



Lugnaquilla in the Wicklow Mountains. Photo: Pavel Pentlinoski

## What makes Ireland's mountains special?

We recently asked a group of Mountaineering Ireland members to tell us in a word or two what they think makes Ireland's mountains special. Some examples of what they said (in no particular order) were:

'Light and landscape'  
'Ease of access'  
'Clean air'  
'Freedom'  
'Scenery'  
'Biodiversity'

Is there something in that quick snapshot which you can identify with?

Whatever qualities you appreciate in Ireland's mountains, they cannot be guaranteed into the future. Ireland has relatively little mountain land and what we have is under pressure from a variety of sources such as changes in agricultural practices, renewable energy developments, climate change and, of course, the impact of an increasing number of recreational users.

Mountaineering Ireland cannot determine the future for Ireland's mountains. We don't own the land, make the legislation or hold the public purse-strings. However, we can be partners in trying to achieve a positive future for Ireland's mountains and their hinterland.

At a local level, members of Mountaineering Ireland are already involved in a number of

organisations trying to address the future sustainable management of their upland area – groups such as the **Wicklow Uplands Council**, the **MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum** and the **Mourne Heritage Trust**.

These groups operate within a national policy framework which is often not coherent and is weak in the protection it affords to landscape and the natural environment. This statement is true for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. To achieve a more appropriate national policy the case needs to be made that Ireland's mountains are important, that all of society gains benefit from these significant natural resources, and that we need to invest to protect these areas for future generations. The fact that most mountain land (more than 80%) is in private rather than

State ownership must be recognised from the outset.

Before Mountaineering Ireland engages with other organisations to make a case for Ireland's mountains we need to be clear on what our future vision is for these areas. In the last issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* one member gave his perspective (see *IML 118*, p19). We want to develop this conversation further by involving many more Mountaineering Ireland members in discussion about their local mountains.

During the autumn, Mountaineering Ireland is hosting a series of **regional meetings** at which we'll ask members, in particular local clubs, what is happening on the mountains in your area and what you'd like to see for their future. To get the conversation going, Mountaineering Ireland members from each region will

present their perspective to members. The dates and locations for these meetings are outlined below. Further information will be published on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) in mid-October.

The feedback from these consultation meetings will be distilled by our Access & Conservation Committee into a **draft policy statement** about the importance of Ireland's mountains, which will be agreed by the Mountaineering Ireland Board, published on our website for further input by members, refined and then proposed for adoption at Mountaineering Ireland's AGM in March 2017.

Make the effort to get involved. Doing so could help protect the qualities that make Ireland's mountains special and your future recreation experiences ■

### Regional Meetings for Mountaineering Ireland members

Region	Date	Time	Venue
South-east	Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> October	7.30pm	Springhill Court Hotel, Waterford Road, Kilkenny
West	Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	7.30pm	Menlo Park Hotel, Galway
North-west	Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> October	7.30pm	Central Hotel, Donegal town
North-east	Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November	6.30pm	House of Sport, Malone Road, Belfast
East	Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November	7.30pm	Irish Sport HQ, Blanchardstown, Dublin
South-west	Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> November	7.30pm	Oriel House Hotel, Ballincollig, Cork