

Mountaineering Ireland's position on payment for access

In its submissions on the next Rural Development Programme and through the National Uplands Working Group Mountaineering Ireland has clearly outlined the mechanisms it believes are required to support and encourage continuity in low-intensity hill-farming, and to enable the sustainable management of large areas of Ireland's uplands. The Governments have a duty under EU legislation to protect sites designated for nature conservation under the Habitats Directive, but it is Mountaineering Ireland's view that the State also has responsibility beyond that to protect Ireland's landscape and natural environment, and to ensure the sustainable management of our upland areas for the benefit of future generations. It is Mountaineering Ireland's view that hill-farmers should be appropriately rewarded for this management.

Mountaineering Ireland's policy on payment by recreational users is based on the following principles:

- Mountaineering Ireland is committed to securing continued free and reasonable access to Ireland's mountains, crags and all the places we use, and is opposed to any charge for access.
- There is potential for landowners to develop services that meet the needs of walkers and climbers (e.g. secure car parking, toilets, accommodation etc).
- Mountaineering Ireland considers that local voluntary contribution schemes / mechanisms (e.g. honesty box to pay for parking) are appropriate where those contributions are invested in the conservation of the natural environment.
- The organisers of outdoor activity events with 50 participants or more should consider adding something to each participant's fee (even €1) to make a donation to mountain rescue, the local community, a local upland forum group, or organisations such as Mountain Meitheal, Mourne Heritage Trust, etc who do practical work to alleviate the impact of recreation on the natural environment.