



Access & Conservation



Martin Keating, Chairperson of Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group, with the Path Manager, Matt McConway, looking at the path on the cone at Croagh Patrick. The path is made by clearing loose stones from a two-metre-wide line, gathering stones from the mountain to create the path, and carefully positioning every stone so that it is solid and so that it works with its neighbouring stones to provide a stable footing. The path is made up of shallow and higher steps, designed to suit people of different abilities and to blend into the landscape. The path is strengthened by revetments on either side.

Progress at Croagh Patrick

Work underway to address path erosion



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Work to repair the erosion along the pilgrim path at **Croagh Patrick** recommenced in May with the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions. The team of four trainees working on the mountain, led by experienced upland path builder **Matt McConway**, is doing a super job. Some work has been done lower down but, in the longer days of summer, their main focus has been on the steep upper section of the mountain known as the cone.

The path work on the cone is a complex process, using a bespoke stone-pitching technique, with all the work being done by hand. The skill and effort required to complete every single metre is phenomenal. The path offers a stable footing and blends into the landscape, providing a solution that protects the mountain from continuing erosion, without the intrusion of an obviously constructed path.

On other sections of the route the focus is on stabilising eroding slopes, reducing path braiding and directing the flow of water off the path. All this work is being done with the aim of healing the erosion scar on Croagh Patrick, and protecting Ireland's holy mountain from the impact of high visitor numbers by making a sustainable path along the Pilgrim Route.

If you're climbing Croagh Patrick and

the team is on the mountain, pause to have a word with them, they would welcome your feedback. Don't expect the path to be finished – the work on Croagh Patrick is expected to continue for at least another eighteen months.

In addition to protecting Croagh Patrick's environment, landscape and heritage, it is intended that this project will become a hub for sharing skills and knowledge regarding the management

of upland path erosion. The team hosted the **National Trust's Mourne Rangers** for a week in August, the start of a series of 'workshop' experiences to share good practices about mountain path repairs.

► The **Croagh Patrick Sustainable Access and Habitat Restoration Project** is an initiative of the **Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group**, funded by the **Department of Rural and Community Development** and **Mayo County Council** ■



Close-up image showing the structure of the path on the cone at Croagh Patrick