



Access & Conservation



View of the 40-metre pilot path work on the lower part of Croagh Patrick's summit cone; the technique used provides a stable path that fits into the landscape.

Trial path work successful on Croagh Patrick summit

Stakeholders confident to move forward.

Alongside other members of the **Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group**, Mountaineering Ireland recently participated in an evaluation of trial path work that was carried out on Croagh Patrick in October. The work was done over a period of two weeks by Scottish mountain-path specialist contractor **Matt McConway of Upland Access Ltd.**

The trial section of stone pitching is two metres wide, consisting of irregular steps and platforms, using only stone and material from the mountain.

The work took place in two locations along the traditional pilgrim path, with a 40-metre section completed on the summit cone and a short section lower down (just beyond the access gate to the mountain), to demonstrate different techniques.

The objective of the trial was to establish if the proposed methodology for constructing

the path would work using the small blocks of stone found on the steep summit cone. The path work was evaluated against the **'Helping the Hills' Guiding Principles** produced

by Mountaineering Ireland, and this included assessing the technique and quality of path work, landscape impact and environmental impact.

A number of groups and



Written by Helen Lawless, Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer

individuals connected with the Stakeholders Group assisted with the trial work. This provided an insight into the value of implementing the project, with a strong emphasis on training and voluntary inputs. Such an approach would build capacity locally to repair the path and care for the mountain into the future.

The result of the evaluation process is that the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group is confident to proceed with the proposed path solution, together with a maintenance and management regime.

The Stakeholders Group acknowledged with gratitude the assistance of the Mountain Shareholders on Croagh Patrick; Murrisk Development Association; GMIT Mayo Campus; South West Mayo Development staff and RSS workers; Mountaineering Ireland; Mayo Mountain Rescue; and all other volunteers who assisted with the trial path work.

The next steps for the



Chris York of Walking-the-Talk, right, who led the project to develop a repair solution for Croagh Patrick, pictured with participants in the evaluation. Martin Keating, Chairperson of the stakeholder group, is second from left and Vincent McAlinden, Mountaineering Ireland, is in the centre.

RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

Share your ideas on shared space

Recently, while savouring the view from a popular summit with a friend, a hillwalker arrived and, standing less than two metres from us, released a valley-filling Tarzan call, without the slightest recognition that this could intrude on the experience we were enjoying.

The rarity of such incidents illustrates how the vast majority of recreationists are respectful of the fact that we share our outdoor space with others.

With more people using Ireland's mountains for an increasingly diverse range of activities, the concept of how we share that space is becoming more important. This can present a challenge for walkers, who have traditionally only come across the occasional hill farmer or a forestry worker on the hills.

There are practical things we can do to prevent conflict, like not walking on a mountain bike route (tyre tracks and constructed jumps provide clues to the possible presence of bikes). As well as being a danger to yourself and others you

might be impinging on the enjoyment of mountain bikers using the route.

How can we transmit an awareness of shared space to others? For example, to those who don't realise that unfenced hillsides are privately-owned sheep-grazing areas and, therefore, not a suitable place to let your dog run loose, or that parking your car on a narrow road could prevent access for a local resident or the emergency services.

Competition

We're keen to gather top tips on how different recreational users of Ireland's upland areas can co-exist without conflict. Send your ideas, or examples of things you have seen or done, to helen@mountaineering.ie before January 31st 2019. All submissions will be considered by three members of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee and a selection will be published in the Spring 2019 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* ■



By coincidence, Westport native John O'Callaghan (Clare Outdoor Club), centre, was on Croagh Patrick when the evaluation of the trial path work was taking place. He is pictured here with Caroline Goucher (Mayo County Council) and Brian Quinn (Fáilte Ireland).

Croagh Patrick project are to obtain planning approval through a Part 8 procedure in partnership with Mayo County Council and then proceed to implementation.

Commenting on the recent evaluation, **Martin Keating**, Chairman of the **Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group**, said:

"Since the formation of the group, the Stakeholders Committee has been advising individuals and groups to prepare for their journey when

climbing Croagh Patrick, to take the right equipment and, most of all, to respect the mountain. It makes sense for us to take the same approach when thinking about the enormous task of repairing the damage and securing the future management of Ireland's 'Holy Mountain.'

"Rather than rush ahead with a quick-fix solution that we might later regret, we have been making careful preparations, taking advice from experienced

upland path professionals and doing trial work where bespoke solutions are required.

"The recent trial works have confirmed that we have a viable solution to repairing the summit section of the mountain, and they have given the stakeholders confidence to move forward to the planning and implementation phases of the project.

"This approach also provides us with an opportunity to train people in the highly skilled methods of upland path work, which sets in motion the long-

term relationship that we need to have with Croagh Patrick.

"The path work will be accompanied by ongoing measures to foster an understanding of the significance of the mountain, as well as the part we all need to play in looking after it.

"We are excited about the opportunities that the solution presents, mindful of the challenges ahead and appreciative of the widespread support that we have experienced on the journey thus far" ■

In brief..

Updates on the access article in our last issue:

Luggala: Mountaineering Ireland representatives have met with the Minister for Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan TD, and the Minister has confirmed that her Department is in active discussions with the agents acting on behalf of the Luggala Trustees.

Northern Ireland: Mountaineering Ireland's September 2018 submission, outlining possible content for an Outdoor Recreation Bill for Northern Ireland, has been well received and has led to the formation of a National Outdoor Recreation Forum working group to further develop these proposals.