



## **Environmental Policy - Built Development**

Mountaineering Ireland's Built Development policy covers all development work in upland and relevant coastal areas requiring planning permission (other than those categories of activity specifically dealt with in other sections of this document). Development proposals which will erode the remoteness and natural beauty of our landscapes should be critically examined. The extent of wild country in Ireland is rapidly decreasing and Mountaineering Ireland considers itself obliged to assist with its conservation.

Mountaineering Ireland does not oppose all development in upland areas, rather it argues that development should be located where it does not destroy the essential character of the undeveloped landscape of the upland and coast. This itself is an increasingly valuable commercial asset to local communities who can utilise tourism and recreation to replace other declining economic activities. Mountaineering Ireland supports appropriate and sustainable development in or immediately adjoining existing settlement and villages.

The following list indicates the type of development which Mountaineering Ireland considers potentially damaging to the essential landscape qualities of our uplands and coast. Proposed developments in the categories listed should be carefully considered by Mountaineering Ireland and its members. Where it appears that particular schemes are inappropriate Mountaineering Ireland should oppose them through the planning process.

- Quarrying, mining and other extractive industry.
- Communication masts, where these are visually or environmentally significant.
- Wind farms and hydro-electric schemes, where significant adverse impact occurs.
- Waste disposal by landfill or otherwise.
- The construction of dwellings in upland areas.
- Tourist facilities and visitor centres where environmental impact is severe and where community benefit is minimal.
- Power lines if inappropriately sited.
- Large agricultural or industrial buildings, mountain roads.

Developments of the types listed above can impact on the landscape in a number of ways:

- There is a reduction of the amount of wild land and land remote from human activity and roads. This is exacerbated by the requirement to have road access and services to the development.
- Increased noise.
- Impact on flora and fauna and especially on areas of special ecological or scientific interest.

- Pollution.
- Increased vehicular traffic.
- Landscape impact - visual intrusion of man-made artefacts on natural ecosystems.

Mountaineering Ireland will participate in the planning process through its constituent clubs and at national level. This will include the submission of comments in appropriate cases and the making of appeals or related submissions to An Bord Pleanála. Where issues are localised the preferable procedure is for action to be taken through locally affected member clubs and groups. Mountaineering Ireland may assist affiliated clubs with expenses related to planning matters.

Mountaineering Ireland, in consultation with local members, will determine its action on new proposals having regard for:

- The impact in terms of scale, positioning and design on the landscape in which it is proposed to site it.
- The quality of that particular landscape and its ability to absorb the development.
- The usage of the area by climbers, walkers and tourists.
- The economic, social and environmental value of the scheme.
- With regard to dwelling houses, favouring those intended for use by families engaged in agriculture.
- The ecological consequences of the development both in the long term and during construction.
- The reversibility of the development and its impacts
- The reduction in the national stock of undeveloped landscape.

*Adopted May 2003*