Trail, which itself is due to be launched by May 2011, the new bothy will provide basic overnight accommodation and an opportunity to step back in time and experience first hand the maritime heritage at this magical location. In addition to the outstanding natural beauty of the location, the bothy will fascinate visitors through story-telling of lives gone before, legends associated with the building and the bay itself; and of its contemporary use as a place for understanding the outdoors. All this will be achieved through interpretative panels and materials placed within and outside the refurbished bothy.

Sarah Noble, Water Based Development Officer from CAAN explains, "Northern Ireland's acclaimed Inland Canoe Trails were the first of their kind within Europe - the North Coast Canoe Trail will be a superb addition to these. Our coastline boasts some of the most varied and challenging sea kayaking in the world; the rugged, dramatic scenery of the north coast draws canoeists from across the UK and farther afield. As part of the North Coast Canoe Trail, an overnight stay in Port Moon Bothy will allow visitors a unique and very special experience at this magical hidden gem."

Looking out towards Rathlin Island, with the Mull of Kintyre in

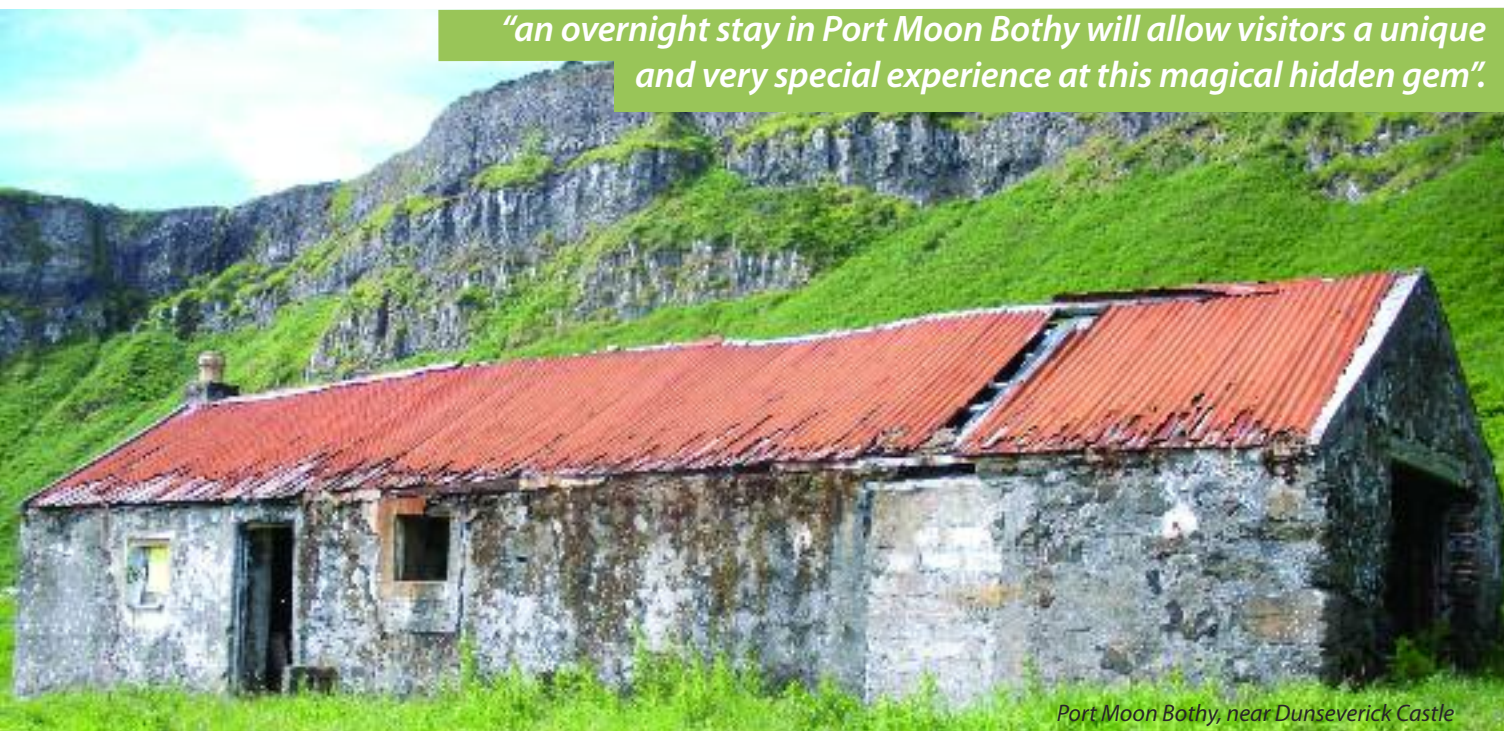
the distance, the bothy at Port Moon will undeniably be an 'exclusive' place to stay overnight on the Causeway Coast. However guests in the bothy will have to share this stretch of jagged cliffs and rough coastline with a whole host of wildlife including grey and common seals, buzzards, peregrine falcons, swallows and the occasional kestrel.

"The planned refurbishment work will restore the building to its original appearance and will provide cold running water, an open fire, composting toilet, lounge area, boat storage, drying room and sleeping space for 8" added Sarah.

Similar to Salt Island Bothy on Strangford Lough, which CAAN restored in the summer of 2008, Port Moon Bothy will provide basic accommodation and will be available to book individually or exclusively for a small fee. Canoeists will be required to bring their own food and will be urged to adhere to the principles of 'Leave No Trace' when using the bothy. Port Moon Bothy will be managed and maintained by the Causeway Coast Kayak Association (CCKA) and is due to open for business by May 2011, giving this old, derelict cottage a new lease of life.

"The CCKA is really looking forward to the development of the bothy in Port Moon as it will enable us to host visiting kayakers on the stunning north coast as well as providing a lovely location for club meetings and social events. We hope to display some of our collection of historic kayaks in the rafters and artefacts from the salmon fishery which should help create a truly authentic atmosphere at the site." Robin Ruddock, Secretary of CCKA.

"an overnight stay in Port Moon Bothy will allow visitors a unique and very special experience at this magical hidden gem".



Port Moon Bothy, near Dunseverick Castle

Venture Outdoors Launch Training Calendar

The Venture Outdoors team launched their new training calendar at CAAN's Network Meeting which took place at Greenmount College, Antrim on 19th October 2010.



Venture Outdoors has worked with a range of experts to pull together an exciting and informative calendar of training events for all those with an interest in the development, delivery and promotion of inclusive outdoor recreation to all living in Northern Ireland regardless of age, background or ability.

The training is relevant to those working in outdoor recreation and who are keen to learn new techniques to engage with the unrepresented communities and therefore encouraging them to use the outdoors. The training includes workshops from

Mencap, Disability Action, Autism NI, NICE (Northern Ireland Council Ethnic Minorities) the Equality Commission, Sensory Trust and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). It focuses on the practical elements of inclusion, equipment, networking and the consultation process and delivers on the effective ways to create funding opportunities to ensure the sustainability of community involvement.

It is envisaged that the training will be of particular interest to activity providers, countryside officers, uniformed groups, park wardens, health & well-being development officers and public landowners.

'We are delighted to have built-up partnerships with a wealth of organisations with great expertise in order to create this calendar of training events that will enhance the inclusive practice of outdoor recreation' Sharon Donnelly, Venture Outdoors Development Officer.

The launch of the training calendar also incorporated the first training session, which consisted of a 2 hour seminar facilitated by RNIB on visual awareness training.

For more information and to view the training calendar please visit www.countrysiderecreation.com/venture-outdoors

All Onboard the Journey to Enhance the Outdoors!

On Friday 11 June 2010, 30 park managers, rangers, private landowners, countryside officers and outdoor recreation group members from across Northern Ireland climbed on board the 'Orchard Express' at Peatlands Park, Dungannon to take part in 'Enhancing the Outdoor Experience' training workshop organised by the Venture Outdoors team and facilitated by the Sensory Trust.

The training provided delegates with the opportunity to increase their knowledge of creative techniques for engaging socially excluded groups, gaining a greater understanding of the benefits of engaging communities in the planning and/or regeneration of public green space, and enhancing knowledge

of the physical, sensory, intellectual access barriers and how they can be overcome to create a first-rate quality visitor experience. The day finished with a journey on board Peatlands Parks train referred to as the 'Orchard Express'.

The Venture Outdoors Project is a 3 year initiative of CAAN and has been provided with a grant of £500,000 from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities Programme and Ulster Gardens Villages. For more information on the Venture Outdoors - Creating Healthy Communities Project please contact Maeve Curran on 028 9030 3930 or email at maeve@countrysiderecreation.com.



Outdoor Recreation Group go down South

CAAN's 2010 study trip for the Outdoor Recreation Group took place on September 13-16th.

Nineteen members headed south to Wicklow, where they met the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Failte Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland, Coillte, the Dublin Mountain Partnership and a range of people representing local businesses and outdoor recreation initiatives. The aim of the trip was to learn how organisations in Wicklow are approaching the development of outdoor recreation and to bring this knowledge back to Northern Ireland for application in relevant local projects.

Some of the key learning outcomes included:

- The cooperative approach to developing the village of Tinahely as a 'walking hub', and the benefits this has brought to the whole community – including farmers and accommodation and catering providers. The hub at Tinahely was the product of a Failte Ireland initiative to develop the area for walking tourism. The aim was to secure 'buy-in' from a high number of local businesses that could offer added value to walking visitors – i.e. something to make their visit more enjoyable, practical or comfortable. The initiative has been a huge success, with participating businesses enjoying increased trade from the village's new annual walking festival as well as walking holiday-makers.
- The value of volunteers in developing a range of different sustainable mountain paths and trails and in providing an 'on-the-ground' ranger service within key areas of the Dublin Mountains. The group met 2 of the Dublin Mountains Partnership's volunteer rangers who explained how important it was for the public to be able to interact with them face-to-face especially on issues such as Leave No Trace, recommended walks and how to use link sections between one forest and to the next. The trail building volunteers are part of a group called Mountain Meitheal. This group comes together throughout the year for designated work days. Their role is to construct a range of mountain trails and paths. This has been hugely successful in terms of the quality and amount of trail that has been built over recent years. The ethos and outputs of the group are truly inspirational and demonstrate what can be achieved when user groups and landowners work together.
- How counter-parts in the Republic of Ireland deal with issues similar to those faced by many countryside/recreation/access officers in Northern Ireland – for example, how the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs have introduced a Walk Scheme which issues payment to landowners when a walk

crosses their land. This payment is based on the estimated hours taken to maintain the trails on their land. While there is a maximum payment of €2,900 per annum, the average in Wicklow is €980 per annum.

- The high use and promotion of the 7 principles of Leave No Trace by landowners, accommodation providers, government departments and volunteer groups.

As well as meeting and listening to presentations from the above organisations, the group walked part of the Kyle Loop (one of the new Failte Ireland Approved National Looped Walks in Tinahely) and took a guided spin on the Ballinastoe Mountain Bike Trails (developed by Coillte). The trip was also an opportunity for members of the Outdoor Recreation Group to network and share ideas, approaches and practices.

The Kyle Loop, Tinahely



Slieve Meelbeg Circuit, The Mourne, Co.Down, Photo by Andrew Branagh



"Excellent experience and the event went very well with a good turnout. Thanks to CAAN for all the hard work in organising the day..."

National Trails Day, a Great Success!

National Trails Day took place on Sunday 3rd October 2010 with hundreds of people from across Northern Ireland getting outdoors on local walking, cycling, canoeing and horse-riding trails on the day.

The day certainly lived up to its objectives with 58 free-of-charge events taking place in Northern Ireland (186 in Ireland) and over 1500 people participating on the day. One of the highlights of the day was the diversity of events that took place and that many participants were newcomers to the outdoors. Some of the most popular events included:

- Bat Walk in Mount Stewart, Ards Peninsula
- Canoeing on the River Blackwater, Co Armagh
- Leave No Trace Walk on the Sallagh Braes, Antrim Hills
- Canoeing from Lock Keeper's Cottage, Belfast
- Florencecourt Pleasure Ride, Co Fermanagh
- Treasure Hunt, Surfin Dirt/GASP, Mourne
- Vinegar Hills Walk, The Sperrins
- Lagan Boat, Canoe Rally & Walk, Lisburn

- Rathlin Ramble, Antrim
- Capall Pleasure Horse Ride, North Down

The feedback from organisers and participants was extremely positive. Comments included: "Excellent experience and the event went very well with a good turnout. Thanks to CAAN for all the hard work in organising the day." - Council. "We have received interest in canoe hire and guided trips from the people that came along on the day." - Activity Provider. "I was delighted that so many took part and not just local people. I felt I achieved what I set out to do and those participating provided me with very positive feedback on their experience." - Leave No Trace Walk Leader.

CAAN has already received many enquiries regarding the date for National Trails Day 2011...so watch this space!

Although CAAN led the organisation and marketing of National Trails Day for Northern Ireland, the success of the event was very much the result of partnership working. The financial partners were Inland Waterways branch of DCAL, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Waterways Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and support partners were The National Trust and The Forest Service of Northern Ireland. The organisers of events on 3rd October included Forest Service, National Trust, the Canoe Association for Northern Ireland (CANI), Activity Providers, Councils, Leave No Trace Trainers and Walking Clubs, each put on all of their events free of charge.

Activity Tourism Learning Journey - North Wales

CAAN in partnership with NITB recently delivered a Learning Journey to North Wales for 21 delegates from the activity tourism private sector in Northern Ireland.



Coed Llandelga Forest, North Wales

The aim of the learning journey was to educate, inform and inspire the delegates through a review of carefully chosen venues. Specific learning objectives included the opportunity to observe good practice delivery from small business providers and partnerships, to view innovative product and marketing and strengthen working relationships between outdoor activity providers from Northern Ireland.

Snowdonia Active set the scene for the busy 4 day itinerary, a presentation from their Chief Executive, Chris Wright highlighting the work delivered for the activity tourism sector in North Wales this included influencing the Welsh Assembly, training for the sector, promotion of sustainable practices and consortia marketing.

This was followed by a tour and presentation from Dave Orange, owner/manager of Open Door Adventure, a small activity provider whose core business is based on the group and corporate teambuilding market. However a concentrated effort to cross sell to these groups has delivered excellent growth in the family market.

The 2nd morning was spent in Coed Llandelga Forest, which although one of the largest privately owned recreation facilities in North Wales is actually operated by a small local company called One Planet Adventure.

The group split up according to ability and took on various elements of the mountain biking trails ranging from the Family Challenge Route to the demanding Black Runs. This was followed by an enlightening presentation from owner Ian Owen who explained the challenges of running such an operation and highlighted the importance of having the complete package. "It was really clear that having an excellent mountain biking course is not enough, One Planet Adventure demonstrated that in order to maximise revenue it is important to maximise the customer experience through a really impressive visitor

centre at the trail head, offering comfortable surroundings, great food and retail experience – the place really had a great ambience." commented Chris Scott, Activity Tourism Manager, CAAN.

The afternoon was spent in the riverside town of Llangollen, with small local provider Pro Adventure. Following a presentation from owner/manager Pete Carol the groups sampled canoeing on the local canal or abseiling in a nearby limestone quarry.

The 3rd day was spent at the foot of Snowdon in Llanberis. The first stop was at Ropes and Ladders, a small activity provider offering a high ropes course. However the most innovative aspect was their recently installed children's rope course which was designed for those aged between 4 – 8 years old. It was not only impressive in design but also by the fact it had returned its initial investment within the first 12 months. "The problem encountered by those with young families visiting North Wales is exactly the same as those families visiting Northern Ireland – there is very little to do for those with children under 8. The children's course at Ropes and Ladders clearly demonstrates how this can be addressed by innovation." stated Chris.

The 2nd visit in Llanberis was to the family-run Boulder Adventures, an independent outdoor adventure company offering accommodation and adventurous activities. The company's high level of professionalism was clearly demonstrated with a presentation and tour from owners Michael and David Crombie.

The trip concluded with an excellent group feedback session during which the delegates from small private sector activity providers from Northern Ireland were able to clearly identify key learning points and most importantly, actions for their own organisations and also the sector.



Ropes and Ladder, Llanberis, North Wales

The Sperrins, Co. Tyrone



Volunteer Rangers Walk the Mullaghs

Saturday 31st July saw the return of the annual volunteer ranger summer walk. This year the location was the high Sperrins, situated to the north of the scenic Glenelly Valley.

The Volunteer Rangers turned out in force for a walk to be led by Martin McGuigan, a local walk leader and also a volunteer ranger himself. The route chosen led them up into the mountains to the coll between Mullaghclogher and Mullaghsturrakeen and over the summits of Mullaghsturrakeen, Mullaghclogha and Mullaghdoe, before descending back down into the valley.

The weather was glorious for the most part, with a few showers descending on the mountains to make them appreciate

the views even more when the rain and mist cleared, leaving views as far afield as Lough Foyle and Donegal.

The welcome sight and smell of a tasty BBQ greeted them when they arrived back at the Gortin Activity Centre, very kindly provided by Mary McGuigan. Old friends reminisced and new friendships were formed on another successful volunteer ranger social walk. "Thanks to all those who attended and to Marty and his family for being excellent hosts in the Sperrins", concluded Diane Patterson, Development Executive, CAAN.

CAAN hosts visit for the Irish Heritage Council

CAAN hosted a 2 day visit in June for the Board and Staff of the Irish Heritage Council to the Mourne and Strangford Lough areas. The visit was to help increase the Council's awareness of the significant connection between 'outdoor recreation and heritage'.

Following the Council's Board meeting, which took place at the recently refurbished Tollymore National Outdoor Centre (TNOC), the first afternoon was spent in the Mourne AONB looking at how the private, community and public sectors are benefiting from actively engaging with the outdoor recreation community. The afternoon was facilitated by Martin Carey, Chief Executive of the Mourne Heritage Trust and involved visits to Meelmore Lodge's tea rooms, campsite and hostel, Cnocnafeola Hostel in Attical, Silent Valley and a homestead near Annalong.

In the evening the Heritage Council hosted a dinner in TNOC for organisations across Northern Ireland with a heritage remit.

The 2nd day of the Council's visit, facilitated by the National Trust and CAAN staff, gave the Council an opportunity to sample some outdoor activities, led by Peak Discovery. Council members and staff canoed from Killyleagh to Salt Island where they learned about the success of both the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail and the refurbished bothy on the island, owned and managed by the National Trust.

A visit to Castle Ward Demesne in the afternoon, to consider the challenges and complexities of developing trail networks in historic landscapes, completed the Council's busy 2 day trip north.



OutdoorNI.com's Summer Campaign takes to the Road

Taste Northern Ireland Garden Party, Belfast

CAAN's Marketing Team attended this year's Taste Northern Ireland Garden Party in Botanic Gardens in Belfast on 18th and 19th September under the consumer brand of OutdoorNI.com as part of its summer campaign.

The Taste Northern Ireland event, joined forces this year with Belfast City Council's annual Garden Gourmet Show to become The Taste Northern Ireland Garden Party, Belfast's newest food, drink and floral show!

After floods of rain on Saturday, many families were out in full force on the Sunday to see what the newest garden party had to offer. The 'taste' section offered visitors an opportunity to nibble on

food samples, see some of Belfast's leading chefs cooking up a storm, enjoy activities in the kid's zone and soak up live music and entertainment, whereas the flower show offered visitors an enticing melange of flowers, fun and award-winning vegetables – all for free!

"Many families and people interested in experiencing the outdoors attended this event so it was important for CAAN to be represented. Our most popular enquiries over the weekend were about walking, cycling and canoeing. National Trails Day also proved to be very popular at this event" commented Beverley Pierson, Marketing Officer, CAAN.

NI Air Show, Portrush

The team also exhibited at the Northern Ireland International Airshow in Portrush on 4th & 5th September 2010.

Large crowds flocked to the North Coast, despite the inclement weather, to enjoy the spectacular air display which included the world-famous Red Arrows and Eurofighter.

The successful summer campaign has targeted families in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Marketing activity has included e-marketing, social networking, PR and attendance at other family events.

To date the campaign has resulted in a 40% increase (from same period last year) in absolute unique visitors to OutdoorNI.com. This has, in turn, increased the direct email enquiries generated by OutdoorNI.com to activity providers by 77% and generated 10,885 referrals to activity providers' web sites.

"It is great to see that the hard work put in by the marketing team has been rewarded by such an excellent increase in visitors to the website and the enquiries it has generated. This has of course been made easier by private sector activity providers offering exciting outdoor activity events and programmes for the family market" enthused Chris Scott, Activity Tourism Manager, CAAN.

Belfast Mela, Botanic Gardens, Belfast

The Venture Outdoors team attended the Belfast Mela held in Belfast's Botanic Gardens on Sunday 29th August under CAAN's consumer brand OutdoorNI.com.

The Belfast Mela was created in 2007, by ArtsEkta, Northern Ireland's leading ethnic arts organisation. It has since become established as an unmissable highlight in Belfast's festival line-up and has rapidly reached status as Northern Ireland's largest multi-cultural festival. Although Melas traditionally has a strong south-Asian focus, ArtsEkta has adopted the concept with a unique multi-cultural focus with the festival promoting a large number of cultures through the arts.

The festival, a fantastic, colourful, cultural and rich afternoon was a resounding success, with over 25,000 in attendance. This was a

true demonstration of the respect for Northern Ireland's ethnic diversity. This was the largest and most successful Mela to date and a true cultural experience for all who attended.

Visitors at the event were able to visit the OutdoorNI stand to seek information on outdoor activities in Northern Ireland such as walking, family cycle routes, canoeing as well as information on more adventurous activities such as zorbing, climbing and coasteering.

Maeve Curran, Venture Outdoors Marketing Officer highlighted "The Mela festival was a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of all outdoor activities that are available throughout Northern Ireland to a diverse audience which included minority ethnic communities, families and couples."

Visions for Magheramorne Quarry

Magheramorne Works and Quarry, which has been used for mineral extraction and processing for the past 200 years, has been identified in a recent report as having the potential to be developed into 1 of Northern Ireland's top 10 visitor attractions.



The 153 hectare site on the shores of Larne Lough has not been used since 2001. A Feasibility Study commissioned by CAAN sets out how the vision to turn this unique site into a major recreational and leisure facility incorporating Ireland's first and only world class "Bike Park" could become reality.

Lafarge Cement UK currently owns the quarry site; the company has expressed a clear commitment to rejuvenate Magheramorne as a legacy for future generations. In 2009, Environment Minister Sammy Wilson approved plans to turn this disused land – the largest brown field site in Northern Ireland, into a recreational facility and harbour village supporting eco-friendly living.

The world class bike park forms a key part of wider plans for the imaginative regeneration of the Magheramorne Works & Quarry site. Minister Wilson said during a visit to Magheramorne Works and Quarry, "This is an imaginative and unique opportunity for Northern Ireland that will reuse what has become a redundant quarry and replace it with a major tourist attraction. This is an exciting project for the 21st Century. It will create a variety of jobs and should also draw a range of tourists to the area."

The Feasibility Study now sheds some light as to what exactly this outdoor recreational area may consist of. Proposals include the development of seven downhill trails from easy 'blue' grade through to the extreme 'double-black' trails, totalling 9.3 km. There is also the potential for a 20.7km cross-country circuit, a 400 metre 'Four Cross' course, another 400 metre Olympic standard BMX track and a full mountain biking skills area.

Clare Wright, Product Development Manager from CAAN stated that, "The main attraction on the site will be Magheramorne Bike Park. This will have an array of x-country and mountain bike trails

with designated areas for lots of other cycling disciplines, a cycling arena and a services hub including provision for a café, cycle shop, changing facilities and bike wash."

The Feasibility Study looked at expanding the ways of re-using the quarry in order to attract more visitors. Proposals for a range of adrenaline activities include the UK's longest Zip line, a high ropes course and a man-made abseiling tower. This 'high' zone would also incorporate an area for bungee jumping (the first in Northern Ireland). The geography of the quarry enables the potential for canoeing, kayaking and water zorbing on the large expanse of water which has gathered at the heart of the quarry complementing the proposed All-Ireland Scuba Diving Centre. This 'wet' zone ensures that the site has potential to cater to all outdoor activity enthusiasts as well as families looking for adventure. With families in mind, there will also be a 'play' zone, including an adventure playground for younger children. Throughout the activity areas, facilities will cater for the total beginner to the most experienced of international competitors.

The Study revealed that the regeneration of Magheramorne Quarry to a recreational centre would result in at least £1.5 million being injected into the local economy each year. The venue is expected to draw events such as rounds of the Mountain Bike World Cup, which can attract 2,500 riders and 15,000 spectators over the course of a single weekend. The Feasibility Study goes on to predict 150,000 visitors to the bike park each year.

Unlike many other mountain biking locations in the rest of the UK, Magheramorne is remarkably accessible. Twenty miles from Belfast and only 5 miles from the port of Larne, it has a railway station on site and is in close proximity to both Belfast airports. Importantly, being around 2 hours from Dublin and with new Belfast bound flights from Galway, the site is also attractive to the Republic of Ireland market. With the Feasibility Study now complete and outline planning permission for the site in place, delivery of Magheramorne Bike Park is edging ever closer. The cost of delivering this recreational facility is estimated at £9.5 million. CAAN will continue to work closely with Lafarge to investigate funding options to enable this visionary project to be delivered on the ground.

Completion of the study was made possible with funding from Lafarge Cement UK and the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland and administered by NITB.

Signage Up for Canoe Trails

The first phase of the Canoe Access Signage Initiative is now complete with directional road signage installed on the Lower Bann and Blackwater Canoe Trails and also at the main access points on the river Lagan.

As well as making it easier for canoeists to locate formal access points, the road signage will raise awareness amongst the general public of the canoeing opportunities that exist within Northern Ireland. In order to deliver the project, CAAN secured funding from DCAL and from the following local councils: Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballymena, Magherafelt, Antrim, Craigavon, Dungannon and Armagh.

Plans are now underway to install directional road signage for the Lough Erne Canoe Trail; this will be rolled out next year.

Canoe Signage for the Blackwater Canoe Trail, The Argory, Co. Armagh



Canoe Slalom and Polo

The new Canoe Slalom and Polo facility at Shaw's Bridge was completed at the end of October.

Work above the water was complemented by in-stream works undertaken by Rivers Agency to repair fallen-down islands and damaged weirs, and to improve the flow of the river in low water conditions. Members of the general public were also amazed to see the removal of a car wreck hidden below the water's surface for at least 10 years! The new fully-adjustable facility will be the first of its kind in Northern Ireland. Its design will allow paddlers

to make the most of the slalom course at all water levels. An estimated 2500 paddlers use the site each year with the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland Slalom Squad and the Ulster Canoe Polo Club training at the facility several times a week.

The £20,000 project was funded by Sport NI, DCAL and Belfast City Council.

Canoe Slalom and Polo Facility, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast



Dates for your Diary...

Venture Outdoors Conference - 'Toolkit to Success' Thursday 3rd February 2011, La Mon Hotel, Belfast

The Venture Outdoors team has organised an innovative and exciting programme for its conference including a series of training workshops for those who are keen to learn new techniques to engage with those from disabled, minority ethnic and disadvantaged communities, therefore encouraging them to use the outdoors. They are also delighted to welcome their keynote speaker, Jamie Andrew who will discuss his experiences after being trapped for 5 nights on the storm bound icy summit of a French mountain. Despite suffering hypothermia and appalling frostbite, he survived. However, days later both his hands and feet were amputated. For many this fate would have meant the end of all hope, but not for Jamie. Since his accident he has learned to walk again, taken up skiing, run a marathon and returned to climb once more in the mountains that he loves so much. Jamie's incredible story of determination and courage is nothing short of inspirational.

Key exhibitors will also be in attendance providing an excellent opportunity for further information gathering and networking. The conference also marks the launch of the Venture Outdoors Toolkit which includes a series of guidelines tailored for those providing outdoor recreation opportunities to the 3 underrepresented groups.

This conference will present a unique training and networking opportunity for those with an interest in the development, delivery and promotion of inclusive outdoor recreation to everyone living in Northern Ireland regardless of age, background or ability.

For more information please contact Maeve Curran, Venture Outdoors Marketing Officer by email or telephone - maeve@countysiderecreation.com, 028 9030 3930.

Northern Ireland's Big Adventure Weekend - 9th & 10th April 2011

Northern Ireland's Big Adventure Weekend is the latest innovative initiative to come out of the Activity Tourism Forum.

The aim of the event is to increase the awareness of the wide range of outdoor activities available in Northern Ireland and to 'kick start' the activity tourism season in 2011. The weekend will see a wide range of private sector activity providers offering an abundance of activity experiences throughout Northern Ireland.

Activities on offer will include coasteering, canoeing, archery, climbing, zorbing and much more. Each activity session will be available at a promotional price of £10 per person. The event will be promoted to families and 'young and lively' 18-30 year olds living in Northern Ireland and also those in the Republic of Ireland within 1 hour drive.

"It is a great example of public and private sector partnership - NITB will provide the budget to promote the event and along

with the expertise at CAAN, pull the logistics and marketing together. The private sector activity providers have shown excellent commitment to offer a wide range of activities for £10 per session." enthused Chris Scott, Activity Tourism Manager, CAAN.

The event will not only provide a fantastic 'hook' for a wide range of marketing including PR, social networking and e-marketing but also the legacy will be increased awareness and repeat bookings for activity providers. "Concept and logistics are being put in place at the moment, so mark the date in your diary and watch this space for further information" added Chris.

For further information on how to get involved in Northern Ireland's Big Adventure Weekend contact Chris Scott, Activity Tourism Manager, CAAN by email or telephone - chris@countysiderecreation.com, 02890 306 940.



CAAN

The Stableyard, Barnett's Demesne,
Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5PB

Tel: 028 9030 3930

Fax: 028 9062 6248

E-mail: info@countysiderecreation.com
www.countysiderecreation.com

Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) is an umbrella organisation that brings together groups and bodies that have an interest in, or involvement with, countryside recreation. This includes those taking part in countryside recreation activities, local and central government organisations, farmers and landowners, environmental and community organisations, youth organisations and providers of outdoor education.

The Network is tasked with the strategic development, management and promotion of countryside recreation across Northern Ireland.

The Countryside Access and Activities Network is supported by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Sport NI and Inland Waterways of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.