

## 'All the Small Things'

# AN AUDIT OF ACCESSIBILITY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION & ANGLING IN COUNTY TIPPERARY



Prepared for: **Tourism Unit**  
**Tipperary County Council**

*Final Report- April 2024*



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NTDC  
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Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann  
Tipperary County Council

## COMMITMENTS TO ACCESSIBILITY

**Project 2024, Ireland’s National Planning Framework, states<sup>1</sup>:**

*“.....Providing access of opportunity to citizens of Ireland is not a finite exercise, particularly where distinct and tailored solutions are required to continually address the needs of our citizens, particularly those who remain vulnerable or marginalised.”*

**Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Strategic Vision 2023-2027 (#5) states<sup>2</sup>:**

*“Improved accessibility to basic infrastructure and tourism amenities is essential in meeting the needs and requirements of all visitors to Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands. This does not only equate to providing access to those with disabilities, but it also addresses the importance of creating universally designed environments to support people with physical needs, the increasing ageing population and those who have difficulty with mobility or access to information.”*

**Tipperary County Development Plan (2022-2028), Objective 9-1 commits to:**

*“Support the provision of accessible tourism in Tipperary, thereby ensuring that facilities are accessible to people with mobility issues, people with learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairment, young children, and elderly people”.*

Cover Photo: courtesy of Irish Wheelchair Association – Great Outdoors Access Guidelines  
[www.iwa.ie/access-guidelines/great-outdoors-access-guidelines/](http://www.iwa.ie/access-guidelines/great-outdoors-access-guidelines/)

This report has been prepared on behalf of Tipperary County Council  
by Alan Hill Tourism Management *in association with* Deirdre Lewis



**Alan Hill**  
Tourism Management

**April 2024**

<sup>1</sup> [gov - National Planning Framework - Ireland 2040 Our Plan \(NPF\) \(2018\) \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

<sup>2</sup> [Ireland-s-Hidden-Heartlands-Regional-Tourism-Development-Strategy.pdf \(failteireland.ie\)](http://failteireland.ie)

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For clarity, a number of critical terms are used throughout the Study:

- **Outdoor Recreation:** Refers to activities that take place in the natural environment, such as walking, hiking, angling, kayaking/ canoeing, wild swimming or cycling or passive activities such as birdwatching. The term does not include pitch-based sports such as hurling, football, tennis, golf, soccer, athletics or equestrian centres (see: *Embracing Ireland's Outdoors – Ireland's National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027*).
- **Disability:** Refers to people living with a range of physical, sensory and intellectual abilities, *inter alia*, depending on age, mobility, visual or aural impairment, intellectual or sensory capacity.
- **Accessibility:** To respond appropriately to ensure persons living with disabilities have access where possible, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to information, to transport, to communications ... both in urban and rural areas ... to enable those with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.
- **Universal Access:** Refers to the degree to which the environment, products, and services are accessible to people with disabilities. The term “barrier-free design” is used to describe the efforts to remove physical barriers from the ‘built environment’ for people with disabilities.

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| TCC    | Tipperary County Council   |
| MD     | Municipal Districts (of Tipperary County Council)                      |
| IWC    | Irish Wheelchair Association   |
| NDA    | National Disability Authority  |
| UNCRPD | United Nations - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| FI  | Fáilte Ireland                           |
| IAE | Ireland's Ancient East brand region      |
| IHH | Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand region |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| SDGs | (United Nations) Sustainable Development Goals |
|------|--|

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Background and Context

Tipperary County Council commissioned this study in late 2023 to provide a baseline of universal accessibility to outdoor recreation and angling across the county, to inform the access needs of the community and visitors over the coming decade.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified by Ireland in 2018) ensures the *rights of all people* with disabilities to *equal access* in all areas of life. National legislation, policies and strategies aim to make Ireland more accessible and inclusive for those living with a disability. Indeed, Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 aspires to provide ‘... *access for all to tourism, sport, and recreation assets in Tipperary.*’ (Objective 9.1).

Access to outdoor recreation is challenging for a majority of the estimated **22% of the population** living with ‘*at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to some extent*’ and **8% of the population** with ‘*at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent*’ (Census 2022). Thus a considerable minority of people who have a right to access outdoor recreation and angling find that their needs are not being met.

The scope of this high-level review comprised the following: -

- Audit of Outdoor Recreation Activities and Angling Facilities in Tipperary in terms of their accessibility;
- Review and Analysis of the Audit; and
- Recommendations for enhancement of outdoor recreation and angling, including future interventions that could improve and promote Tipperary as a good place to live, work and visit.

The Study, likely the first of its kind in Ireland, aims to provide a snapshot-in-time of accessible recreation and angling to inform future interventions across the five municipal districts of Tipperary. This timely, policy-led and evidence-based research, with its focus on accessible recreation, will continue to strengthen Tipperary as a sustainable outdoors recreational destination of choice for ALL.

## 1.2 The Process

The study was undertaken in four sequential stages:

- (i) Comprehensive desk research, review of policy and best practice;
- (ii) Thorough engagement with key stakeholders from both the *supply* (providers and promoters of recreational infrastructure in the county) and *demand* side (the users and their representative bodies) of the recreational and angling spectrum;
- (iii) Site selection, audit development, and field auditing of 33 key recreational and angling sites across the five municipal/ borough districts of the county; and
- (iv) Analysis of the findings to propose practical recommendations for enhanced recreational access for all in Tipperary over the coming decade and onwards.

Multiple perspectives fed into the process from support agencies, users and their families, disability charities, and relevant officers of Tipperary County Council. All data were recorded, aggregated and analysed to create a set of concrete recommendations.

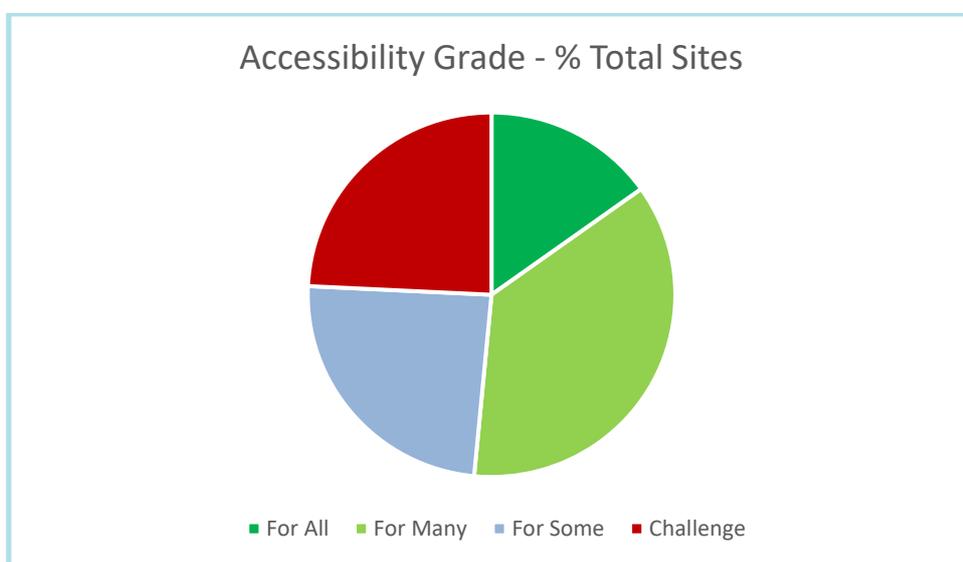
## 1.3 The Audit

Initial map-based and digital research was undertaken to identify suitable sites for audit from the extensive recreational and angling asset base across Tipperary. An initial selection of c. 40 sites was identified, but many of the mountainous and/or long-distance waymarked ways were discounted, due to their inherent inaccessibility except to fully mobile or elite enthusiasts. Finally, **thirty-three (33) sites** were selected for field audit.

A template was designed to carry out the field audits systematically, based on a range of 50 criteria that measure the accessibility of recreation and angling sites for people with varied physical and intellectual abilities. The multi-criteria categories included Physical Accessibility; Environment; Management/ Safety; Tourism & Marketing. The field audit was conducted in January-March 2024 and although high level by nature, it provides a signpost for detailed assessments of accessibility, engineering, safety and public risk criteria.

The results of the accessibility audits indicate that 42% of the selected sites across Tipperary are completely inaccessible to people living with disability. A further 36% are moderately accessible in a physical sense, but lack critical services such as WC access. Just 21% could be considered 'accessible', while none scored 'full marks' for universal access.

**When the field grading system is applied it becomes clear that much work is required to ensure that people living with disabilities have assured access to the outdoors and nature.**



Just **15%** of sites across Tipperary may be classified as '**Accessible for All**', and even these require modifications to ensure they reach best practice. Many sites (42%) may be considered as '**Accessible for Many**', but with moderate interventions could present a whole new world of fully accessible recreation.

The top-scoring recreational and angling sites include:

- **Cahir-Swiss-Cottage;**
- **Clonmel Townpark to-Kilsheelan-Carrick-on-Suir (Suir Blueway);**
- **Ballina Riverpark;**
- **Fethard Townpark; and**
- **Lough Doire Bhile (based on potential of the Littleton Labyrinth);**

Close runners-up, presenting potential satellite recreation amenities to the main sites, based on score and potential include:

- **Templemore Townpark;**
- **Cabragh Wetlands;**
- **Dundrum Marl Bog;**
- **Garrykennedy;**
- **Dromineer; and**
- **Kildanogue Wildfowl Reserve.**

It is recommended that strategic interventions for enhanced accessibility should be focused on these Signature and Satellite sites.

## 1.4 The Findings

Following an extensive four month period of research, consultations, and physical auditing of sites across Tipperary, a set of findings emerged, categorised under three headings.

### POLICY & DELIVERY

|   |
|---|
| 1. Impressive Policy and Strategy framework exists to support disabled access at National, Regional & County Level based on principles of Universal Design & Universal Access, but in practice, delivery is lagging.  |
| 2. Lack of ‘joined-up thinking’ at local, county, and national levels – more integrated action is needed.   |
| 3. The ‘User Voice’ is seldom heard – must be addressed through regular user consultation.  |
| 4. Lack of institutional awareness of common ‘access’ issues / obstacles and best practice – training and capacity building are required for TCC planners, designers, landscape architects, engineers, officers, etc. |
| 5. Excellent practical design ‘guidance’ material exists but tends to be invisible to mainstream planners. This can be address by technical capacity building (see 4 above).  |
| 6. Outdoor Recreational ‘access’ tends to be an after-thought to universal access (in relation to considerations in public buildings and urban public realm delivery.)  |
| 7. Development agencies often are followers rather than leaders.  |

### INFRASTRUCTURE – ‘All the Small Things’

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| 8. Users report that it is ‘ <b>All the Small Things</b> ’ that prohibit them from enjoying access to Outdoor Recreation. A remedial programme to provide Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation in Tipperary is required.  |
| 9. Can we prioritise Accessible Recreation sites needing remedial work (based on audit and consultation feedback). <b>Accessibility should be viewed as a ‘Journey’</b> from digital information to allow pre-planning of the visit to a recreation site, to arrival, parking, facilities and the experience to be enjoyed. Regular feedback from disabled users and formal inspections would ensure a culture of continuous improvement. |
| 10. Community groups, who often drive local recreational facilities face obstacles in provision of accessible recreation infrastructure due to prohibitive insurance/ costs/ risks, require support.  |
| 11. Could <b>Cahir become a national centre of excellence</b> for accessible outdoor recreation & angling? NGOs such as Irish Wheelchair Association (supported by HSE funding) provide residential hotel breaks to provide respite for people with disabilities and their carers.  |

### COMMUNICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIP

|   |
|---|
| 12. Tipperary to lead on a new set of ‘ <b>Signature</b> ’ accessible recreational and angling sites in Tipperary for future investment upgrade and coordinated promotion.  |
| 13. Each person with a disability is required to develop an <b>annual Individual Service Plan</b> to map out specific learnings / experiences the client wishes to participate in – focused integration and planning by TCC and service providers are required to enable clients in Tipperary better access the county’s outdoors recreation. |

## 1.5 The Recommendations

Finally, the Study makes several recommendations for interventions, addressing both :-

### 5.1 Practical Enhancement of Assets

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Detailed Audits &amp; Action Plans for Accessible Recreation Infrastructure Remedial Interventions across County Tipperary</b></p> <p><b>Note:</b><br/> <b>TCC's development of the new Littleton Labyrinth under the Just Transition programme offers a golden opportunity to adopt universal design and access principles for outdoor recreation at the outset, to create a world class accessible destination, while maintaining the integrity of the essential 'wildness' of the site.</b></p> | <p>1.1 Audit in detail the Signature Sites and Satellite Sites identified in this study from accessibility, engineering, safety and public risk perspectives. Develop specifications and outline costings for effective remedial interventions at these sites.</p> <p><b>Priority Requirements at Sites:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible WC &amp; changing facilities,</li> <li>• Car parking, with no barriers, suited to Mobility Minibus;</li> <li>• Removal of steps/ ramps</li> <li>• Access to immersive activities at designated sites e.g. swimming</li> <li>• Suitable surfaces and gradients</li> <li>• e-charging points for Minibus</li> <li>• Launch pads/ transfer benches at blueway / lakeshore sites</li> <li>• Accessible swimming aids / ramps at designated bathing sites</li> <li>• Accessible specialist information / maps/ apps in appropriate style.</li> </ul> <p>1.2 Develop focussed 'Action Plans' at selected priority sites in Tipperary in short to medium term, as follows:</p> <p><b>Signature Sites:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Littleton Labyrinth/ including L. Doire Bhile</li> <li>2. Cahir Castle to Swiss Cottage</li> <li>3. Clonmel-Kilsheelan-Carrick-on-Suir Blueway</li> <li>4. Ballina Amenity Park</li> <li>5. Fethard Townpark</li> </ol> <p><b>Satellite Sites:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dromineer lakeshore</li> <li>• Templemore Townpark</li> <li>• Cabragh Wetlands</li> <li>• Dundrum Marl Bog</li> <li>• Kildanogue Wildfowl Reserve</li> <li>• Garrykennedy marina</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2. Capacity Building for Designers, Planners, Engineers and Architects within TCC</b></p>   | <p>Design and deliver a bespoke training course annually for relevant technical staff / officers on all aspects of universal design and accessible outdoor recreation.</p>  |
| <p><b>3. Cahir as a new Disability Access Destination</b></p>   | <p>Add value to the town of Cahir through delivery of enhanced recreational / angling offerings. Through a fully integrated universal design approach, ensure that accommodation, transport, outdoor infrastructure, visitor attractions, communications and evening facilities service the needs of all.</p>   |
| <p><b>4. Access for All to Tipperary's primary 'Blue' recreation sites.</b></p>   | <p>Provide accessibility for swimming at designated bathing sites, with relevant aids.</p> <p>Secure funding and commission <b>two bespoke craft</b> to provide disability users and anglers access to Lough Derg and Suir Blueway.</p>   |

### 5.2 Communications

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| <p><b>5. Coordination of all Online Communications / Messaging</b></p> | <p>Development of an integrated online platform composing web portal, managed social media feeds, online contact database, and related research / policy downloads.</p> |
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| 6. Coordinated Universal Access-Focused Signage   | The development of a suite of branded signage and maps for key sites to support the enhanced delivery of universal access within the county. This may include, in time, mapping of sensory gardens for access to nature. |
| 7. Full integration of principles of universal access into Tipperary County Council recreational and tourism promotion ‘messaging’. | Embrace the potential to contemporise the copy and imagery employed by TCC to promote Tipperary through reflecting and speaking to visitors with all levels of mobility and awareness.                                   |
| 8. Knowledge sharing among partners within the county.  | Ensure optimum links are being shared among partners (public, NGO’s, charities, agencies).   |
| 9. Bespoke Recreational and Angling ‘Packages’ for mobility-constrained users / visitors.   | Strategically identify a small number of new recreational / tourism ‘packages’ that speak to the needs, preferences, and budgets of those with disabilities (and their carers).  |

### 5.3 Management, Partnerships and Synergy

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 10. Greater Tipperary County Council internal corporation, formal structures, and information sharing on all aspects of Universal Access. | <p>Consultation process confirms the need to improve internal networking within the council structure.</p> <p>Establish a multi-disciplinary ‘<b>Steering Group</b>’ led by a Director of Services to lead accessibility initiatives.</p> <p>The terms of reference for the group would be to ensure the Study is suitably implemented and resources are deployed optimally.</p>  |
| 11. Inter-regional Cooperation on Recreational Access for All   | <p>Tipperary’s recreational ‘offering’ is partly defined by two inter-county assets: Lough Derg and Munster Vales. An opportunity exists for multi-county steering groups to embrace selected accessibility opportunities to provide tailored universal access provision.</p> <p>Adopting the principle would send out a significant message that Tipperary is taking practical universal access seriously.</p>   |
| 12 Informing and supporting annual ‘ <i>Individual Service Plans</i> ’ for people with disabilities in Tipperary.                         | <p>Each Tipperary person with a formal disability has an annual <b>Individual Service Plan</b> agreed. Such ISPs lay-out what the individual wishes to learn / experience each year. In future, access to outdoor recreation should be a central part of the ISPs, subject to delivery of accessible facilities.</p>  |
| 13 Addressing the Recreational Knowledge Deficit through a comprehensive User Survey.   | <p>Currently, there is little qualitative or quantitative user research on disability needs, experiences, and recommendations. Users have been invisible in design and provision of recreational infrastructure to date. A comprehensive <b>Recreational User Online Survey</b> from a universal access perspective (promoted through all relevant partners) once every 2 to 3 years would be welcome addition to the collective knowledge providing, benchmarks, facilities, and operational feedback.</p> |



*Access to outdoor recreation is the right of all people, irrespective of age or ability.*

*Photo: courtesy [www.outsideonline.com](http://www.outsideonline.com)*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Tipperary County Council commissioned an audit of accessibility of outdoor recreation and angling to make strategic recommendations for development of accessible tourism experiences in the coming decade, and to make robust recommendations for appropriate interventions to meet demand.

Alan Hill Tourism Development Ltd (**Alan Hill**), working with **Deirdre Lewis**, was appointed by **Tipperary County Council (TCC)** in late 2023, to conduct an audit of accessible outdoor recreation and angling facilities across County Tipperary, and to make recommendations for strategic interventions to enhance access for people of all ages and abilities.

The aim is to develop strategic recommendations for the effective development of accessible experiences in the context of increasing tourism demand and expectations of accessibility for all for the coming decade.

The findings of the audit, stakeholder consultations, policy research, analysis, and recommendations, conducted between December 2023 and March 2024, are presented below.

### 2.1 Terms of Reference

Tipperary County Council required the conduct of an audit of all outdoor recreation and angling activities in County Tipperary to develop a clearly defined road map to enhance the accessibility of the outdoor tourism offer, as a fundamental contributor to tourism development across Tipperary.

**The core requirements are: -**

- Provision of an Audit of all Accessible Outdoor Recreation Activities in County Tipperary.
- Provision of an Audit of all Angling facilities in County Tipperary.
- Review of Audit and Recommendations for future works and development that could improve accessibility of outdoor recreation facilities into the future in County Tipperary.
- Review of Audit and Recommendations for future works and development that could improve angling facilities into the future in County Tipperary.

### 2.2 Context for the Audit

The aim of this audit, the first of its kind in Ireland, is to provide a snapshot of recreational and angling access for people of all ages and abilities within the county, to help identify future needs and interventions. It comes from the perspective that broader outdoors recreational access is often difficult, if non-existent, for the majority of more than **38,600 people (23% of the county's population)** who reported experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty (based on Census 2022).

This aligns with major national moves towards making Ireland more accessible and inclusive for more than 1 million people living with some form of long-lasting disability. The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (ratified by Ireland in 2018) ensures the rights of all people with disabilities to equal access in all areas of life. At a county level Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 speaks about '**access for all to tourism, sport, and recreation assets in Tipperary.**' (Objective 9.1).

The rate of people living with a disability varies county-wise and nationally with the definition of the severity from 8% to 22% of total population, but this suggests that in a rural county like Tipperary, there are a considerable number of people with rights (and needs) to outdoors access who are being disadvantaged.

This document is an attempt to practically flag-up some of the obstacles and challenges through greater partnership and understanding begin to build recreational *access for all* in Tipperary.

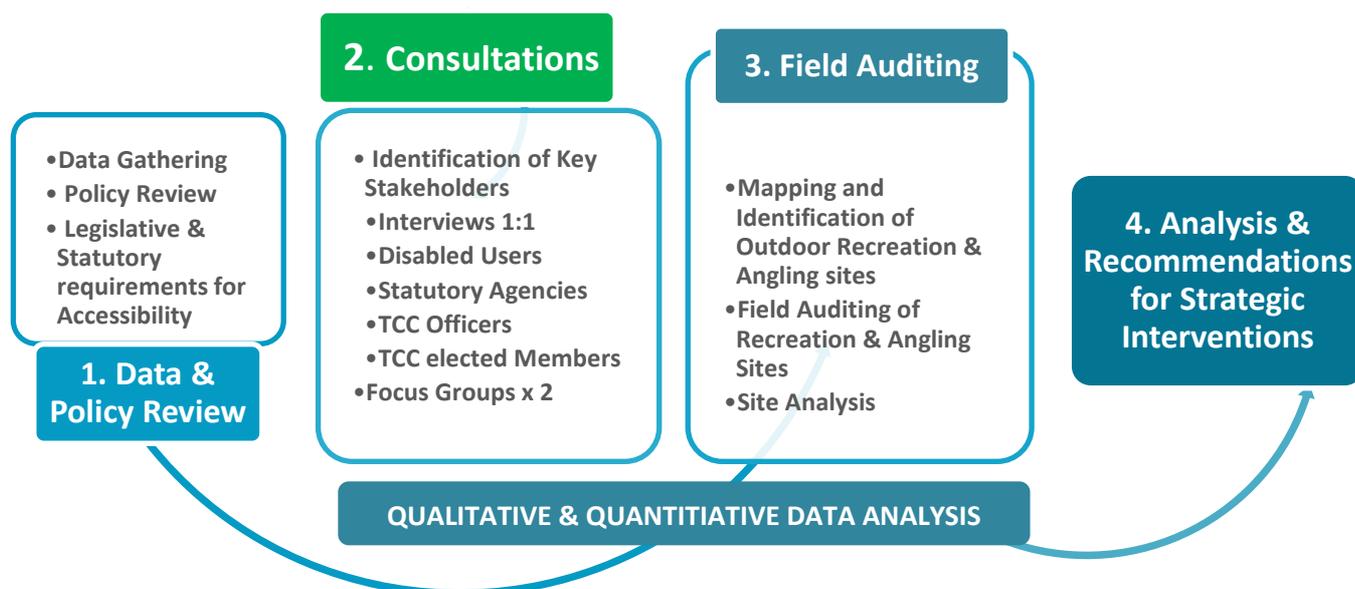
The recommendations aim to identify strategic interventions that will support and enhance Tipperary’s tourism offer as being accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

## 2.3 Methodology

A 4-phased approach to research, consultations, auditing and analysis was adopted, working in phases with the support of the Tourism Office of Tipperary County Council.

**Phase 1:** An initial **data gathering** phase was undertaken to understand the current level of the accessible outdoor recreational tourism offer across Tipperary. It is notable that many of the most accessible sites are held in public ownership or under public management (e.g. TCC, Coillte, NPWS, Waterways Ireland). An in-depth **policy review** was conducted during this stage, to provide the context for accessible outdoor recreation from international, European, regional and national strategic perspectives. This initial research phase also pointed towards special interest guidelines and best practice in the field.

Figure 1 Methodology - Accessibility Audit of Outdoor Recreation



**In Phase 2**, extensive **stakeholder consultations** were undertaken using a variety of methods, including one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders across Tipperary from both the *supply* (providers and promoters of recreational infrastructure in the county) and *demand* side (the users and their representative bodies) of the recreational and angling spectrum. Consultees included statutory authorities who manage recreational amenities; disability authorities, groups and disabled recreational users; TCC elected members and national sports governing bodies. Two focus groups were convened with (i) disability representatives/ carers and (ii) with TCC decision makers.

One-to-one interviews were held with more than 30 individuals, together with a rolling engagement with TCC’s project coordinator. Multiple perspectives fed into the process from support agencies, users and their families, disability charities, and relevant officers and elected members of Tipperary County Council.

All of the consultee data were recorded and aggregated to provide anonymised responses, to ultimately define key findings from the combined responses (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

**In Phase 3**, field audits were undertaken across the five Municipal Districts (MDs) of County Tipperary. In total, thirty-three (33) outdoor recreation sites were audited in depth, using a designed templated checklist. Each parameter was accorded a score, and each site was scored for each, leading to a final score for each site.

**In Phase 4**, the research and analysis allowed the team to formulate recommendations for strategic interventions. Should these interventions be acted upon, Tipperary will be positioned as Ireland’s premier county for accessible outdoor recreation and angling, focused on defined centres of excellence supported by smaller satellite accessible sites offering a full range of accessible activities across the county.

Finally, based on the combined results, the Study makes several recommendations for strategic interventions addressing four distinct areas: -

- Practical Enhancement of Assets;
- Communications;
- Management and Organisation; and
- Partnerships and Synergy.



*Access to the Outdoors and Nature is good for mind and body – for ALL of us*  
Photo: courtesy of Unsplash <https://unsplash.com>

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT FOR ACCESSIBLE RECREATION

This chapter reviews the strategic policy context that will underpin the development of accessible outdoor recreation in Tipperary, within the wider framework of sustainable tourism objectives for Ireland.

#### 3.1 Outdoor Recreation – what do we mean?

At the outset, it is important be clear what is meant by ‘Outdoor Recreation’ based on the definition in the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2028<sup>3</sup>.

**Outdoor recreation means activities that take place in the natural environment, such as walking, canoeing, angling, mountain biking, orienteering and wild swimming, among a range of other activities. These include active land-, water- and air-based activities, including other passive activities in the outdoors such as birdwatching (Figure 2).**

Figure 2 Activities included in Outdoor Recreation

|  |  |  |
|--|--|---|
| Land-Based   | Water-Based  | Air-Based   |
| Walking  | Canoeing/Kayaking  | Paragliding   |
| Hillwalking/Hiking   | Rowing   | Hang-gliding  |
| Leisure cycling  | Wild swimming  |   |
| Mountain biking  | Surfing  |   |
| Horse riding   | Coasteering  |   |
| Running  | Wind surfing/Kite surfing  |   |
| Orienteering   | Sailing  |   |
| Bouldering, Scrambling, Rockclimbing, Mountaineering                               | Diving   |   |
| Caving   | Angling  |   |
| Play in nature   | Stand Up Paddleboarding  |   |
| Passive enjoyment of the outdoors  |  |   |

from: *Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors – National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027*

It is notable that this definition does not include pitch-based sports such as tennis, golf, football, hurling, athletics, equestrian centres, thus these activities are not included in this study.

<sup>3</sup> gov - Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors - National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027 ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

## 3.2 Universal Design & Access – what do we mean?

Universal design is a philosophy of design, which envisages that design of a building, product or service from the outset and throughout should meet the needs of all people who wish to use it, regardless of age, size, ability, or disability.

**The principles of good universal design include that something can be used equally or equitably by people with diverse abilities, is easy to understand or navigate, requires low physical effort, and can be approached, reached, and used by people regardless of their size or mobility.**



Centre for Excellence  
in Universal Design

<https://universaldesign.ie>

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Ireland in 2018, ensures the rights of all people with disabilities to equal access in all areas of life. The UNCRPD endorses Universal Design as the preferred approach, which shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

The EU states that all public institutions and tourism businesses should aim to be universally accessible and create barrier-free access to amenities<sup>4</sup>. This means ensuring products and services are **accessible** to all people, regardless of their physical or intellectual limitations, disabilities or age. There are various types of accessibility:

- **physical accessibility** – improving spaces and infrastructure to create an environment where people of all abilities can move around freely;
- **communication accessibility** – helping people with communication difficulties to get their message across via tools and trained staff;
- **web accessibility** – making booking services and related websites easier to access.

Further to Ireland's Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, the **Disability Act 2005** put the onus on public bodies to make buildings and services as accessible as possible. Local authorities have particular obligations under Section 25 of the Disability Act; however, the Act only mandates accessibility for public buildings and services.

Since the introduction of **the Disability Act** in 2005, the 2010 Building Regulations have been revised with Universal Design in mind. The technical requirements of Part M 2010 of the Building Regulations focus on ensuring that adequate provision shall be made for all people to access and use a building, its facilities and its environs<sup>5</sup>, with guidance and specifications around how designs should be made accessible.

The Changing Places regulations (2022) aim to ensure that public amenities should have accessible changing places and WC access for all.

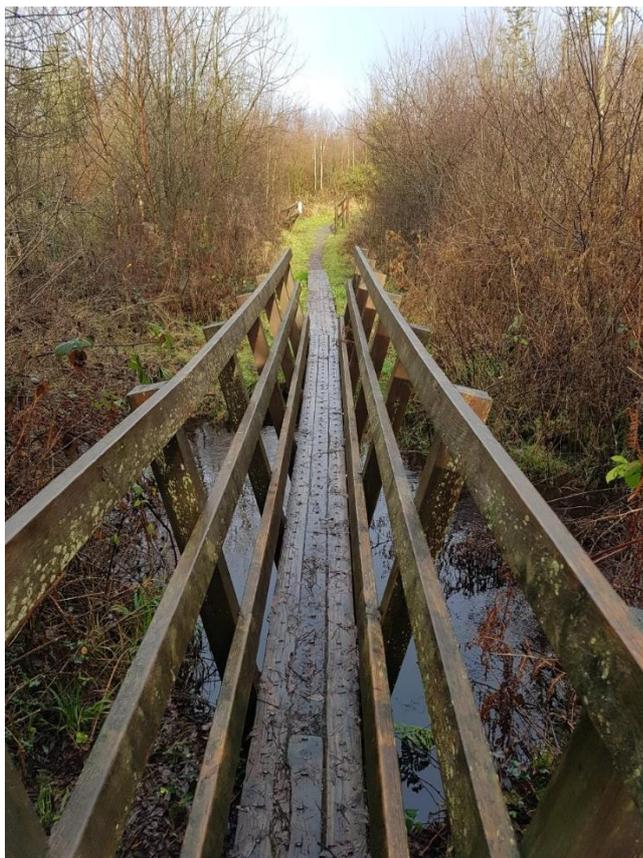
<sup>4</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/tourism/eu-funding-and-businesses/business-portal/accessibility\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/tourism/eu-funding-and-businesses/business-portal/accessibility_en)

<sup>5</sup> [scsi.ie/disability-access-in-buildings-part-m-of-the-building-regulations/](https://scsi.ie/disability-access-in-buildings-part-m-of-the-building-regulations/)

From the perspective of Tipperary, accessible tourism aims to allow tourist destinations to be enjoyed equally by everyone. The accessibility of tourism and recreational spaces may be seen as an opportunity for differentiation and as a way to attract new visitors.

For a fuller review of policies that influence accessibility, see Section 3.5 below and Appendix 2.

***The lack of universal design means that many outdoor recreational amenities are inaccessible for wheelchair users or people of low mobility such as older citizens.***



*(Inaccessible) narrow bridge leading to bog walks at Scohaboy Bog, Co Tipperary  
Photo: Deirdre Lewis, January 2024*

### 3.3 Demographic Profile of Tipperary

It is pertinent to review the demographic profile of Tipperary to inform the audits and analysis.

The Census of Population of Ireland in 2022<sup>6</sup> indicates that the population of Tipperary was **167,895**, demonstrating +5% growth since the 2016 Census. The population is relatively young, with an average age of 40.3 years, albeit somewhat older than the national average (38.8 years).

The numbers of people **living with disability in Tipperary**, “with at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent” is estimated (based on national data) as 8% of the population or approximately **13,432 people**, a very significant minority (Table 1).

<sup>6</sup> [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)

**Table 1 Demographic Profile of County Tipperary (Census 2022)**

| DEMOGRAPHIC FACTOR  | TIPPERARY                                      | IRELAND                | NOTE                                     |
|---|--|------------------------|--|
| Total Population  | 167,895  | 5,149,139              | Tipp +5% growth since 2016 (+8% Ireland) |
| No. Children <15yrs   | 33,286   |                        | 37% in childcare                         |
| Average Household Size  | 2.67   | 2.74                   |  |
| In Employment   | 73,207   |                        | +15% since 2016 (+16% Ireland)           |
| Average Age   | 40.3 years                                     | 38.8 years             | Tipp 38.6yrs in 2016                     |
| Nos. >65 Years  | 29,356 (17.48%)                                | 776,315                | Tipp +20% since 2016                     |
| Males   | 83,369   | 2,604,590              |  |
| Females   | 84,256   | 2,544,549              |  |
| No. Living alone  | 15,316   |                        | +4% since 2016                           |
| Health  | 83% self assess as: Good/ Very Good            |                        | 87% in 2016                              |
| Total population living with at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to some extent | [37,377 estimate] @22% of Tipperary population | 1,109,000 <sup>7</sup> | 22% of Irish population                  |
| Total population with at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent     | [13,432 estimate] @8% of Tipperary population  | 407,342                | 8% of the population                     |

People living with disabilities have a right to access outdoor recreation under the UN Declaration of Human Rights and Ireland’s Disability Act 2005, among other commitments.

**The 2016 Census showed that 60% of people with physical disabilities in Ireland said it impacted their ability to participate in leisure and other activities, while 50% experienced difficulty going outside alone.**

It is in this context that the audit of accessible outdoor recreation was undertaken.

### 3.4 Tourism Baseline Performance

In 2019, Ireland welcomed almost 9.7 million **overseas visitors**, the majority of whom came from Britain, mainland Europe and North America, spending €9.5 billion<sup>8</sup>. The most recent national tourism data for **domestic visitors** confirms that we took 13.3 million internal trips, which resulted in 34 million bed nights with a spend of €2.9 billion in 2022 (Failte Ireland<sup>9</sup>). Tourism is thus highly valuable to regional economies.

**The World Health Organisation estimates that 15-20% of the global population experience disability at some stage of their lives. This group, along with their families, friends and carers, has an estimated spending power of US \$13 trillion. Extensive research highlights the enduring benefits of inclusive policies and accessibility strategies in the public and private sectors, leading to increased innovation, with positive economic benefits<sup>10</sup>.**

<sup>7</sup> [Disability - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Tourism Facts 2019 Final March 2021 \(failteireland.ie\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Failte Ireland - Tourism Research & Statistics | Irish Tourism Statistics | Tourism Reports](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Driving disability inclusion is a business imperative | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#)

Irish domestic visitors in 2022 engaged in an array of **outdoor recreation**, including walking (54%), hiking (13%), cycling (9%), swimming (37%), boat tours (10%) watersports (6%) and angling (4%), all of which are readily available in County Tipperary.

Fáilte Ireland's *Tourism Barometer Survey* in January 2024 reported that visitor levels in 2023 were significantly up in some sectors, although businesses are concerned with rising energy and payroll costs. Regional operators in both *Ireland's Ancient East* (including South-Mid-East Tipperary) and *Ireland's Hidden Heartlands* (including Northwest Tipperary) reported growth in visitor numbers above those of 2022. However, availability and costs of accommodation are having a significant knock-on effect on smaller attractions and activities.

The recent '**Elevate Tipperary Tourism**' Conference hosted in Cashel by TCC Tourism Office (February 2024<sup>11</sup>), provide a snapshot of the performance of County Tipperary's tourism performance. The trends in Tipperary mirror the national figures to some extent, with particular concerns among accommodation providers regarding both domestic and international markets.

**Should Tipperary add the concept of 'Accessible Tourism' to its offering, then it stands to become a unique destination in Ireland, offering accessible outdoor recreational holiday opportunities for families and people living with disabilities, with realisable socio-economic benefits across the county.**

### 3.5 Strategic Policy Context

This review looks at the variety of strategic policy influences on the future development of accessible outdoor recreation in County Tipperary at international/ European, national, regional and local levels.

Full details of the policy research are presented in Appendix 1, while the following identifies the most salient policies that will influence accessible tourism in Tipperary in the coming decade.

These cascading influences include, *inter alia*, public health and participation in sports and recreation, climate, biodiversity, spatial planning and tourism strategies. These combined policies and strategies will assist in setting the future strategic development of tourism / recreation for Tipperary, including access for people living with disabilities.

Under the new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2023-2028)**, counties are urged to offer accessible walks, trails, blueways and angling amenities for citizens and visitors of all abilities. This ambition should align with relevant policies that influence various aspects of the socio-economic development across the county, including sports & recreation, health & well-being, and sustainable tourism.

It is notable in a national context that there is currently no **Outdoor Recreation Strategy** or related **Walking & Cycling Strategy** for County Tipperary. However, in January 2024, there was an announcement by the Minister for Rural & Community Development (DRCD) of funding availability for all counties to create an Outdoor Recreation plan in line with the objectives of the **National Outdoor Recreation 2023-2027 (see below)**. There is scope within this future plan for Tipperary to position 'universal access' at the heart of all of its future recreational offering.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [Conference - Tipperary Tourism](#)

<sup>12</sup> It is understood (April 2024) that funding has been allocated to TCC to develop an Outdoor Recreation Plan and with plans for a complementary Sport Action Plan.

In a national context, County Tipperary now has a significant opportunity to be a leader in provision of universally accessible outdoor options for all. This should be based on sound principles of social inclusion and sustainability, particularly in the use of natural and cultural assets to provide universal access to the Great Outdoors where possible.

### 3.5.1 International & National Policy Context

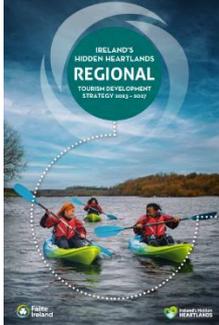
Key international and national policies and plans will strongly influence the future development and resourcing of tourism in Tipperary (Table 2).

**Table 2 Key International & National Policies that influence Tourism Development**

| POLICY PLANS & STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN POLICIES</b>  |  |
| <p><b>United Nations (UN) Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities</b></p>  | <p>The UNCRPD is an international human rights treaty intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons living with disabilities.</p> <p><b>Article 9 obliges State Parties</b> ‘...to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications....., and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. These measures ...shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility”.</p> <p>Ireland ratified the Convention in March 2018.</p>   |
| <p><b>United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals</b></p>  | <p>The SDGs were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity across the planet. SDGs recognize that disability is an issue that cuts across all aspects of development.</p> <p>The SDGs <b>explicitly include disability and persons living with disabilities</b>, specifically in the parts related to Education, Growth and Employment, Inequality and <b>Accessibility</b>.</p>  |
| <b>IRELAND – NATIONAL PLANNING &amp; TOURISM &amp; POLICIES</b>   |  |
| <p><b>National Planning Framework Project 2040</b></p>  | <p>Project 2040 sets out ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO), with supporting funds, to guide future development, centred on planning for sustainable growth, connectivity, enterprise, innovation and transition to low carbon, resilient communities within an inclusive society.</p> <p>The NPF noted that a significant proportion of the population will experience disability at some stage in their lives, particularly as the population ages. This is reflected in National Policy Objectives 27 and 28. Project 2024 goes on to state (p.84)</p> <p><b>“.....Providing access of opportunity to citizens of Ireland is not a finite exercise, particularly where distinct and tailored solutions are required to continually address the needs of our citizens, particularly those who remain vulnerable or marginalised.”</b></p> |
| <p><b>National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2017-2021</b></p>   | <p>NDIS represents a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities. The National Disability Authority (NDA) works to support its implementation with the Dept of CEDiy as the formal coordinating body for the Strategy. The roll-out aims to deliver on Ireland’s obligations in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified in 2018 (see above). The ambitious Strategy has 125</p>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth</b> – in association with <b>National Disability Authority</b></p> <p><i>Note: A new National Disability Inclusion Strategy is anticipated to be published in late 2024 with consultations currently on-going.</i></p> | <p>actions spread over eight key themes, including: Equality and choice; Joined-up policies and public services; Education; Employment; Health and well-being; Person-centred disability services; Living in the community and <b>Transport and accessible places.</b></p> <p>The NDA also references good practice and guidance documents for universal design and access, presented in more detail in Appendix 2. In particular, Active Disability Ireland have a series of publications on outdoor recreation, including beaches, playgrounds, trails and public parks: <a href="https://activedisability.ie/resources/outdoors/">https://activedisability.ie/resources/outdoors/</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Best Practice Access Guidelines: Designing Accessible Environments</b></p> <p><b>Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA)</b><br/>                 Edition 4, November 2020</p>  | <p>This evidence-based document understands the concept of accessible design from a human rights perspective where disability is understood, nationally and internationally, to arise from the interaction between a person’s health condition or impairment and multiple influencing factors within their environment (including access to outdoor recreation).</p> <p>The IWA has developed guidance in universal design and access: <a href="https://www.iwa.ie/app/uploads/access-guidelines/best-practice-access-guidelines/3188_IWA_Best_Practice_Access_Guidelines_4.pdf">https://www.iwa.ie/app/uploads/access-guidelines/best-practice-access-guidelines/3188_IWA_Best_Practice_Access_Guidelines_4.pdf</a></p> <p>The development of the 2022 national <a href="#">Building Regulations (Part M Amendment) Regulations 2022 (S.I. No. 608 of 2022)</a> means that accessible changing places will enable people with complex care needs to take part in everyday activities nationwide– see <a href="#">Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use 2022</a></p> |
| <p><b>Get Ireland Active: National Physical Activity Plan (2016) with annual implementation reviews undertaken to latest (2022)</b><br/> <b>Department of Health</b></p>   | <p>The <b>National Physical Activity Plan (and updates)</b><sup>13</sup>, emerging from <i>Healthy Ireland Framework</i> and other policies, all point to the need for increased physical activity by the populace. These are supported by various activity initiatives such as <i>Get Ireland Walking! Get Ireland Cycling!</i> etc.</p> <p>The aim of the National Physical Activity Plan is to increase physical activity levels across the whole population, including marginalised groups and <b>people living with disabilities</b>, to improve the health and wellbeing of all.</p> <p>Action 49 of the plan seeks to ensure that no group is disadvantaged and <b>recognises that targeted interventions are required to address and overcome barriers to participation</b> which are experienced by some people.</p>   |
| <p><b>National Climate Action Plan 2021</b><br/> <b>Dept. Environment, Climate and Communications (Nov. 2021)</b></p>   | <p>The Climate Action Plan 2021 provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, as set out in the Climate Act 2021. This Plan will cascade downwards to all regional and county development plans. The Action Plan sets out 493 actions to be taken across all Government Departments and Agencies, in association with enterprise, agriculture, energy industries, as well as civil society.</p> <p><b>Ten actions are specifically focused on Sustainable Tourism (which includes accessibility), principally on outdoor recreation and connectivity, including greenways, blueways and peatways, with measurable targets to reduce the impacts of tourism on the environment.</b></p>  |
| <p><b>National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2023-2027)</b></p>   | <p>The contribution access to outdoor recreation makes to our physical and mental wellbeing is well recognised. The NORS provides an overarching framework for the development of outdoor recreation in Ireland, to focus</p>   |

<sup>13</sup> <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Get-Ireland-Active-the-National-Physical-Activity-Plan.pdf>

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Department of Rural &amp; Community Development/<br/>                 Comhairle na Tuaithe</b></p> <p><b>Embracing Ireland's Outdoors<br/>                 National Outdoor Recreation Strategy<br/>                 2023-2027</b></p>  | <p>integrated delivery with clearly articulated objectives, actions, and responsibility for delivery across many agencies.</p> <p>The NORS adopts six strategic objectives, including <b>Leadership; Environment; Awareness; Opportunities; Access</b> and <b>Expertise</b> for delivery by key partners in recreational development countrywide.</p> <p>The NORS Strategy addresses inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes that 6-7 % of young people under the age of 20 have a disability (<i>while the total population of adults living with Disability in Ireland based on Census 2022 may be as high as 10.5%</i>).</li> <li>• Refers to measures nationally that aim to be as inclusive as possible irrespective of ability, with a focus on participation and engagement.</li> <li>• Promotes Sport Ireland/ CARA/ Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of all sports in Ireland to provide integrated guidance on development of accessible infrastructure, which will encourage people of all abilities to venture into the Outdoors.</li> </ul> <p>Application of best practice, common standards, sustained resourcing, and funding will aim to increase participation of citizens of all abilities in outdoor recreation for societal wellbeing over the next five years.</p> <p><b>Application of the NORS has the capacity to underpin accessible recreation and tourism-related economic development in Tipperary.</b></p> |
| <p><b>Ireland's Hidden Heartlands<br/>                 Tourism Development Strategy<br/>                 2022-2026 -Fáilte Ireland</b></p>    | <p>The Strategy aims to deliver its 10-year vision that Ireland's Hidden Heartlands will be one of Europe's leading regenerative tourism destinations "where tourism works to create flourishing places and thriving communities". The Heartlands are highly valued for the environmental qualities and biodiversity and easy access to the outdoors and nature.</p> <p><b>Strategic Focus 5 (3.5.3):</b> Accessibility is a central element of sustainable development, enabling all people to participate in and enjoy tourism experiences. <b>Improved accessibility to basic infrastructure and tourism amenities is essential in meeting the needs and requirements of all visitors to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. This .... also addresses the importance of creating universally designed environments to support people with physical needs, the increasing ageing population and those who have difficulty with mobility or access to information.</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Ireland's Ancient East: Eastern<br/>                 Region Tourism Development<br/>                 Strategy 2022-2026 - Fáilte Ireland</b></p>    | <p><i>Ireland's Ancient East</i> was launched in 2015 to unify the eastern region as an internationally marketable tourism proposition. By 2019, tourism in IAE was worth €1.7bn to the region's economy, supporting c. 55,000 jobs. Fáilte Ireland's goal is to make <b><i>Ireland's Ancient East</i> the most personally engaging cultural destination in Europe</b> by harnessing the authentic character of its living culture, landscapes, and hidden history to create unique visitor experiences and support vibrant communities. Tipperary has significant potential to create accessible outdoor experiences for visitors to the region as its key calling card.</p>   |
| <p><b>Sustaining Tourism in Ireland:<br/>                 Understanding the Opportunity<br/>                 (2022)<br/>                 Fáilte Ireland</b></p>  | <p>This document aims to identify opportunities available to the Irish tourism industry based on internationally benchmarked research. It encourages Irish Tourism to adopt the principles of sustainability in each of Accommodation, Restaurants/bars/ cafés; Activities; and Attractions. Travellers are increasingly sustainability minded, and are demanding immersive experiences, with opportunities to connect with nature, local culture, authentic meetings with local people and communities, which should be accessible, with minimal impacts on the environment.</p>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|                   | <p>Many of these opportunities are achievable in Tipperary, given the current baseline offering and accessible proposals emerging.</p>   |
| <p><b>EU LEADER – Rural Development Programme (2023- 2027)</b></p>                                 | <p>Since 1991, the LEADER RDP has provided rural communities with funding, supports and resources to actively engage in and direct the local development of their own area, through community-led local development. LEADER has supported projects and initiatives in enterprise, farm diversification, <b>tourism</b>, community facilities, social inclusion, and climate action. Within Economic (1) strand of this current LEADER Programme, Rural Tourism and Recreation are core elements and will offer significant supports to rural activities and enterprises.</p>   |
| <p><b>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 Southern Regional Assembly (RSES)</b></p> | <p>The RSES sets out a 12-year policy for the Southern Region through regeneration and growth of sustainable and transformative projects, meeting highest standards in innovation, design &amp; place making. It recognises the strong urban centres and rural hinterlands of the region, with <b>areas of recreation and tourism based on assets of high environmental quality</b>. The Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) as set out in the RSES are highly supportive of integrated development of tourism, outdoor recreation, and amenities, for citizens and visitors to the region.</p>  |
| <p><b>TIPPERARY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TOURISM)</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Tipperary County Development Plan (2019-2025)</b></p>  | <p>Tipperary has an actively growing tourism economy and international visitors are attracted by strong natural and heritage assets and an abundance of activities for all ages and abilities.</p> <p><b>Objective 9 of the Council commits to the following (in brief) -</b></p> <p><b>9 - A</b> a) Continue to collaborate with other tourism stakeholders in the development of emerging attractions and activities .....</p> <p><b>9 - B</b> Support the development of Tipperary as a national leader in ‘Responsible Tourism’ .....</p> <p><b>9 – C</b> Support the implementation of ‘<i>Tipperary Marketing, Experience &amp; Destination Development Plan (2016-2021)</i> and ‘<i>Tipperary Transforming</i>’ and associated tourism strategies and plans.</p> <p><b>9 - D</b> Develop a ‘Greenway and Trails Strategy’, and to support and seek funding opportunities for the development of green and blue ways, incorporating walking, cycling and equine trails.</p> <p><b>9 - E</b> To continue to enhance and re-imagine the towns and villages as visitor-led tourism destinations, through collaborative heritage and tourism-led regeneration programmes and projects.</p> <p><b>9 - F</b> To co-operate with all relevant bodies and agencies, in promoting the county’s waterways and Lough Derg Lakelands.</p> <p><b>9 - G</b> To collaborate with Fáilte Ireland, TII &amp; key stakeholders in development and implementation of digital technology enhancement.</p> <p><b>9 - H</b> To support, encourage and promote sports tourism.</p> <p><b>9 - I</b> <b>To support the provision of accessible tourism in Tipperary, thereby ensuring that facilities are accessible to people with mobility issues, people with learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairment, young children, and elderly people.</b></p> |

### 3.6 Best Practice in delivery of Accessible Recreation

This section explores how other jurisdictions (e.g. EU, UK, Canada, and USA) have learned from providing accessible recreational opportunities for all: including systems that have been adopted; resources required; partnership and engagement models; and ultimately, what ‘good’ practice looks like.

Tipperary may learn from the experience of both Ireland and other jurisdictions in delivery of best practice. Sample international case studies are presented below, where each provides slightly different learnings (but importantly all acknowledging that they are on a journey, far from arrival at a satisfactory ‘end point’). A more in-depth review is presented in Appendix 3.

#### Project 1: Victoria Regional Parks, Canada<sup>14</sup>

Canada is likely the global leader where ‘accessibility for all’ is enshrined in policy and guidelines (both national and regional). Universal design and access principles are adopted and followed up with varied measures from changing attitudes, training and capacity building, to delivery of practical facilities and recruitment of disabled staff/ volunteers.

##### Practical Learnings from Victoria Parks, Canada:

Some specific learnings from Canada to make recreation in parks and trails more inclusive:

- Universal access to points of interest
- Smooth, even trail surfaces
- Opportunities to sit and rest along trail routes
- Use of grades and ramps instead of stairs
- Use of symbols to indicate trail difficulty
- Placement of park benches at accessible viewpoints
- Digital and print-based public information identifying accessible park and trail experiences.
- Development of universally designed picnic areas.
- Recruitment of disabled recreational users as volunteer advisors.

#### Project 2: Supporting Inclusive Outdoor Access in the UK: Outdoor Accessibility Guidance (2023)

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-18April2023.pdf>

The Sensory Trust (UK) is a leading authority on inclusive and sensory design. They use the outdoors to improve the health and wellness for all. This contemporary (2023) national research and guidance are insightful and practical, flagging some excellent examples of ‘*how to*’ that could be adopted in Tipperary. The document provides a step-by-step guide on how to re-engineer mainstream recreational infrastructure to make it more ‘universally friendly’ for all.

##### Practical Solutions to Prioritising Access Improvements:

When planning physical access improvements, and with limited budgets, it is important to identify:

- Which barriers can be removed, e.g. simply leaving a gap vs. a restrictive kissing gate.
- Which barriers can be avoided, e.g. creating an alternative route to bypass steps.
- Which barriers can be mediated e.g. adding seating alongside a gradient or replacing a tricky stiff bolt with an easy access latch on a gate.
- Which barriers are a priority for action e.g. uneven path, steps, stiles, and steep gradients.

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<sup>14</sup> Victoria Regional Parks, Canada - Everyone’s Parks and Trails: A Universal Access Plan for CRD Parks - <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/everyone's-parks-and-trails-a-universal-access-plan-for-crd-parks.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

### The Visitor Journey – The Access Chain

The Sensory Trust’s ‘**Access Chain**’ is a useful approach, which was developed to ensure that access planning starts with the decision to go somewhere; followed by the journey, then the experience itself, and ending with a safe return home. If any link in the chain is broken then what should be an enjoyable day out, can turn to disappointment, or may never happen. It is a good basis for reviewing or planning access.

#### Practical Actions to Improve Recreational Access

- Visitor Centre / Indoor Facilities
- Staff and Volunteer Awareness
- Toilets / Changing Facilities
- Car Parking
- Routes and Wider Access
- Play Facilities
- Information Provision for ALL
- Interpretation
- Events
- Building Relationships (**listening to users**)

#### Practical Examples of Good, Simple Practice

- Seats near a path, with space for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs ensure that people can sit and enjoy the space together.
- Careful location of seating ensures that blind and partially sighted people find the seating easily and it does not cause an unexpected hazard or obstacle.
- Seating layout impacts on how people can sit and have a conversation e.g. using sign language.
- Provide arm rests and accessible seating locations and angles.
- Seating - make the most of existing features such as boulders or clay banks. While incidental opportunities to sit shouldn’t replace more inclusively designed seating, the use of existing features such as fallen trees can be a bonus for walkers.
- Tables with seating that is not fixed and can be moved is more flexible for everyone. Comfortable table height ensures a wheelchair user can sit up to the table.

### Project 3: USA National Parks/ Adaptive Outdoor Recreation

<https://www.travelbreatherepeat.com/accessible-outdoor-activities/>

Also: <https://www.nationalparks.org/explore/programs/accessibility-all-americans>.

The American National Parks Service has been a world leader in accessibility since the first park was designated in Yellowstone (1872).

Currently there are 63 parks spread across 30 states, all with deeply embedded universal access principles and innovative practices to facilitate as many people as possible, of all abilities to enjoy the outdoors, through a process known as Adaptive Outdoor Recreation. This embedded culture provides activity opportunities on hiking trails, mountain biking and on-water for people living with disabilities.

### Project 4: European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) [www.accessibletourism.org](http://www.accessibletourism.org)

Accessible tourism is of growing international interest, and an EU network was established in 2006 to share best practice and learnings for accessible tourism across member states.

The **European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)** is a **non-profit association** that brings together tourism enterprises, organisations, and individuals to evaluate good practices: ENAT aims to evaluate and endorse good practices related to accessible tourism. By leveraging the knowledge and experience of its network members, ENAT works to improve the accessibility of various aspects of tourism, including **tourist**

**information, transport, infrastructure, design, and services.** These efforts contribute to creating models of excellence in accessible tourism for the entire industry .

### 3.7 Conclusions

Policy at every level is highly supportive of enhanced accessibility for outdoor recreation and angling in Tipperary as positive outdoor experiences for people living with disabilities will deliver social inclusivity and vital public health benefits for all. However, accessibility must be delivered to the highest possible standards and practice, as proposed in the Irish Wheelchair Association, Sport Ireland and Active Ireland guidance documents.

Tipperary has the potential to acquire a national ‘accessible outdoor recreation’ reputation, based on superb experiences and delivery, with plenty of opportunity for people living with disabilities to enjoy an array of outdoor activities. This must be cushioned within the policy context of sustainable approaches to all universally accessible developments.

By adopting best international practice and solutions in provision of accessible recreation at key sites, Tipperary’s accessible outdoor recreation can become a core element of its tourism brand. It will allow Tipperary to showcase its considerable recreational assets, focused on universal accessibility, within its regional strategic branding and international promotion by Fáilte Ireland.



*Accessible angling stand at Mota Quay on Lough Derg, Co Tipperary  
Photo: Deirdre Lewis, 2024*

## 4. FIELD AUDIT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN TIPPERARY

A high-level audit of thirty-three outdoor recreational sites, covering trails, watersides, wetlands and amenity zones, was undertaken across the four Municipal Districts (MD) and one Borough District of County Tipperary. A bespoke template was used to score a range of criteria pertaining to accessibility, quality of amenity, supporting services and tourism potential. The process and results are presented, with recommendations for potential accessible centres of excellence and ‘satellite’ amenities across the county.

County Tipperary enjoys a rich tapestry of natural landscapes that enclose mountains, lakes, rivers, wetlands, peatlands and forests, encompassing attractive environments that offer varied recreational experiences.

### 4.1 Site Selection & Template Design

Initial digital desk research, followed by map- and app-based searches of the recreational and angling asset base across Tipperary, was undertaken to identify suitable sites for audit.

An initial selection of c. 40 sites was identified, encompassing a wide geographic and outdoor recreational range spread across the five municipal districts of the county. By their nature, many of the mountainous and/or long-distance waymarked ways were discounted at the outset, due to their inherent inaccessibility except to fully mobile or elite enthusiasts. Thus, the list was filtered down to **thirty-three (33) sites** for field audit (see **Table 3 overleaf, and Map 1** (A0 scaled attachment)).

A template was designed to carry out the field audits in a systematic and impartial manner, based on a range of criteria that measure the accessibility of recreation and angling sites for people with varied physical and intellectual abilities, depending on age, mobility, visual or aural impairment or sensory capacity etc. However, the scoring applied in the template was not specific to any particular disability.

The field audit was by definition very high level and did not encompass detailed risk assessments for the full spectrum of disabilities – rather, it presents a signpost to further detailed assessments, which should be carried out from an engineering, health & safety and public risk perspectives.

The audit template is presented in Appendix 1.

### 4.2 Standards Applied

Sport Ireland provides excellence guidance on trail grading and classification for walking/ cycling/ equine recreational trail development<sup>15</sup>, depending on the physical setting of the amenity. This standard grading system for outdoor recreation amenities across Ireland uses four grades as follows:

- Multi-Access – suited to people with disabilities, visual impairment.
- Easy
- Moderate
- Strenuous

<sup>15</sup> www.sportireland.ie – see [classification\\_grading\\_of\\_recreational\\_trails.pdf \(sportireland.ie\)](https://www.sportireland.ie/classification_grading_of_recreational_trails.pdf)

Trails are classed by type (1-6) and setting, offering practical guidance to trail developers and recreational users.

In the UK, the Lake District National Park (LDNP)<sup>16</sup> has designated 50 “easy-access” routes that are suitable for those with limited mobility, wheelchairs, tampers, pushchairs or visual impairments. They are also suitable for young children or less able adults. The routes have no stiles and are graded as suitable for some, many or all. The descriptions provide the length, terrain and path type as well as facilities available *en route* or nearby. The Lake District adopted a four-part grading that is designed in terms of accessibility for all:

| Lake District-UK   | (Sport Ireland) |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| • For All (FA)     | (Multi-access)  |
| • For Many (FM)    | (Easy)          |
| • For Some (FS)    | (Moderate)      |
| • Challenging (CH) | (Strenuous)     |

Given the Lake District classification is intuitively simple-to-use in terms of accessibility of outdoor recreation, while aligned to the Sport Ireland system, this notation was adopted for the field audits.



Photo: [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/accessible-for-all](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/accessible-for-all)

Sport Ireland provide excellent guidance on accessible recreation<sup>17</sup>. They recommend that **accessibility should be viewed as a ‘Journey’** from provision of digital information to allow pre-planning of the visit to a recreation site, to arrival, parking, facilities and the experience to be enjoyed. Regular feedback from disabled users and formal inspection of the assets would ensure that a culture of continuous improvement and action is built into the design process.

However, it is clear that there is a distinct lack of awareness in planning outdoor recreation for the needs of people living with disabilities, but a lack of recognition of the independence of disabled people and their willingness to explore outdoor recreational options.

There is a need for significant training and awareness building to ensure that Universal Design and Access are built into all future plans for Tipperary’s outdoors, as both national and international demand increases for safe and enjoyable places for all to enjoy the benefits of the Great Outdoors.

<sup>16</sup> [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/accessible-for-all](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/accessible-for-all)

<sup>17</sup> [sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/great-outdoors-a-guide-for-accessibility.pdf](http://sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/great-outdoors-a-guide-for-accessibility.pdf)

**Table 3 Site Selection for Audits of Accessible Recreation & Angling**

| SITE SELECTION: ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT OF RECREATION & ANGLING, CO. TIPPERARY , 2024 |  |                             |       |       |         |         |         |         |
|---|--|-----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| No  | TCC Municipal District                 | RECREATION AMENITY          | Trail | Water | Angling | Wet/Bog | Amenity | Coillte |
| 1   | Clonmel BD                             | Clonmel Townpark            | √     | √     | √       |         | √       |         |
| 2   | Clonmel BD                             | Clonmel Blueway             | √     | √     | √       |         |         |         |
| 3   | Clonmel BD                             | Kilsheelan Blueway          | √     | √     | √       |         |         |         |
| 4   | Clonmel BD                             | Slievenamon/ Kilcash Woods  | √     |       |         |         |         | C       |
| 5   | Carrick-on-Suir                        | Carrick-on-Suir Blueway     | √     | √     | √       |         | √       |         |
| 6   | Carrick-on-Suir                        | Fethard Townpark            |       |       |         |         | √       |         |
| 7   | Carrick-on-Suir                        | Ballysloe Loop              | √     |       |         |         |         |         |
| 8   | Carrick ( <i>Littleton Labyrinth</i> ) | Loch Dhoire Bhile Loop      | √     |       | √       | √       |         |         |
| 9   | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Cahir Castle-Swiss Cottage  | √     | √     | √       |         | √       |         |
| 10  | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Glengarra Woods             | √     |       |         |         |         | C       |
| 11  | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Kildanogue Wildfowl Reserve | √     |       |         | √       |         | C       |
| 12  | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Glen of Aherlow loops       | √     |       |         |         |         | C       |
| 13  | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Dundrum Marl Bog            | √     |       |         | √       |         |         |
| 14  | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Golden                      | √     |       | √       |         |         |         |
| 15  | Templemore-Thurles                     | Cabragh Wetlands            | √     |       |         | √       |         |         |
| 16  | Templemore-Thurles                     | Templemore Townpark         | √     |       | √       |         |         |         |
| 17  | Templemore-Thurles                     | Devilsbit Loop              | √     |       |         |         |         |         |
| 18  | Templemore-Thurles                     | Derrynaflan Greenway        | √     |       |         |         |         |         |
| 19  | Templemore-Thurles                     | Upperchurch Loops           | √     |       |         |         |         | C       |
| 20  | Nenagh                                 | Scohaboy Bog/Laghile Wood   | √     |       |         | √       |         | C       |
| 21  | Nenagh                                 | Borrisokane Riverpark       |       | √     |         |         | √       |         |
| 22  | Nenagh                                 | Terryglass Harbour          |       | √     |         |         | √       |         |
| 23  | Nenagh                                 | Mota Quay                   |       | √     | √       |         |         |         |
| 24  | Nenagh                                 | Dromineer Harbour           |       | √     | √       |         | √       |         |
| 25  | Nenagh                                 | Garrykennedy Harbour        | √     | √     | √       |         |         |         |
| 26  | Nenagh                                 | Castlelough Amenity         |       | √     |         |         | √       |         |
| 27  | Nenagh                                 | Ballina Amenity Park        |       | √     | √       |         | √       |         |
| 28  | Nenagh                                 | Pollagh Wood, Birdhill      | √     |       |         | √       |         |         |
| 29  | Nenagh                                 | Redwood Bog                 |       |       |         | √       |         |         |
| 30  | Nenagh                                 | Kilcommon Pilgrim Loop      | √     |       |         |         |         | C       |
| 31  | Nenagh                                 | Clare Glens                 | √     | √     |         |         |         |         |
| 32  | Nenagh                                 | Sli Eala                    | √     |       | √       |         |         |         |
| 33  | Nenagh                                 | Tountinna/Millenium Cross   | √     |       |         |         |         |         |

See also Map 1 (A0 attachment) for spatial array of sites, showing each by type of recreational amenity available.

Figures 6, 7, 8, 9 in Chapter 9 show the audited sites, by type and grading, in each municipal district.

### 4.3 Audit Process

The audit process was undertaken from January to early March 2024 across the five administrative districts (Municipal x4; Borough x1) of County Tipperary. Site selection identified a full range of trail, waterside (lake, river), wetland or other outdoor amenity sites that could be considered ‘accessible’ for a range of people with varied abilities.

Critically, the definition of ‘outdoor recreation’ stated in the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2023-2028) was adopted throughout the audit, whereby pitch-based amenities are not considered (e.g. golf, GAA, equine arena, gyms, etc etc.) – see Section 3.1 above.

Each of the 33 selected sites were visited in the field and scored against **50 parameters** listed in the Audit Template. The maximum potential score was 173 (100%), based on multi-criteria categories, including Accessibility; Environment; Physical Management/ Safety; Tourism and Marketing Potential.

The scoring system used is by nature subjective and is not intended to be definitive. However, it allowed the team to assess the relative levels of accessibility at each site.

### 4.4 General Observations on Accessibility

The following general observations may be made for enhanced accessibility to outdoor recreation and angling.

| General Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Walking trails on relatively flat surfaces</b> provide people with a range of physical and intellectual disabilities/ low mobility/ hearing/ sight to enjoy the outdoors and relax in nature in quiet spaces. These may be greenways, blueways or forest trails with relatively low gradients, good surfacing and accessible trail hubs.</p>  |  |
| <p>Increasingly, there are opportunities to apply the principles of good design where <b>local authorities are undertaking public recreational infrastructure works</b>, to ensure that people of all abilities can enjoy access to the outdoors.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Key issues for Universal Access include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>accessible parking</b></li><li>• <b>WC and ideally changing facilities</b></li><li>• <b>barrier-free entrances to amenities</b></li><li>• <b>step-free kerbing</b></li><li>• <b>suitable trail surfaces</b></li><li>• <b>low gradients (&lt;5-10° slope)</b></li><li>• <b>Impediment free surfaces</b></li><li>• <b>greening/ calming measures</b></li><li>• <b>seating at intervals along trails</b></li></ul> |  |

Accessible trail at **Garrykennedy** lakeshore, Lough Derg

**General Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**Barriers at the entrance to amenities create serious issues for universal accessibility.** Barriers may comprise barriers to carparks; barriers at the entrance to WC/ showers and/or gated entries (kissing gates/ stiles) of poor design.

*Narrow entrances with barriers inhibit wheelchair users, from entering the amenity at **Lough Doire Bhile***

Ideally, unhindered access to walking/ cycling trails should be a standard practice in designing public amenities.



**Well-designed WC and changing places are critical to meet the needs of people with disabilities and older citizens.**

*TCC's public WC amenities at **Clonmel Quays** could be fully accessible, but a step at the entrance prohibits wheelchair access (right)*

While provision of such basic amenities implies a cost, there are good examples of local authorities providing such facilities to address these needs e.g. Mayo and Louth Co. Councils provide universally accessible WC by using pumped facilities to minimise maintenance.

***Clonmel Town Park** provides fully accessible WC at the carpark (bottom right)*

Dromineer on Lough Derg is due to have **upgraded WC/changing facilities** under the Changing Places regulations in 2024, a welcome upgrade.



**Dog fouling on pathways, both urban and rural, is a major source of discomfort and disgust for all recreational users, but for wheelchair users in particular as it adheres to the chair and is difficult to clean off.**

Through the consultative process, there was considerable negative feedback to the frequency of dog fouling which requires to be addressed systematically county-wide.



**General Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**Outdoor trails in the uplands** are largely inaccessible to people with disabilities, in particular people who use wheelchairs for mobility.

Trail surfaces are frequently rough stony paths, with steep gradients, and in remote areas without services such as WC.

*Steep steps and uneven surfaces prohibit access for many people to the **Clare Glens** near Newport (top right)<sup>18</sup>*

As a result, upland trails were largely discounted from the audit, although a few sites were examined for inclusivity. All are challenging environments for people with disabilities.

*Inaccessible trail leads to Tipperary’s iconic mountain, **Slievenamon**, near Kilcash*



**Walking trails alongside wetlands or converted peatlands** largely occur in flat landscapes, and are highly amenable to full accessibility if universal design principles are adopted.

Positive examples occur across Tipperary for accessible or partially accessible recreation include **Lough Doire Bhile** (see photo, right) which is part of TCC’s planned ‘**Littleton Labyrinth**’), as well as the **Cabragh Wetlands** and **Schohoboy Bog**. However, all need modifications to ensure they meet best practice in providing unhindered, accessible access, including parking, gateways, and WC amenities.



<sup>18</sup> **Note:** The trail map at the Clare Glens grades this trail as ‘Easy’ access – this is definitely a case where the trail is moderate to challenging, particularly for people of low mobility or visual impairment.

**General Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**Access to Angling**, where universal access principles are adopted, is viable. However, there are cases where it is difficult to access angling stands due to the natural settings, or through poor design e.g. poor surfaces or lack of foot guards.

IFI and TCC are working in multiple locations to enhance access, but there is significant potential to provide universal access at more locations given Tipperary’s lakes and river assets. Seasonal flooding however can pose challenges for access.



*Well-designed angling stand with foot guard in Holland  
 Photo: compliments of Ferdinand Heijerman (Pike Ireland)*

Access to **Cycling** can be highly challenging for people with disabilities, but using imagination and the goodwill of cycling clubs, people living with certain disabilities will enjoy the access to the outdoors in great company.

*Map showing North Tipperary Cycling Routes – unfortunately, most are inaccessible to people with disabilities.*



Access to **Boating / Kayaking/ Canoeing** can be highly challenging for disabled people due to access and egress issues upon entering craft / boat.

Access can be highly challenging also for those tasked with managing the inherent water safety risks.

**Additional accessories may be required such as hoists, steps and /or transfer benches to allow disabled users to access the waters.**

The **Suir Blueway** (see map, right) provides opportunities for access, but requires further interventions to make it truly accessible for disabled kayakers.



## 4.5 Site Specific Observations on Accessibility

The following specific observations were made regarding accessibility as the audit was conducted across County Tipperary. This is intended to provide a ‘snapshot’ of where good universal design has been adopted and where planning of the site could be improved.

| Site Specific Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Upon arrival at a recreational site, parking should be fully accessible.</b></p> <p><b>There should be no barriers (as these prohibit access by disability minibuses); good surfacing without potholes; and kerb free access to amenities.</b></p> <p><i>TCC’s Nenagh offices present a kerbed step immediately in front of the designated wheelchair parking.</i></p> <p><b>Similarly, potholes in carpark surfaces make access challenging to otherwise excellent amenities. Examples of such potholes may be seen at the carparks at Scohaboy Bog, Kilcash Woods and Dundrum Marl Bog.</b></p> <p><i>Potholes at the carpark at Dundrum Marl Bog, an otherwise accessible trail amenity ‘For All’</i></p> | <br> |
| <p><b>Poorly designed barriers create an immediate impediment to people with disabilities to enjoy an otherwise accessible amenity.</b></p> <p><i>Poorly designed barrier at entrance to The Suir Blueway west of Kilsheelan creates a barrier for Disabled Minibuses to enter the facility. A similar barrier is located at the entrance to Clonmel Town Park.</i></p>  |   |

**Site Specific Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**Walkways should be amenable for use by people of all abilities.**

There are excellent examples of this at various locations such as Dundrum Marl Bog, Cahir to Swiss Cottage, Clonmel-to-Carrick-on-Suir Towpath on the Suir Blueway.

*Suir Blueway offers a fully accessible trail from Clonmel to Carrick-on-Suir along the old towpath.*



**Gates, Barriers and Steps at the entry or exit to amenities may render the entire facility as unavailable to people with disabilities.**

*Gated barrier at entrance to Scohaboy Bog provides a mobility hindrance (left)*

*Narrow barrier at entrance to Littleton Labyrinth at Lough Doire Bhile hinders wheelchair access (right)*



**Town parks offer a range of amenities for people living with disability including walking, cycling/ tricycling, kayaking, angling and generally being in nature.**

*Cahir /Inch Field and the path along the Suir Blueway south to the Swiss Cottage offer an excellent range of accessible amenities, including parking, WC, picnic benches, mobility tricycle (with volunteer pilots) and accessible angling.*



**Site Specific Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**Templemore Townpark** offers a range of accessible amenities, including parking, walkways through mature gardens, ornamental lake & fountain, and accessible angling stands. However, it lacks an accessible WC.



The new **Town Park in Fethard** is a universally designed amenity and offers opportunities for walking/ spinning along a fully accessible perimeter trail.

*Fethard Town Park is a state of the art accessible centre, offering recreation For All*

It is also home to IWA offices and offers pitch-based sports, gym, meeting rooms, café as well as walking and cycling.



**Wetland trails** offer significant scope to enhance accessibility due to flat surfaces.

The **Cabragh Wetlands** and the **Littleton Labyrinth** (including Lough Doire Bhile, see below), among others, offer great potential for excellent accessible trails.

*An accessible education centre, viewing platform and trails offer access to the outdoors in a tranquil setting at Cabragh Wetlands, near Thurles*



**Site Specific Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**



**Kildanogue Wildfowl Reserve** (right and above) provides accessible recreation and nature viewing, a positive collaboration between Coillte, community and local gun and conservation club (ABGGC).



The TCC-planned **Littleton Labyrinth** in the post-peat era of Littleton Bog (right), has the potential to provide an exceptional world class Centre of Excellence for accessible outdoor recreation as part of the national Just Transition programme.

Up to 7km of walkways and pontoons are planned in the first stage of transition in 2024, with extensions over time.

The **Derrynaflan rail-to-trail walk** within the planned Littleton Labyrinth provides a glimpse into our early monastic and recent industrial history. However, it requires significant surface upgrades, parking and barrier free entrances to make it accessible to people with disabilities also.

**The Lough Doire Bhile** lake, wetlands and trail network (right) have positive potential, but narrow entrances, poor surfacing in places and inaccessible angling stands require attention. However, as part of the overarching masterplan for Littleton Labyrinth, L. Doire Bhile offers a positive place from which to start.

However, poorly designed barriers impede access for wheelchair users at Doire Bhile and its loop walks/ pathways.



**Site Specific Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**Kayaking/ Canoeing and other water-based amenities:**

Access can be very challenging for disabled people particularly at the point of embarkation/ disembarkation. Management of access also poses a significant challenge for both recreational users and recreational managers, due to the inherent safety risks.



**Some excellent initiatives are being undertaken on the Suir Blueway:**

- **Access Steps** are installed at key points along the route;
- **Transfer Benches** are planned at Clonmel, Kilsheelan and Carrick-on-Suir – which will be available from **Tipperary Sports Partnership (TSP)** for use on the Blueway (*note they are mobile rather than permanent fixtures*).
- TSP provides **Inclusive Paddling** programmes and work with local disability service providers to provide the programmes.
- TSP has a **SIDO (Sports Inclusion Disability Officer)** on the team, whose remit includes actions to support people living with disabilities to be active, including in the outdoors.



*Stepped access for kayakers to Suir Blueway at Newcastle, but inaccessible for people with physical disabilities (above).*

**Access to Boating / Sailing:**

Many positive initiatives are being undertaken across Tipperary.

**At Dromineer on Lough Derg:**

- (i) Lough Derg Yacht Club offers accessible sailing using a hoist mechanism - but volunteers report that egress is particularly challenging for people with disabilities.
- (ii) Nenagh Boat Club volunteers offer limited disability access to boating, but insurance costs and mariner training requirements are prohibitive to allow volunteer groups to provide such access on a regular basis.

**At Ballina on the south end of Lough Derg,**

access to commercial craft is available for tourist boat trips, while just across the lake in Co. Clare at **Killaloe**, launch pads for accessible kayaking are available.



*Garrykennedy Marina, Lough Derg*

**Site Specific Observations re Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation**

**In terms of Cycling**, two positive initiatives were reported during consultations.

- (i) Cahir offers a **Mobility Tricycle**, a partnership between TCC, the local community and Cahir House Hotel. A person can ring the hotel (where it is stored) to pre- book the tricycle and a local volunteer pilot (20 trained pilots) will escort the person along the Suir Blueway from Cahir to Swiss Cottage.
- (ii) **Tandems and hand-cycles** are provided by Tipperary Sports Partnership and managed by Blueway Bike Hire, for hire on Clonmel and Carrick on Suir Blueway.
- (iii) **North Tipp Wheelers cycling club facilitate disabled cyclists**, by providing a volunteer pilot to guide a tandem on weekend spins used by a disabled cyclist in the district.



*Accessibility Tricycle is available for hire in Cahir. People of low mobility are guided by a trained pilot along the Suir Blueway*

**Access to Angling** is offered via clubs, local authorities and Inland Fisheries Ireland.

**IFI** offer a number of accessible sites in Tipperary, including multiple stands at the **Swiss Cottage along the Suir Blueway (right)** and **Templemore Park**, where disabled anglers can drive directly to well-signed angling stands.

Lakeshore sites frequently offer pier access for angling, but without foot guards on the piers, which is potentially a hazard for wheelchair users.

**Mota Quay (right)** on Lough Derg offers a good example of positive access for angling directly from the shoreside, with a well surfaced car park.

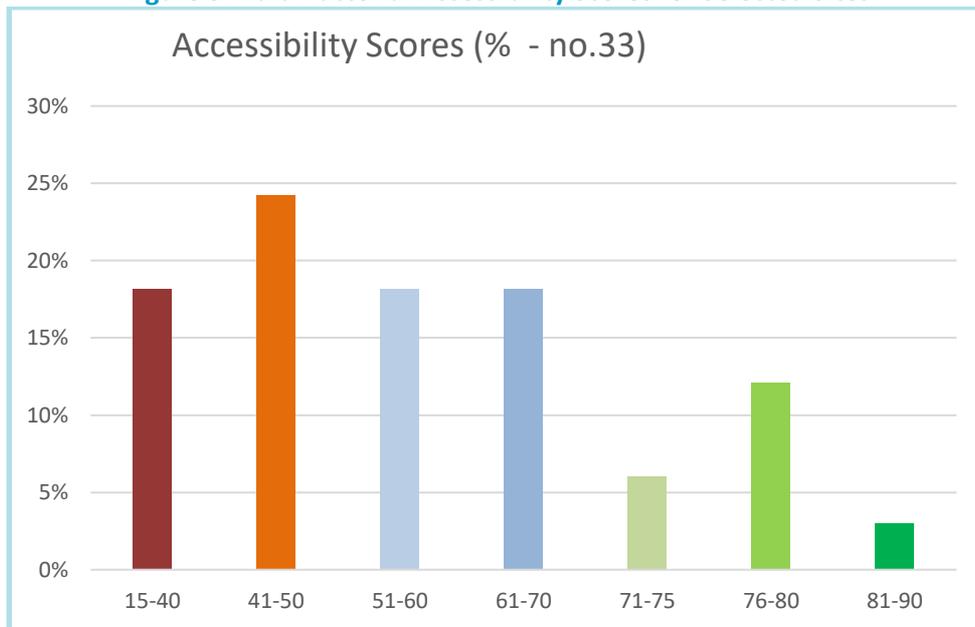
However, **poor surfaces on piers, without any foot guards**, create unintended barriers to wheelchair users or older people with mobility/ visual impairment.



## 4.6 Audit Results

The results of the multi-factorial accessibility audits (Figure 3) indicate that 42% (brown colours) of the selected sites in Tipperary are completely inaccessible to people living with disability. A further 36% (blues) are moderately accessible in a physical sense, but lack critical services such as WC facilities. Just 21% (greens) could be considered 'accessible', while none scored 'full marks' for universal access.

Figure 3 Multi-Factorial Accessibility Scores for Selected Sites



When the field grading system (FA, FM, FS, CH) is applied (see Figure 4) it becomes clear that much work is required to ensure that people living with disabilities have access to the outdoors and nature.

Figure 4 Accessibility Grading (%) of Total Sites

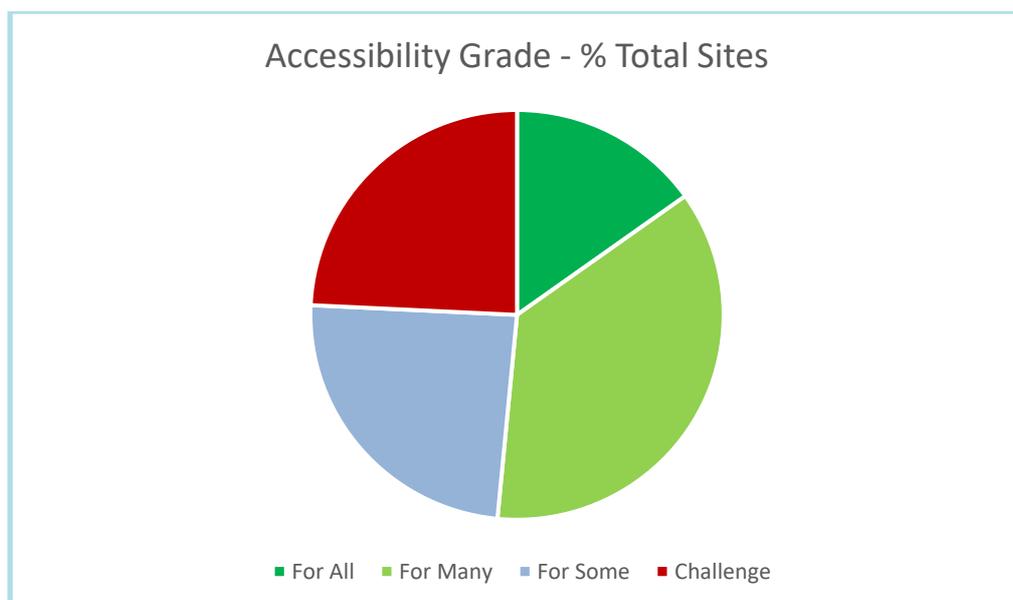


Figure 4 indicates that just **15%** (dark green) of sites across Tipperary may be classified as '**Accessible for All**', and even these require modification to ensure they reach best practice. Many sites (c. **36%**, green) are '**Accessible for Many**', but have the potential to be much more accessible, where moderate interventions could present a whole new world of accessible recreation for disabled citizens and tourists alike.

The top-scoring recreational and angling sites (>70%) include:

- **Cahir-Swiss-Cottage;**
- **Clonmel Townpark to-Kilsheelan-Carrick-on-Suir (Suir Blueway);**
- **Ballina Riverpark;**
- **Fethard Townpark; and**
- **Lough Doire Bhile** (*based on potential of the Littleton Labyrinth*);

Close runners-up, as potential satellites to the main sites, based on score and potential include:

- **Templemore Townpark;**
- **Cabragh Wetlands;**
- **Dundrum Marl Bog;**
- **Garrykennedy;**
- **Dromineer; and**
- **Kildanogue Wildfowl Reserve.**

It is in these sites that strategic interventions for enhanced accessibility should be focused in the medium to long term.

The graded results for each site are presented on **Table 4** overleaf and in **Chapter 9 (Figures 6, 7, 8,9)** for each municipal district across the County. For a full view for all of Tipperary - see **Map 2** (scaled A0 attachment).

Table 4 Accessibility Grading of Audited Sites for Recreation

| ACCESSIBILITY GRADING OF AUDITED SITES FOR RECREATION & ANGLING, CO. TIPPERARY, 2024 |  |                            |       |       |         |         |         |        |
|--|--|----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| No   | TCC Municipal District                 | RECREATION AMENITY         | Trail | Water | Angling | Wet/Bog | Amenity | *GRADE |
| 1  | Clonmel BD                             | Clonmel Townpark           | √     | √     | √       |         | √       | FA     |
| 2  | Clonmel BD                             | Clonmel Blueway            | √     | √     | √       |         |         | FM     |
| 3  | Clonmel BD                             | Kilsheelan Blueway         | √     | √     | √       |         |         | FM     |
| 4  | Clonmel BD                             | Slievenamon/ Kilcash Woods | √     |       |         |         |         | CH     |
| 5  | Carrick-on-Suir                        | Carrick-on-Suir Blueway    | √     | √     | √       |         | √       | FM     |
| 6  | Carrick-on-Suir                        | Fethard Townpark           |       |       |         |         | √       | FA     |
| 7  | Carrick-on-Suir                        | Ballysloe Loop             | √     |       |         |         |         | CH     |
| 8  | Carrick ( <i>Littleton Labyrinth</i> ) | Loch Dhoire Bhile          | √     |       | √       | √       |         | FM     |
| 9  | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Cahir Castle-Swiss Cottage | √     | √     | √       |         | √       | FA     |
| 10   | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Glengarra Woods            | √     |       |         |         |         | FS     |
| 11   | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Kildanogue Wild Reserve    | √     |       |         | √       |         | FM     |
| 12   | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Glen of Aherlow loops      | √     |       |         |         |         | CH     |
| 13   | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Dundrum Marl Bog           | √     |       |         | √       |         | FM     |
| 14   | Tipp-Cahir-Cashel                      | Golden                     | √     |       | √       |         |         | CH     |
| 15   | Templemore-Thurles                     | Cabragh Wetlands           | √     |       |         | √       |         | FM     |
| 16   | Templemore-Thurles                     | Templemore Townpark        | √     |       | √       |         |         | FM/FA  |
| 17   | Templemore-Thurles                     | Devilsbit Loop             | √     |       |         |         |         | CH     |
| 18   | Templemore-Thurles                     | Derry-naflan Greenway      | √     |       |         |         |         | FS/CH  |
| 19   | Templemore-Thurles                     | Upperchurch Loops          | √     |       |         |         |         | FS     |
| 20   | Nenagh                                 | Scohaboy Bog/Laghile Wood  | √     |       |         | √       |         | FS/FM  |
| 21   | Nenagh                                 | Borrisokane Riverpark      |       | √     |         |         | √       | FS     |
| 22   | Nenagh                                 | Terryglass Harbour         |       | √     |         |         | √       | FM/FA  |
| 23   | Nenagh                                 | Mota Quay                  |       | √     | √       |         |         | FM     |
| 24   | Nenagh                                 | Dromineer Harbour          |       | √     | √       |         | √       | FM/FA  |
| 25   | Nenagh                                 | Garrykennedy Harbour       | √     | √     | √       |         |         | FM/FA  |
| 26   | Nenagh                                 | Castlelough Amenity        |       | √     |         |         | √       | FM     |
| 27   | Nenagh                                 | Ballina Amenity Park       |       | √     | √       |         | √       | FA     |
| 28   | Nenagh                                 | Pollagh Wood, Birdhill     | √     |       |         | √       |         | FS     |
| 29   | Nenagh                                 | Redwood Bog                |       |       |         | √       |         | CH     |
| 30   | Nenagh                                 | Kilcommon Pilgrim Loop     | √     |       |         |         |         | FS     |
| 31   | Nenagh                                 | Clare Glens                | √     | √     |         |         |         | CH     |
| 32   | Nenagh                                 | Sli Eala                   | √     |       | √       |         |         | FS/CH  |
| 33   | Nenagh                                 | Tountinna/Millennium Cross | √     |       |         |         |         | FS/CH  |

\*KEY TO ACCESSIBILITY GRADING BASED ON UK SYSTEM (LAKE DISTRICT)

|    |             |  |
|----|-------------|--|
| FA | For All     | FA = Key Site proposed for Accessibility       |
| FM | For Many    | FM = Satellite Site proposed for Accessibility |
| FS | For Some    |  |
| CH | Challenging |  |

## 4.7 Key Findings of the Audit

The field audit was by definition very high level and did not encompass detailed risk assessments for the full spectrum of disabilities – rather, it is a signpost to further detailed assessments, which should be carried out from an engineering, health & safety and public risk perspectives.

The key issues to emerge echo those recorded in consultations with people who are living with disabilities and their carers/ service providers. In practice, disabled people cannot access outdoor recreation and are denied all the physical and mental benefits that accompany being in nature. This is a fundamental denial of people’s human rights and is contrary to all of the ambitious policies and strategies available to us.

The field audits observed many obstacles that prevent people from accessing the outdoors, whether to go for a ‘spin’ in a wheelchair; for an elderly person to walk; for a child with autism to paddle on a blueway. Many of these ‘*small things*’ such as steps, poor surfacing, swing/ kissing gates or inappropriate gradients could be easily designed or engineered out at the point of commissioning a footpath, a jetty, a toilet.

There is a clear need for significant training and awareness building to ensure that the **principles of universal design and access** are built into all future plans for Tipperary’s outdoors, as both national and international demand increases for safe and enjoyable places for all to enjoy the benefits of the Great Outdoors.

Based on the audit results:

- Tipperary is host to c. five outdoor recreation Signature Sites that have potential to become ‘**Accessible Centres of Excellence**’ for outdoor recreation and angling. They are well distributed around the county and would provide options for disabled persons and their families/ carers to enjoy new recreational opportunities.
- In particular, it is worth noting that with the proposed development of the **Littleton Labyrinth** by Tipperary County Council under the Just Transition programme, a golden opportunity arises to design the whole site to be universally accessible to best international standards.
- In addition to these Signature Sites, the audit identified 5-6 ‘**Satellite Sites**’ that with moderate interventions (on barriers, WC, surfacing, etc) could become accessible sites offering niche recreational activities.

Tipperary now has the potential to become Ireland’s leader in provision of access to outdoor recreation for all. Such thinking has an economic strength also, as disabled people holiday with their families and friends and should Tipperary offer an array of accessible recreation options, this will become a unique selling point.



*Accessible angling in the Netherlands, using well design access stands  
Photo: complements of Ferdinand Heijerman (Pike Ireland)*

## 5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Consultations were held to seek inputs of partners who are *'supplying'* accessible outdoor recreational and angling facilities and those *'using/ trying to use'* these amenities across County Tipperary. Consultees' responses were recorded and aggregated to provide a summary of their inputs. From these findings, the distinctive differences between the needs of people living with disabilities as recreational 'users' in Tipperary, versus mainstream users of recreational amenities, emerges. These findings were used to inform recommendations for strategic interventions for enhanced accessibility in the final chapter. This 'snapshot in time' provides a useful benchmark to evaluate progress in relation to accessible recreation in years to come.

### 5.1 Engagement Process

Given the unique nature of the brief (at a county and national level) to examine accessibility to outdoor recreation in Tipperary, it was agreed that considerable time should be invested in talking with / listening to key stakeholders. These inputs have largely informed the findings and recommendations in the final chapter. The following were conducted between January and March 2024 (with some consultees engaged on more than one occasion).

At the outset of the stakeholder engagement process, a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was compiled. Every attempt was made to engage with a range of stakeholders, including policy and decision makers, statutory agencies, service providers and critically, disabled users of outdoor recreation and angling for their inputs to this study.

The format of the consultations fell into one of three types:

- One-to-one sessions (by phone and/or face-to-face)
- Focus Group sessions (x 2)
- Regular face-to-face review / preview sessions with the client (TCC).

It was important that the 'user' perspectives and inputs were clearly heard. All responses were noted by the two interviewers and aggregated to provide a summary of consultees' inputs and insights.

Direct sessions (excluding Focus Groups) were conducted with **32** individuals from multiple backgrounds and experiences in relation to issue of accessibility to the outdoors, from the following categories:

- Disability Advocacy (National and Specialist)
- People living with disabilities who already avail, or wish to avail, of outdoor recreation and angling, as well as mainstream users of outdoor recreation
- Disability Charities
- Sporting / Governing Bodies
- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Community / Volunteer Support Services
- Local Development Companies / Rural Recreation
- Tourism Development Agencies (Fáilte Ireland)
- Destination Development Agency in Tipperary
- Uplands Access / Rural Access (national and local)

- State Recreational land managers (Coillte)
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Angling: club fishermen and angling service providers in Tipperary (voluntary and private)
- Boating: service providers for accessible boating (voluntary and private)
- Cycling: local club members

Two **Focus Groups** convened sessions with:

- Representatives of recreational users and advocates (convened by the Irish Wheelchair Association), and
- Relevant officers of Tipperary County Council. Significant learnings emerged from each session, both from a supply and demand side of outdoor recreation. It was clear that the process of discussing the considerable issues and challenges facing disability users in Tipperary was both positive and worthwhile for all participants.

All interview and focal group data were compiled and aggregated for analysis by the project team. Key themes and ideas were identified and brought forward for consideration in the final analysis.

## 5.2 Summary Findings of Consultations

Helpful insights were gathered and analysed from varying perspectives.

This summary provides an aggregated view of the findings under three distinct headings, namely policy, infrastructure and communications. These themes emerged repeatedly and informed the development of concrete recommendations for strategic interventions.

### 5.2.1 Policy Considerations

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1</b> Impressive Policy and Strategy framework (see Ch. 2 above) exists to support disabled access at National, Regional & County Level, based on principles of Universal Design & Universal Access | But in practice, delivery of accessible recreational infrastructure is lagging across the county (and nationally). An opportunity arises for Tipperary to become a leader in accessible outdoor recreation. |
| <b>2</b> Disaggregated responses to policy drivers   | Lack of ‘joined-up thinking’ at local, county, and national levels  |
| <b>3</b> The ‘User Voice’ is seldom heard in design of policy and practice.  | Certainly insufficient at point of commissioning and screening of new infrastructure.   |
| <b>4</b> Lack of institutional awareness of common ‘access’ issues, particularly in relation to the obstacles faced at every level by disabled users of outdoor recreation                             | “ <i>All the small things</i> ” such as a step on a footpath; poor surface finish on pathways; or lack of accessible WC/ changing places prohibits access to many sites (see 5.2.2. Infrastructure below).  |
| <b>5</b> Excellent practical design ‘guidance’ material exists.  | But largely discounted by mainstream designers, planners and engineers, due to perceptions of cost and additional resources required.   |
| <b>6</b> Access to Outdoor Recreation or Angling tends to be an after-thought to ‘universal access’ (vs. access to public buildings and urban public realm)  | Largely due to definitions in Disability legislation and policy, which focuses on physical access to buildings and the urban realm.   |
| <b>7</b> Development agencies often are followers rather than leaders in provision of accessible outdoor recreation.   | However, the policy tide is turning and it is encouraging to see accessibility to the outdoors at the core of e.g. the <i>Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands</i> tourism strategy.                                 |

### 5.2.2 Infrastructure Considerations – ‘All the Small Things’

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>8</b> Users report that it is ‘All the Small Things’ that prohibit them from enjoying access to Outdoor Recreation.</p>   | <p><i>Required: Recreational Infrastructural Remedial Programme for Universal Access in Tipperary</i></p>  |
| <p><b>9</b> Prioritise Accessible Recreational Sites needing Remedial Work from the Consultation Feedback.</p>  | <p><i>To be based on principles of ‘Customer Journey’ from digital information, planning the trip, access &amp; services on site and total visitor experience.</i></p> |
| <p><b>10</b> Resource constraints by community groups driving new recreational facilities in their communities to think beyond the mainstream recreational users (e.g. toilets, parking, surfaces and path design, planting, and suitable signage).</p> | <p>Resource constraints for voluntary groups prohibits additional costs and maintenance requirements</p>   |
| <p><b>11</b> Could a town like Cahir become a national centre of excellence for <i>access</i> to recreation and angling? Working with NGOs such as Irish Wheelchair Association (supported by HSE funding)</p>  | <p>e.g. provide residential hotel breaks in the Centre of Excellence to provide respite for people with disabilities and their carers.</p>                             |



*Dromineer Lakeshore (left), Co. Tipperary*



*Ballina Amenity Park (right), Co. Tipperary*

**All the Small Things - steps on footpaths mean that wheelchair users simply cannot access the amenity, despite good intentions of e.g. provision of wheelchair accessible parking**

*Photos: Alan Hill/ Deirdre Lewis, January 2024*

### 5.2.3 Communications and Partnership Considerations

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>12.</b> Tipperary to become a leader in accessible recreational and angling sites in Ireland.</p>  | <p>Based on the audit, earmark a set of ‘Top 5’ sites that may be suitable as national centres of excellence for accessible recreation, with a further ‘5 Satellite’ sites providing niche activities.</p> |
| <p><b>13</b> Lead on a new set of ‘Top 10’ accessible recreational and angling sites in Tipperary for future investment upgrade and coordinated promotion of this unique selling point for the county.</p> |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>14</b> Each person with a disability is required to develop an annual <i>Individual Service Plan</i> to map out learnings / experiences the client wishes to participate in.</p> | <p>These plans should be able to include access to Outdoor Recreation -</p> |
|--|---|

### 5.3 Requirements of Recreational User Groups in Tipperary

The table below captures many of the learnings from the consultations. It demonstrates the distinctive differences between the needs of disabled recreational users (Table 5 **Error! Reference source not found.**) and mainstream recreational groups (Table 6) within the county (and likely nationally).

**Table 5 Needs of Disability Recreational User**

| Primary Requirements   | Secondary Requirements  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme / Experience Aligned to Needs</li> <li>• Supported / Designated Car Parking e.g. age-friendly, mobility, or autism-friendly.</li> <li>• Mobility minibuses should have a Blue Badge parking sticker for the actual vehicle (vs the individual client as it is currently).</li> <li>• Easy access to Universal Accessible Toilets.</li> <li>• Changing Facilities e.g. new drive to increase the number of ‘changing places’ facilities allowing people with significant difficulty to be changed using overhead tracking hoists.</li> <li>• Group Suitability in Relation to Access e.g. day trips with minibus, jetty design and upkeep, and sensitivity around height barriers at carparks for larger vehicles e.g. minibus with hoists.</li> <li>• Physical Design, particularly surfaces, gradients of access routes, tracks, angling stands</li> <li>• Safe infrastructure - particularly for Angling Stands, non-slip with foot guards around edges</li> <li>• Maintenance of Likely Route/ Amenity / Angling Options.</li> <li>• Suitable Information in Advance and On-Site Signage e.g. online information available in an accessible format for screen reader, magnification settings and picture messaging.</li> <li>• Weather Independent Facilities e.g. Café with Access</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance of Travel (from home base) and accessible public transport options.</li> <li>• Avoidance of Over-Crowding</li> <li>• Price / Costs Per Person Per Visit e.g. such as do carers go free.</li> <li>• Acceptance of guide/assistance and service dogs.</li> <li>• Aware and Supporting Staff Members e.g. promotion of Disability awareness training for staff.</li> <li>• Positive Previous Experience / Endorsement from Peer Group and Support Services</li> <li>• Dog Fouling &amp; Bird Fouling Control</li> <li>• Seating along Suitable Trail/Routes, at appropriate distances</li> <li>• Sensory-aware Spaces.</li> <li>• eCharging for minibuses (currently only EV car spaces) e.g. future-proofing and disability NGOs having bus parking contracts with EV providers.</li> </ul> |

**Table 6 Needs of Mainstream Recreational User**

| Primary Requirements  | Secondary Requirements  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe and Clean Environment</li> <li>• Recreational Experience, Variety of Trails/Routes, and Support Facilities</li> <li>• Previous Experiences on Site (or Endorsements)</li> <li>• E-Information / Mapping Online - e.g. location, amenities, trails length, gradient, timing</li> <li>• Family-friendly – child-friendly activities, accessible WC</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Events Programme</li> <li>• Fish stock quality and environmental condition of waters.</li> <li>• Informational and Directional Signage on Site</li> <li>• Car Parking (Free if Possible)</li> <li>• Loyalty / Membership / Friends of Schemes and Related</li> </ul> |

By shining a spotlight on specific needs and obstacles, a clearer set of recommendations to foster greater recreational accessibility within the county has emerged.



**All the Small Things – Inch Field, Cahir, Co.Tipperary**  
 Recent installation of well designed, universally accessible picnic tables mean that wheelchair users can join into the family fun.  
 Photo: courtesy of TCC Councillor Andy Moloney, 2024

## 6. KEY FINDINGS OF THE AUDIT & CONSULTATIONS

This chapter presents summary findings of the study in three categories.

At the end of the audit and consulting process, a number of key findings emerged from considerable consultations and research. These are used to inform the development of concrete recommendations for Tipperary County Council and its partners to implement in the short to medium term to enhance disability access to outdoor recreation, based on the principle of Universal Design and Access, underpinned by the provisions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and UN Human Rights charters.

The findings are ordered into three categories, which are presented in summary below with comments.

1. Policy & Delivery
2. Infrastructure – ‘All the Small Things’
3. Communications & Partnership

### 6.1 Policy & Delivery

| Key Finding   | Some Details   | Observations / Comment  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>1. An impressive Policy and Strategy framework exists to support disabled access at National, Regional &amp; County Level based on principles of Universal Design &amp; Access</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite substantial policy framework, and advances in design of public realm, there is a distinct lack of delivery in practice for accessible outdoor recreation activities.</li> <li>• Significant commitment is required at the design and planning stages of all publicly funded projects in Tipperary to ensure that outdoor recreational amenities are designed based on the Universal Principles.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A “whole of Government” National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2022 includes specific actions assigned to local authorities e.g. Action 108 relates to the ‘dishing’ of footpaths; Action 109 relates to accessible infrastructure.</li> <li>• United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was ratified by Ireland in 2018. This obliges State Parties to ensure access for persons with disabilities to the physical environment and transportation in both urban and rural areas.</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. Lack of ‘joined-up thinking’ at local, county, and national levels.</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Silo’ cultural mindset in our public bodies needs to shift for progress to be made in Tipperary / Ireland for the significant minority formally identified as disabled.</li> <li>• CSO Census 2022 estimated <b>that 8% of the Irish population lives ‘with at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent’</b> and that <b>22% lives “with at least one long-lasting condition or disability to some extent”</b>.</li> <li>• A multi-party South Tipperary Disability Forum exists for the south but not for the north of the county.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CSO Census data does not report specifically for Tipperary but based on 8% of the county’s population equates to <b>13,437 people ‘living with long lasting disability to a great extent’ in Tipperary.</b></li> <li>• Disability Forum meets regularly, but there is no plan to seek improved ‘outdoor recreational access’ – and should be expanded to include North Tipperary.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3 The ‘User’s voice’ is seldom heard</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad rainbow of capable NGOs advocating and supporting those with <i>specific</i> disabilities in Tipperary from Age Friendly Tipperary to Irish Wheelchair Association</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical division of Tipperary into two Ridings in the ‘health realm’ is a disadvantage to generating synergy and practical co-operation.</li> </ul>   |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   | <p>and various specialist from Autism Support Groups to Acquired Brain Injury (HSE).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A segment of the disability community that tends to be overlooked is the <b>Youth voice</b>. Perhaps young people are better serviced through access to sports and clubs (e.g. basketball, team ball games, archery, horse-riding and swimming). However, outdoor recreational access particularly with power/adapted/all-terrain wheelchairs is invisible in Tipperary.</li> <li>• A <b>User Recreational Needs Survey</b> of people living with disabilities across Tipperary would be invaluable, to define needs and outdoor recreation services tailored appropriately.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even for specialist NGOs ‘outdoor recreational access’ tends to be a secondary consideration relative to the long list of primary needs of their members / clients</li> <li>• The work of <b>Vision Sport Ireland</b> should be acknowledged (e.g. bring Blind and Visually Impaired tennis to Tipperary), outside the scope of this Study, but along with equestrian <b>Riding for the Disabled</b> – an important on-going contribution.</li> <li>• Consultations with young people and their service providers are strongly recommended e.g. JIGSAW, FOROIGE as part of a User Survey</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>4. Lack of Institutional Awareness of common ‘access’ issues / obstacles and legalisation</b></p>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational and angling <i>access</i> obstacles for those with disabilities are <b>largely invisible</b> unless a friend / family member is regularly disadvantaged because of poor planning / delivery.</li> <li>• A ‘least will suffice’ planning mentality can be seen in the likes of car parking, surfacing and WC design / provision. <b>Basic design deficiencies in these will make it impossible for a disability user to access any site.</b> This reality is often missed by planners / designers and public.</li> <li>• Future interventions and planning in Tipperary should <b>look beyond the sole individual user and consider also immediate network of relatives and/or friends.</b> This immediate ‘community’ is often three or four time the size of the individual user e.g. carer, immediate family, support organisation and friends’ group.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability users (individuals or groups) must <i>invest a considerable amount of ‘planning time’</i> into selecting a suitable outdoor recreation site in Tipperary. They adopt a conservative approach, often revisiting accessible sites that were ‘successful’ previously, with limited choice. Risks are seldom taken when identifying sites given planning, preparation time required e.g. taking support staff, physical inconvenience to clients.</li> <li>• ‘Trading Places’ technique often employed in ‘best in class’ educational/awareness raising initiatives where mainstream planners (or related) spend time in a wheelchair at a recreational site.</li> <li>• <i>Interesting to note (22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022)</i> Department of Transport’s input to the draft County Development Plan. Issue: <i>Accessible public transport for All, and especially for Persons with Disabilities, Reduced mobility, and Older People:</i> -</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>5. Excellent practical design ‘guidance’ material exists but it often tends to be invisible to mainstream planners.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent <b>guidance is available</b> already – there is no need to reinvent the wheel.</li> <li>• On-going professional training and engagement with users will remedy past mistakes and lost opportunities.</li> <li>• Need for more user advocates ‘batting’ for increased adoption of good practice in universal design for Outdoor Recreation.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training is required at every level</li> <li>• Ireland’s Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (NDA), Irish Wheelchair Association, Best Practice Access Guidelines, Sport Ireland, Get Ireland Active.....all expressly address universal issues through different lenses.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>6. Recreational ‘access’ tends to be an after-thought to universal access in relation to public</b></p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is the perception that <b>universal access provision will be more costly</b> and unlikely to have the same degree of usage compared to conventional facilities.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is often a lack of sensitivity to the outdoor recreational needs and desires of disabled citizens. Designers will deal with access to a</li> </ul>  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>buildings and urban public realm delivery.</b></p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation access for disability challenged users is invariably less expensive if designed in at the outset.</li> <li>• This is the ‘cost-benefit’ evaluation; however, from as far back as the first Disability Act (2005) recreational <i>access</i> was identified to be provided where possible.</li> </ul>  | <p>theatre or a public office BUT when it comes to trailhead, corners are cut</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future recreational interventions in Tipperary should identify ways of providing transport (private or public) access to outdoor spaces. Where possible, groups promoting outdoor access should explore opportunities to link with existing community transport services to provide pick up/drop off services where possible e.g. Local Link.</li> <li>• Carparks should be designed to allow Mobility Minibuses, without barriers.</li> </ul>           |
| <p><b>7 Development agencies often are followers rather than leaders.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although invariably well intentioned, many agencies demonstrate a lack of awareness of access problems or solutions. This often is down to the lack of the ‘lived experience’ of decision makers.</li> <li>• The concept of ‘universal access’ is often namechecked in a similar manner to ‘sustainability’ and ‘climate change’ (with perhaps the latter two more clearly understood in today’s policy landscape?).</li> <li>• Renewed effort needs to be invested into training and building bridges among the primary parties to <b>improve the recreational experience of 13,400 Tipperary citizens</b> and visitors over the coming decades.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ‘acceptance of underperformance’ is a good starting point.</li> <li>• The formal training of a ‘designated point person’ within a development organisation to take responsibility for engineering the delivery of organisational change could be considered.</li> <li>• Could the local authority offer a <b>Disability Access Certificate for Outdoor Recreational and Angling Infrastructure</b> building upon the currently available Disability Access Certificate (DAC) for new buildings / alterations and extensions?</li> </ul> |

## 6.2 Infrastructural Considerations - ‘All the Small Things’

| Key Finding   | Some Details   | Observations/ Comment  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>8. Users report that it is ‘All the Small Things’ that prohibit them from enjoying access to Outdoor Recreation</b></p> <p><b>Required: Detailed site audits followed by Recreation Infrastructural Remedial Programme for Universal Access at key sites in Tipperary</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Users report many ‘small things’</b> (e.g. bollards/ gates blocking access; steps on kerbs/ paths, inappropriate surfaces and gradient of pathways, lack of WC at carpark) that prohibit access to outdoor amenities.</li> <li>• Almost 75% of sites visited / audited as part of the Study were deficient in ‘small things’, many requiring just modest investment to ensure access.</li> <li>• <b>Securing the on-going advice of Users is an essential part of a successful capital expenditure programme.</b></li> <li>• Role of Area Engineers and Planners will be important in roll-out as the agreed interventions, although often modest, may have wider implications.</li> <li>• Adoption of common <b>Engineering &amp; Design Approach</b> for recreational sites (universal design, materials, priorities)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following a detailed site safety &amp; engineering audit, <b>deliver upgrades/refurbishments on five primary sites across Tipperary</b>, popular with those with mobility issues (this initiative could come from pooling existing resources / allocations from multiple partners)</li> <li>• There is an absence of practical and contemporary <b>local user research on the recreational and angling ‘needs’</b> of those with mobility challenges.</li> <li>• Absence of an <b>overarching user needs database</b> to help with service delivery and planning (recognising GDPR).</li> <li>• <b>Use NDA/ Sport Ireland practical guidance for recreation infrastructure delivery.</b></li> </ul> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | based on National Disability and Sport Ireland guidance is recommended.   |  |
| <p><b>9. Prioritise Accessible Recreational Sites needing Remedial Work</b></p> <p><i>To be based on principles of 'Customer Journey' from digital information, planning the trip, access &amp; services on site and total visitor experience.</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The consultations went through a process of identifying the primary recreational and angling sites most popular with disability users in Tipperary. This emerging 'list' could provide <b>the foundation for identifying immediate remedial priorities for the physical upgrade of suitable sites.</b></li> <li>This list will likely be modest in terms of number of sites and likely nature of remedial work required.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selected sites should be balanced geographically, types of amenities and services. <b>Essential requirements are car parking, accessible WC (with changing if possible) and suitable surfaces/ gradients of pathways and access to angling stands.</b></li> <li>A related initiative should be the <b>advance digital communications</b> packaging / mapping / promotion of these sites for ALL users. (See #13 below.)</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>10. Barriers to community groups in driving new recreational facilities in their communities beyond the mainstream recreational users (e.g. toilets, parking, surfaces and path design, planting, and suitable signage) – costs and insurance can be prohibitive.</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community groups find additional costs and operational 'risks' of providing accessible facilities to be prohibitive. <b>There is a need for additional supports to community providers of accessible amenities.</b></li> <li>Insurance companies frequently create cost 'barriers' to insuring accessible infrastructure such as e.g. angling access for volunteers to Tipp's lakes &amp; waterways.</li> <li>Funding bodies supporting community enterprises / groups in Tipperary have a role in promoting / informing applicants on issues / guidelines around universal access.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is encouraging to see appointment of Tipperary's <b>Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO)</b> who will practically support the existing work of the Tipperary Sports Partnership and the established Rural Recreation Officer (RRO). The joint working of these resources to better deliver universal access to recreational facilities in Tipperary is welcomed.</li> <li>Insurance companies must be challenged nationally re. perceived risks for universal access to ensure insurance costs in provision of outdoor recreational infrastructure are not prohibitive.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>11. Could a town like Cahir become a national centre of excellence for access to Outdoor Recreation and Angling?</b></p> <p>NGOs such as Irish Wheelchair Association (supported by HSE funding) provide residential hotel breaks to provide respite for people with disabilities and their carers – Cahir provides a suitable site for such short breaks.....</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Respite breaks</b> provided by HSE for those living with disabilities and a family member / carer. However, there is no suitably accredited hotel in Tipperary, meaning over 100 Tipperary people with disabilities must travel p.a. outside the county for a break.</li> <li>These <b>respite breaks</b> are taken in hotels with suitably accessible rooms / facilities and trained staff (e.g. 3-5 nights in Kilkenny, or Cork).</li> <li>The breaks are heavily subsidised by the HSE and may be availed off on more than one visit per annum.</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could be an interesting <b>specialist tourism development</b> project for the Tourism Unit of TCC especially if linked with developing / expanding the recreational / angling infrastructure to deliver more fully on universal access.</li> <li><b>Cahir</b> could be a pilot destination, where significant investment in accessible outdoor recreation infrastructure has taken place, with support of the local hotel. Discussions with the hoteliers could be undertaken to enable Cahir to become a <b>national centre</b> of disability access excellence.</li> </ul>           |

### 6.3 Communications and Partnership

| Headline Finding   | Some Details   | Observations/ Comments  |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>12. Tipperary to lead on a new set of ‘Top Five’ accessible recreational and angling sites for future investment upgrade and coordinated promotion.</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A ‘Top Five’ sites across the county is a possible, with five satellite sites</li> <li>• Most are established but a few sites are emerging with considerable potential, including those undergoing development by Tipp County Council:<br/> <b>e.g. Littleton Labyrinth, the new Ballina Walkway, and Suir Blueway</b></li> <li>• From an accessibility perspective, the ‘Top Five’ sites could be rolled out in mainstream tourism promotion.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This list of top sites could be suitable for a promotional strategy enhancing their visibility to target users.</li> <li>• As pre-planning recreational visits are <b>critical</b> to those with mobility issues the more tailored and up to date the digital travel and site information the better.</li> <li>• See below #13 for consideration of a generic communications plan to enhance universal access to recreational and angling sites in Tipperary.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>13 Develop a new Communications Strategy on the key accessible recreational and angling sites in Tipperary – to facilitate ease of planning and access by users/ groups/ families</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived <b>communications deficit</b> in relation to suitably accessible recreational and angling sites in Tipperary.</li> <li>• Many disability users are <b>technologically literate and rely on online information sharing.</b></li> <li>• In addition, their NGOs conduct much of their destination and travel research through mainstream platforms such as Google or TripAdvisor.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tailored <b>Annual Communications Strategy</b> is required. It likely should be implemented by the Tourism Unit of the TCC fully aligned to their mainstream online strategy.</li> <li>• The strategy should be suitably funded and target both internal partners like the NGOs and HSE but also the individual users (and their families and carers).</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>14 Each person with a disability is required to develop an annual Individual Service Plan ISP (with support) to map out learnings / experiences the client wishes to participate in. There is considerable room for greater recreational access opportunities in Tipperary to be considered in ISPs.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These annual ‘plans’ are developed with family/ carers/ NGO and can cover most off-site experiences from cultural, sporting and visitor experiences. They may occasionally cover an over-night stay. Where possible / practical the NGO will explore with the client the visit’s feasibility.</li> <li>• As recreational access potential in Tipperary is considered poor by the NGOs (<i>and there is little experience of potential sites</i>), to date ‘home county recreational visits’ are seldom identified in ISPs</li> <li>• These individual plans are a mandatory requirement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is scope for an annual special <b>‘familiarisation visit’</b> to the leading (and accessible) recreational sites in Tipperary for those people working ‘at the coalface’ of designing these individual ‘plans’ and the HSE funder.</li> <li>• Increased <b>awareness and a dialogue with site managers</b> may add significantly to a wider menu of options being offered through these individual service plans (ISPs).</li> </ul>                                |

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Based on the findings of the desk research, consultations and field audits, a number of key recommendations may be made for strategic interventions to enhance accessibility to outdoor recreation across County Tipperary. These are summarised in **Figure 5** below and full details are presented in **Table 7** overleaf.

**Figure 5 Summary of Recommendations for Strategic Interventions**

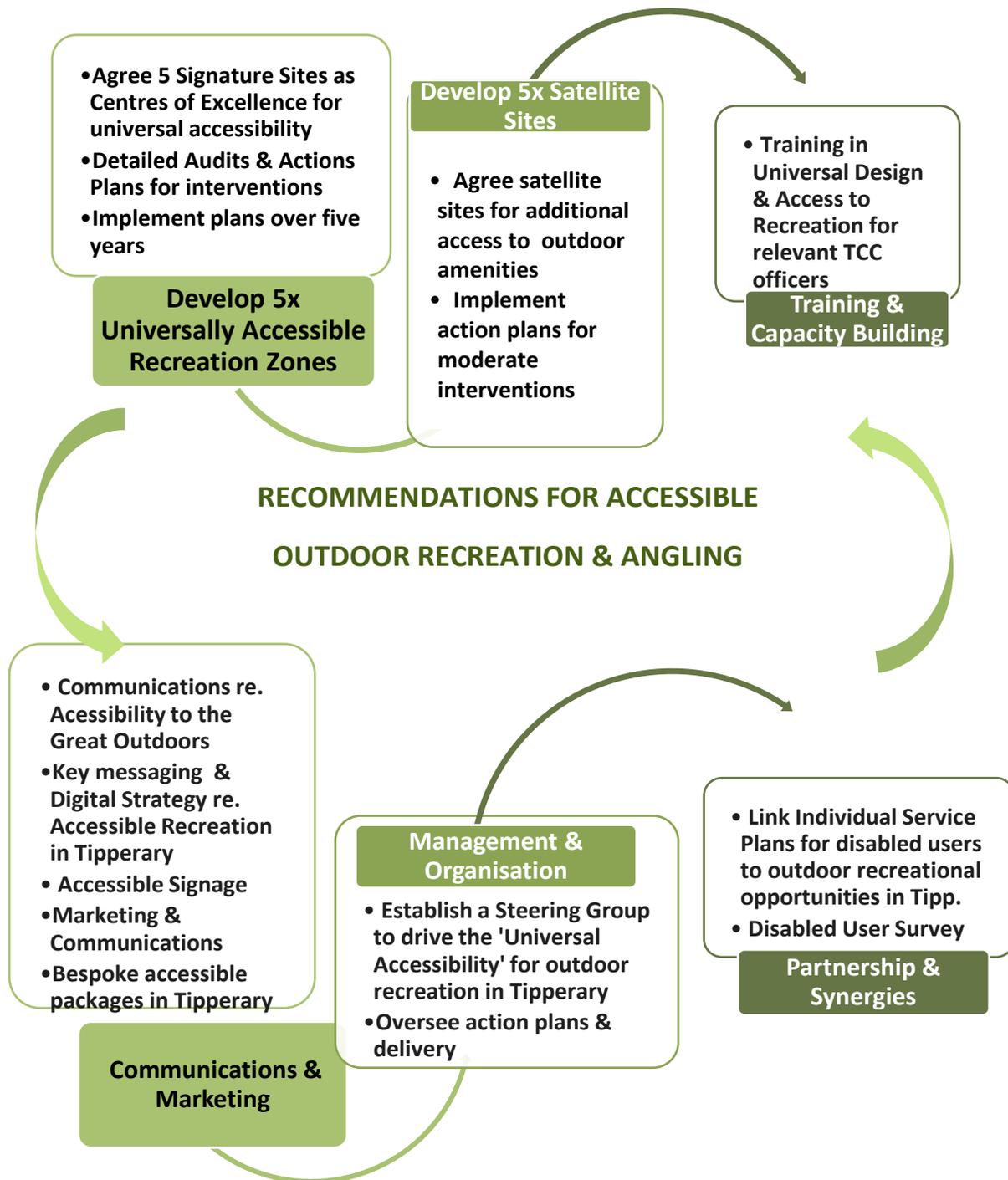


Table 7 Recommended Strategic Interventions

| Ref:  | Initiative   | Description   | Primary Outcomes  | Lead Responsibility           | Timeframe                           | Comment   |
|---|--|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. ACCESSIBILITY ENHANCEMENTS OF KEY RECREATION &amp; ANGLING INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |  |   |   |                               |                                     |   |
| 01.1  | <b>Undertake detailed Audits of the key selected sites from Accessibility, Public Safety, Planning and Engineering perspectives<sup>19</sup>.</b>  | Based on the findings of Audit 2024, undertake detailed audits of the selected Signature & Satellite sites to meet compliance with national accessibility guidance.   | Detailed audits of accessibility criteria of selected sites (see 1.2 below) to provide detailed design specifications & costings for Action Planning, based on guidance and best practice.  | TCC/ Internal Steering Group  | Short                               | The ‘audit phase’ of this Study makes it clear that many remedial works are often modest in terms of action and budget. Many of the site-specific initiatives should fall within normal current expenditure.  |
| 01.2  | <b>Develop Actions Plans for universal access at identified sites across County Tipperary</b><br><br><b>Selected primary sites to become Centres of Excellence for Accessible Recreation</b><br><br><b>Selected ‘satellite’ sites to be upgraded to provide additional options for accessible recreation</b> | Develop focussed ‘Action Plans’ at selected priority sites in Tipperary in short to medium term:<br><br><i>Signature Sites:</i><br><b>1. Littleton Labyrinth/ incl. Lough Doire Bhile</b><br><b>2. Cahir Castle to Swiss Cottage</b><br><b>3. Clonmel-Kilsheelan-Carrick-on-Suir Blueway</b><br><b>4. Ballina Amenity Park</b><br><b>5. Fethard Townpark</b><br><br><i>Satellite Sites:</i><br><b>• Dromineer lakeshore</b> | Practical universal access enhancement of five signature and satellite sites identified in Study.<br><br><i>Priority Requirements at Sites:</i><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessible WC &amp; changing facilities,</li><li>• Accessible entry points for immersive water activities for e.g. swimming / kayaking</li><li>• Car parking; no overhead barriers; suited to Mobility Minibus access;</li><li>• e-charging points for Mobility Minibus</li><li>• Removal of steps/ ramps</li><li>• Suitable surfaces and gradients</li><li>• Accessible specialist information in appropriate style.</li></ul><br><i>Additional Considerations:</i> | TCC / Internal Steering Group | Short-Medium, Long term... ongoing. | <b>TCC’s development of the new Littleton Labyrinth under the Just Transition programme offers a golden opportunity to adopt universal design and access principles for outdoor recreation at the outset of works. A balanced approach will ensure enhanced access will maintain integrity of wilder places.</b><br><br>Not all general recreational or angling sites in Tipperary can become universally accessible BUT the few significant sites that are accessible can be significantly improved for a modest capital investment. |

<sup>19</sup> There is no Disability Auditor in Ireland and it is not required by law or planning. Quality audits to identify any disability requirements could be sourced/based on current DMURS standards – see <https://www.dmurs.ie>

|    |  |   |  |  |   |   |
|----|--|---|--|--|---|---|
|    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Templemore Townpark</b></li> <li>• <b>Cabragh Wetlands</b></li> <li>• <b>Dundrum Marl Bog</b></li> <li>• <b>Kildanogue Wildfowl Reserve</b></li> <li>• <b>Garrykennedy marina</b></li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital information about sites to allow visitors to plan ahead</li> <li>• On-site services e.g. accessible Café</li> <li>• Accessible wheelchair ramps at key waterside sites to allow immersion</li> <li>• specialist Guides or Pilots (possibly via trained volunteer corps)</li> </ul>  |  |   | Investigate best practice in mobility aids for water-based immersive activities on ongoing basis.   |
| 02 | <b>Professional Capacity Building in Universal Design &amp; Access for Outdoors' for Planners, Engineers, Architects, Sports &amp; Inclusion officers in TCC</b>       | Deliver a bespoke training course annually for relevant technical staff / officers on all aspects of Universal Access & Design for the Great Outdoors.  | UAD professional course delivered by external experts addressing outdoor accessibility issues (and opportunities), with practical case studies in Tipperary.   | TCC - with likely support from NDA / Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.  | Annually, linked to continuous professional development (CPD) | Design and delivery of this course may be the first of its kind in Ireland so other Local Authorities may seek to emulate its delivery and effectiveness.   |
| 03 | <b>Cahir – as a leading Disability Access Destination, with outdoor activities, accommodation, supporting services, guides, transport, comms etc.</b>                  | Enhance Cahir's current accessible recreation & angling offerings through a fully integrated approach - ensure accommodation, transport, relevant outdoor infrastructure, visitor attractions, communications and night-time facilities service universal access needs. | Cahir can enhance its reputation as an Accessible Centre of Tourism Excellence as a welcoming, progressive and highly accessible destination for those living with disabilities and their families / carers.   | TCC Internal Steering Group working closely with the town's community development champions, user-groups, and the Tourism trade. | Medium to long term (likely multi-phases).                    | To capitalise upon this opportunity a new piece of research will be required to plot out the master opportunities for Cahir.<br><br>Link to NDA individualised plans for people living with disabilities.   |
| 04 | <b>Access for ALL to Tipperary's primary Water Assets</b><br><br>This initiative further enhances TCC's ambition to become a leading recreational destination for all. | Enhance selected key sites for accessible outdoor/ wild swimming, at TCC designated bathing areas.<br><br>Secure funding and commission <i>two bespoke Accessible Craft</i> to provide disability users and anglers access to Lough Derg and River Suir.                | Ensure that water quality at designated sites is monitored and meeting bathing water standards.<br><br>Specially designed craft with a capacity of 4-6 disability users (& carers/family). A fully accredited and trained crew to facilitate voyages on Tipperary's iconic waterways. Craft could vary from modified RIBs to traditional redesigned fiberglass cruisers or barges. | Internal Steering Group with external specialist partners.   | Medium<br><br>Medium to long term.<br><br>2025-2029           | Identify suitable sites for water-based activities to enhance opportunities for immersive fun activities.<br><br>Identify where a suitable craft may be launched / stored.<br><br>identifying the market is relatively straightforward compared to the 'operationalising' the venture and |

| Ref:                    | Initiative  | Description  | Primary Outcomes  | Lead Responsibility   | Timeframe   | Comment  |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|--|
|                         |   |  | <i>Further research would be required to examine options.</i>   |   |   | making it successfully function on a season-by-season basis.   |
| <b>2 COMMUNICATIONS</b> |   |  |   |   |   |  |
| 04                      | <b>Coordination of all Online Communications / Messaging</b>  | Develop an integrated digital platform comprising web, social media feeds, online contact database; downloadable maps of key accessible sites                                  | One-stop-shop approach to all recreational and angling information in Tipperary for universal access users, to allow effective pre-planning of visits to outdoor amenities  | Tourism Unit (TCC).   | Design and launch (Phase 1) - Short to medium                           | Should be viewed as 'plug-in' to existing tourism and recreational online promotional / communications tools.  |
| 05                      | <b>Coordinated Universal Access-focused Signage</b>   | Develop a suite of branded signage and maps for key sites to support enhanced delivery of universal access within the county.  | Coordinated suite of directional / information signage on accessible priority sites identified in this Study along with supporting signage, sensitive to the needs of all visitors regardless of their impairment.                      | Tourism Unit (TCC) with support through the new dedicated internal Steering Group.                                      | Medium  | Positive examples elsewhere demonstrating excellence in this area e.g. Coillte, Avondale (Wicklow).<br><b>Sensory gardens</b> (some public / some private) could be part of accessible nature mapping.           |
| 06                      | <b>Full integration of principles of universal access into Tipperary County Council's recreational and tourism promotion 'messaging'.</b> | Update contemporary copy and imagery to promote Tipperary by reflecting and speaking to visitors with all levels of mobility and awareness.                                    | Proofing all promotional copy and imagery to bring it in line with best international practice in relation to universal access.<br>A new set of professional shots may be required to satisfy this opportunity.                         | Tourism Unit (TCC)  | Medium  | Engage with external partners like the National Disability Authority and Irish Wheelchair Association on ensuring new copy and imagery are appropriate.  |
| 07                      | <b>Knowledge sharing between partners within the county.</b>  | Ensure optimum links are being shared among partners (public, NGOs, charities, agencies).  | Enhancement of relevant click-through links on each partners site / platform.   | TCC Internal Steering Group.  | Medium  | Considerable room for improvement in 'signposting' relevant information to users.  |
| 08                      | <b>Bespoke Recreational and Angling 'Packages' for those mobility-constrained users / visitors.</b>                                       | Strategically identify a small number of new recreational / tourism 'packages' that address the needs, preferences, and budgets of those with disabilities (and their carers). | Initially examine one new 'package' per primary accessible site.<br>These 'packages' can be promoted / sold chiefly online through existing tourism channels and the platforms offered through supporting charities / disability NGO's. | TCC Tourism Unit & Internal Steering Group, with practical inputs from NGOs.<br>A specialist 'tour operator' in Ireland | Medium – Long term<br><br>This will likely be a multi-phase initiative. | Once launched into the specialist marketplaces detailed evaluation of the success of the packages will be vital.<br>International research on 'best in class' package design, delivery and pricing is advisable. |

|  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | may be interested in pilot. |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|--|

| Ref:                                 | Initiative   | Description   | Primary Outcomes   | Lead Responsibility  | Timeframe                   | Comment   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>3 MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION</b> |  |   |  |  |                             |   |
| 09                                   | <b>Greater Tipperary County Council internal cooperation, formal structures, and information sharing on all aspects of Universal Access.</b> | Consultation confirms the need to improve internal networking within TCC. A multi-disciplinary 'steering group' led by a Director of Service, with Terms of Reference to ensure implementation and optimal resources            | New steering group tasked with implementing this Study's recommendations.  | TCC Steering Group   | Short term (and ongoing)    | Steering Group to make a formal presentation to the senior management team in the Council Executive and elected Members of TCC on an annual basis.                          |
| 10                                   | <b>Inter-regional Cooperation on Recreational Access for All.</b>  | Tipperary's existing recreational offer is partly defined by inter-county assets i.e. Lough Derg and Munster Vales. Opportunity exists for multi-county embracing of opportunities to provide universal access to the outdoors. | The greater visibility and consideration of universal access recreational provision in the development planning for both Lough Derg and Munster Vales.<br><br>Scope may be limited in e.g. Upland recreation but by adopting universal principles, Tipperary sends out a clear message on this critical issue. | TCC (Tourism Unit) with the respective Steering Groups for each asset. | Short-Medium term (ongoing) | Initial task is to examine what joint recreational experiences are 'open' to those living with disabilities. This initiative could help identify new funding opportunities. |

| Ref:                              | Initiative  | Description  | Primary Outcomes  | Lead Responsibility  | Timeframe                          | Comment   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>4 PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGY</b> |   |  |   |  |                                    |   |
| 11                                | <b>Informing annual 'Individual Service Plans' (ISPs) for all those with disabilities in Tipperary about accessible recreation opportunities.</b> | <b>Each Tipperary person with a formal disability agrees an annual ISP.</b> ISPs lay-out what the individual wishes to learn / experience, but rarely refer to access to Outdoor | Desirable for those users (and support services/ carers/ families) to have up-to-date relevant information on what recreation is accessible in Tipperary to inform these 'plans'. | Steering Group with key external partners including the HSE and the IWA. | Short – Medium term (and ongoing). | This requires effective communications and collaboration between key partners. <b>This relatively modest initiative could have a significant difference</b> |

|    |   |  |  |  |              |  |
|----|---|--|--|--|--------------|--|
|    |   | Recreation largely due to the actual / perceived lack of access / facilities.  | Currently there is a significant deficit in recreational provision that must be addressed.   |  |              | <b>on the quality of life for people with disabilities.</b>  |
| 12 | <b>Address the Knowledge Deficit through a comprehensive User Survey.</b> | Scant qualitative or quantitative research on <b>Disabled User needs, experiences or recommendations exists</b> ( <i>invisible in design and provision of recreational infrastructure to date</i> ). A comprehensive <b>Recreational User Online Survey</b> from a universal access perspective (promoted through all relevant partners) would be a welcome addition | Tailored Online Survey of users (and their support carers / family).<br><br>The aim would be to secure about 150 samples responses to secure collective knowledge providing, benchmarks, facilities, and operational feedback. | TCC Steering Group (with key external partners). | Medium/ 2025 | The challenge is a) design of the survey and b) ensuring proper distribution to ensure the link arrives at the correct people.<br><br>The feedback from this exercise could be considerable. To repeat again the 'voice of the recreational user' is often silent. |

## 8. Potential Funding Sources for Strategic Interventions

A number of funding sources are available for the proposed strategic interventions through a number of public sectoral funds, which are presented below.

A number of possible sources of public supporting funds are available to implement enhanced access to outdoor recreation, which are outlined in Table 8 below. These pertain to outdoor recreation, tourism, enterprise and rural development.

**Table 8 Potential Funding & Resources to Support Implementation**

| Target of Funding  | Potential Source of External Funding & Resources   |
|--|--|
| <b>Recreational Infrastructure</b>   | Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) –<br>Rural Recreation Development Fund (RRDF)<br>Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) - Greenway funding<br>LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027<br>The Walks Scheme (currently being expanded)<br>Just Transition ( <i>Category 5</i> ) – <i>applied to parts of Tipperary</i> |
| <b>Tourism Development</b>   | Fáilte Ireland Tourism Promotion support<br>Fáilte Ireland – various programmes<br>LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027   |
| <b>Rural Regeneration/<br/>Town &amp; Village enhancement</b>                        | Rural Regeneration Funds<br>Town & Village Renewal Scheme<br>Municipal grants  |
| <b>Active Travel / Accessibility</b>   | Just Transition ( <i>Category 5</i> ) – <i>applies to parts of Tipperary</i><br>Transport Infrastructure Ireland<br>National Roads Authority (NRA)   |
| <b>Co-Funding Opportunities in provision of<br/>Outdoor Recreation &amp; Angling</b> | Coillte<br>Inland Fisheries Ireland<br>Waterways Ireland<br>Dept. Transport, Tourism & Sports  |
| <b>Skills, Capacity Building &amp; Training</b>                                      | National Disability Authority<br>Centre of Excellence for Universal Access ( <i>part of NDA</i> )<br>LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027<br>Tipperary Education & Training Board (ETB)<br>Local Enterprise Office (LEO)<br>Fáilte Ireland  |
| <b>Marketing &amp; Related</b>   | Fáilte Ireland – <i>Ireland’s Ancient East/</i><br>Fáilte Ireland – <i>Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands</i><br>LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027<br>Local Enterprise Office (LEO)   |

## 9. Map Attachments

**Maps 1 and 2 for all of County Tipperary** are attached electronically (in A0 format).

- Map 1: Audited Sites, by Recreation Type
- Map 2: Graded Accessibility Assessments of Recreation Sites

Subset maps for each Municipal & Borough District are provided overleaf in **Figures 6, 7, 8, 9.**

### MAP 1: AUDITED SITES, BY RECREATIONAL TYPE

Figure 6.1 Nenagh Municipal District

Figure 7.1 Templemore-Thurles Municipal District

Figure 8.1 Tipperary-Cahir-Cashel Municipal District

Figure 9.1 Clonmel Borough Council & Carrick-on-Suir Municipal District

### MAP 2: GRADED ASSESSMENTS OF RECREATION SITES

Figure 6.2 Nenagh Municipal District

Figure 7.2 Templemore-Thurles Municipal District

Figure 8.2 Tipperary-Cahir-Cashel Municipal District

Figure 9.2 Clonmel Borough Council & Carrick-on-Suir Municipal District

Figure 6 Audited Recreation Sites in Nenagh Municipal District

MAP 6.1 – AUDITED SITES BY RECREATION TYPE



MAP 6.1 ACCESSIBILITY GRADING OF AUDITED SITES

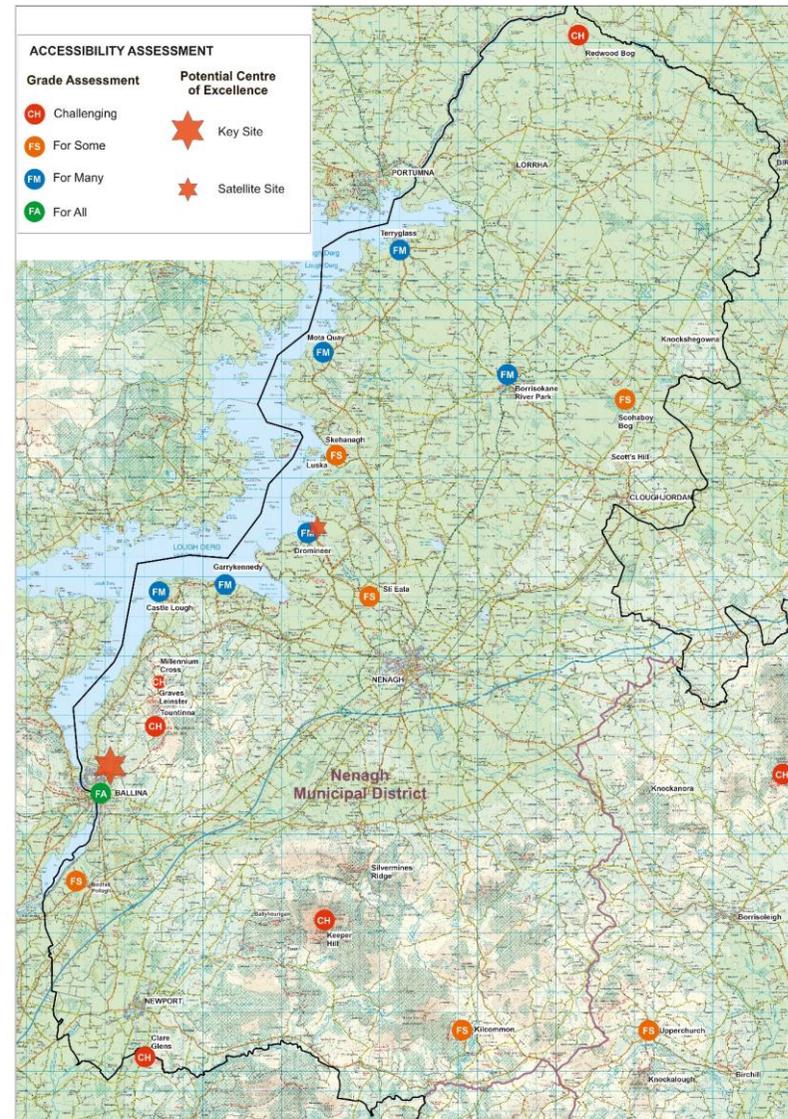
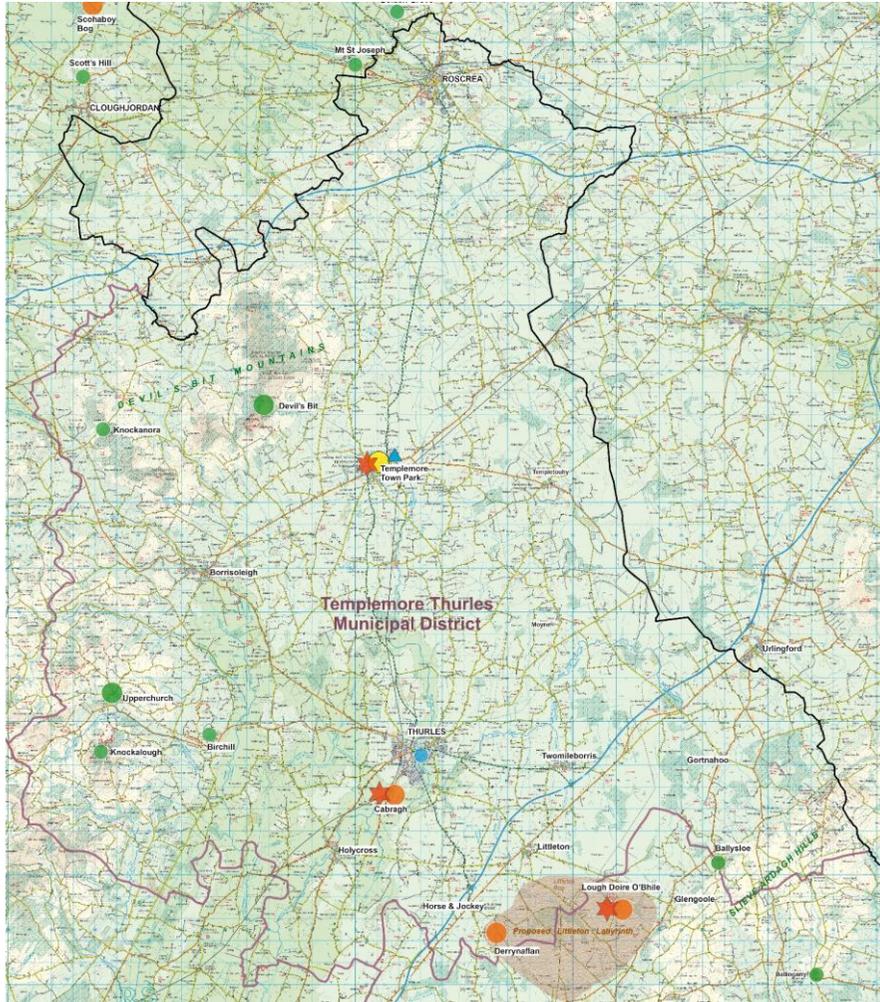


Figure 7 Audited Recreation Sites in Templemore-Thurles Municipal District

MAP 7.1- AUDITED SITES BY RECREATION TYPE



MAP 7.2 ACCESSIBILITY GRADING OF AUDITED SITES

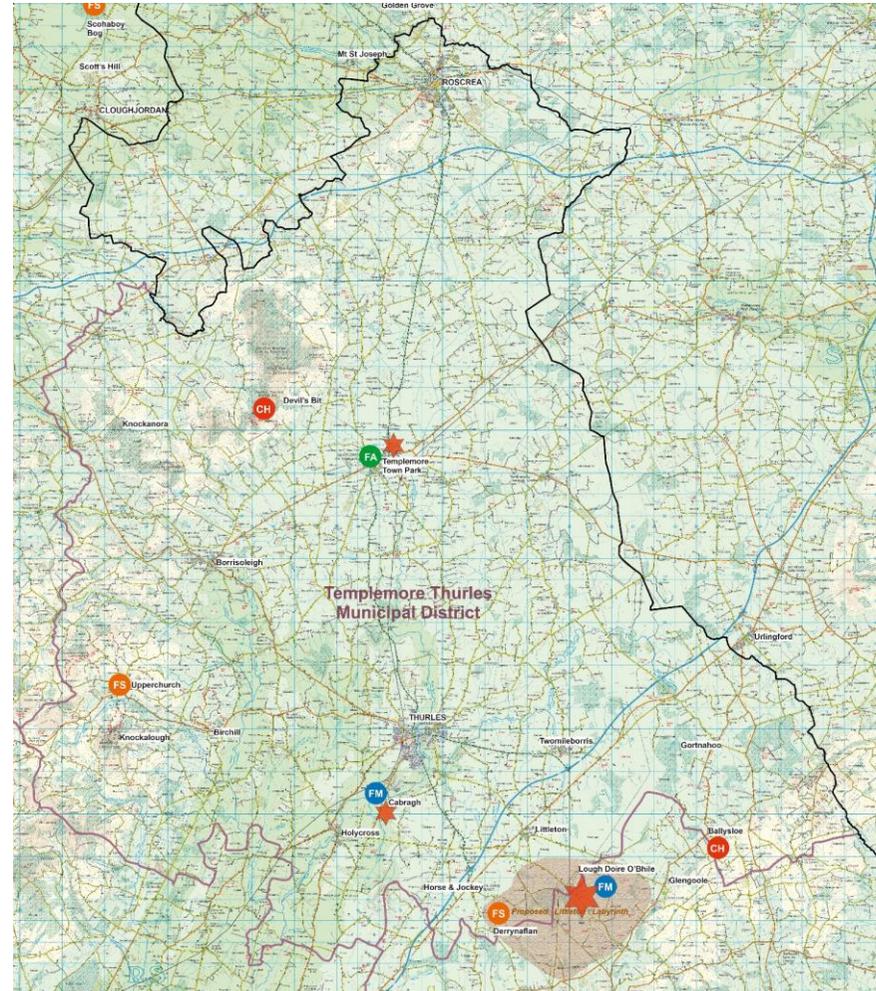
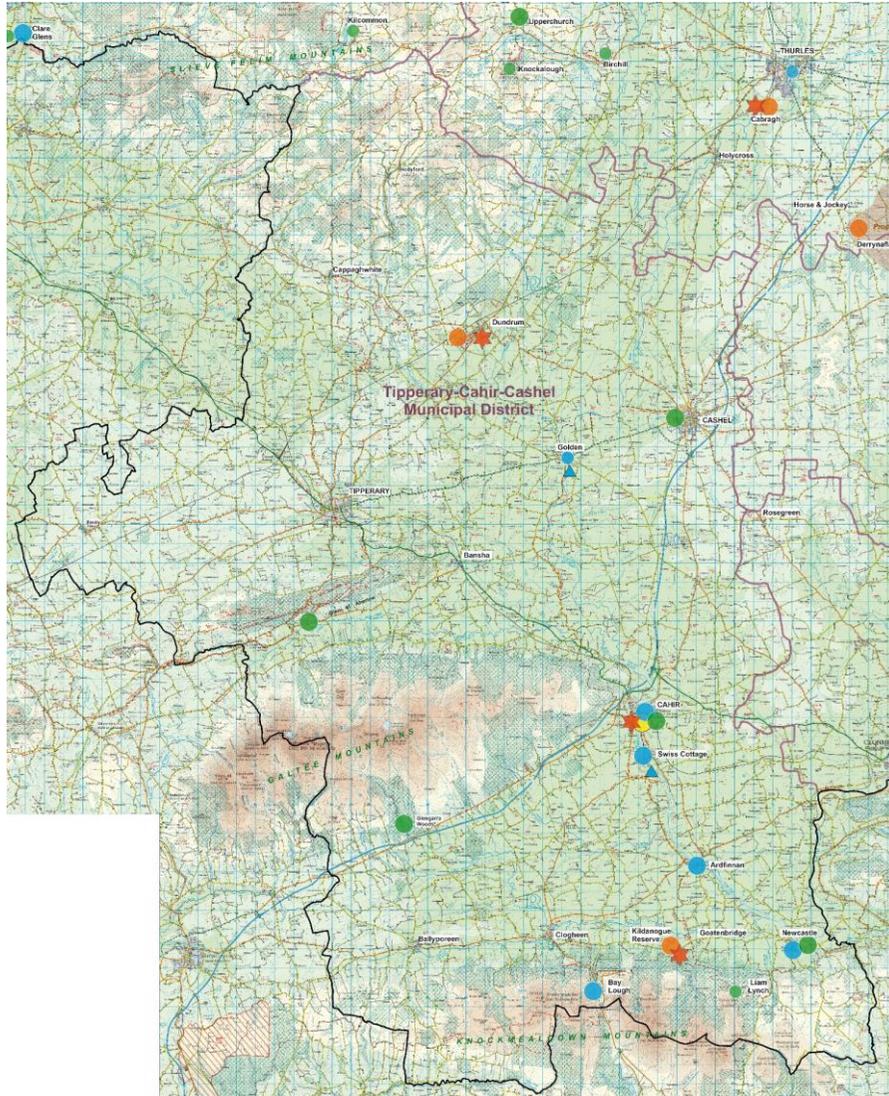
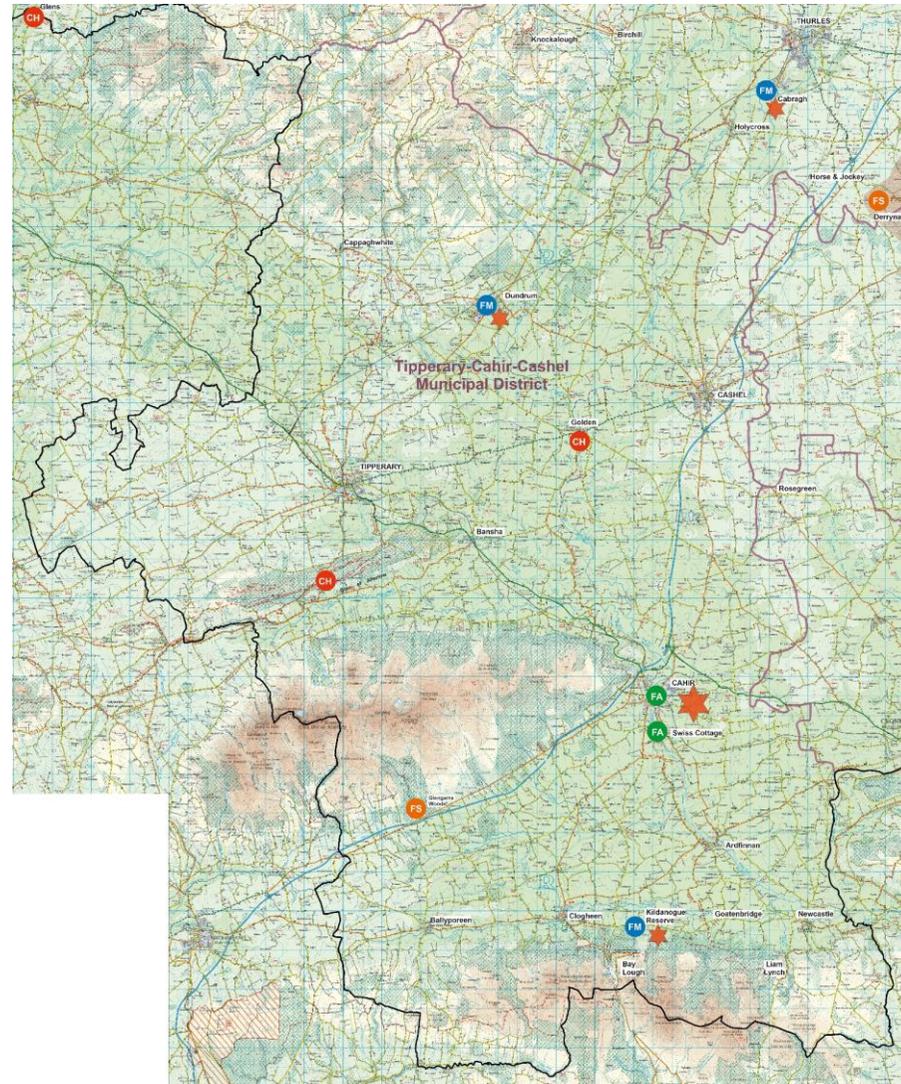


Figure 8 Audited Recreation Sites in Tipperary-Cahir-Cashel Municipal District

MAP 8.1 AUDITED SITES BY RECREATION TYPE



MAP 8.2 ACCESSIBILITY GRADING OF AUDITED SITES





## APPENDIX 1 – ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT TEMPLATE, 2024

| ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT OF RECREATION & ANGLING AMENITIES, CO. TIPPERARY |   |    |    |    |    | 2024  |
|--|---|----|----|----|----|---|
| NAME OF AMENITY:   |   | FA | FM | FS | CH | FA For All/ FM For Many/ FS For Some/ CH Challenging  |
| GRADE:   |   |    |    |    |    |   |
| TYPE OF ACTIVITY:  |   |    |    |    |    | walking hiking cycling angling kayak canoe swim other |
| LOCATION   |   |    |    |    |    |   |
| MD (Tipp)  |   |    |    |    |    | Municipal District                                    |
| <b>1. Ownership &amp; Land Use</b>                                   |   |    |    |    |    |   |
| Owner  | Landownership of amenity - Public Pu /Private P / Commonage Co/ Mixed Mx/ Other O                   |    |    |    |    | TCC Coillte NPWS IFI Other                            |
| Access   | Permissive access in place with landowner(s)...   |    |    |    |    | Yes/ No   |
| Terrain  | Agriculture/ Bog/ Forest/ River/ Lake / Hill/ Mountain  |    |    |    |    | describe terrain                                      |
| <b>2. ASSESSMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY FOR DIFFERENT NEEDS OF USERS</b>   |   | FA | FM | FS | CH | FA For All/ FM For Many/ FS For Some/ CH Challenging  |
| <b>2.1</b>   | <b>Ease of access to amenities for General User</b>   |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Safe & easy access from public roads to starting point of amenity                                   |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Standard of directional signage from public roads   |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Availability of E-Info: trail/ angling/ amenity (web/ social media/ QR codes/ Apps/ other)          |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Ease of public access through gates/ stiles/ 'kissing gates'  |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Hard-surface Car parking available at site  |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Pedal / E-Bike parking / lock-up available on site  |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Minibus/ Coach parking available on site  |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Wheelchair/ Disability WC/ toilet amenities available   |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Variety of marked trails/ ways/ facilities for different user needs in place                        |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Length of path/ trail/ cycleway/ blueway/ peatway clearly mapped                                    |    |    |    |    | in km   |
|  | Standard of path/ trail surfaces and underfoot conditions for general user                          |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Gradient of pathway/ route - steep, moderate, gentle  |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Standard of angling stands / pier / quay surfaces   |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Safe access to quays/ piers/ steps for kayaking/ angling boating amenities                          |    |    |    |    |   |
| <b>2.2</b>   | <b>Ease of access for Wheelchair / Buggy/ Low Mobility/ Low Visibility Users</b>                    |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Safe & easy access from car park to starting point of amenity for low mobility/low visibility users |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Accessibility through gates/ stiles/ 'kissing gates'/ along pathways to the amenity                 |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Variety of path/ trail/ cycleway/ blueway/ peatway for different user needs in place?               |    |    |    |    | in m /km  |
|  | Standard of path surfaces for wheelchair/ pram/ buggy/ other mobility /visibility aid user          |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Gradient of pathway/ route suitable for wheelchair/ low mobility/ low visibility user               |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Standard of angling stand surfaces for wheelchair / mobility aid users                              |    |    |    |    |   |
|  | Ease of access to water from bank/ bridge/ quay/ pier/ shore to kayak/ angling/ boat facilities     |    |    |    |    |   |

|  |   |             |             |            |            |   |
|--|---|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|---|
|  | Level of maintenance of access tracks/ walkways/ trails/ routes/ angling stands               |             |             |            |            |   |
| <b>3. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>                |   | <b>Good</b> | <b>Fair</b> | <b>CdB</b> | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Good/ Fair / Could do Better/ Not Applicable</b> |
|  | Existence of SAC/ SPA/ NHA/ pNHA/ Other designation   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Diversity of biodiversity/ ecology/ habitats at site  |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Management of environmental vulnerability (ecological/ flooding/ grazing) for access          |             |             |            |            |   |
| <b>4. PHYSICAL MANAGEMENT OPERATION &amp; SAFETY</b>   |   | <b>Yes</b>  | <b>No</b>   | <b>N/A</b> |            |   |
|  | Site manager in place   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Public sector/ Statutory Agency role and involvement in management                            |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Private sector role and involvement in management   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Community/ Voluntary sector role and involvement in management                                |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Evidence of community/ public/ private partnership in management of this site                 |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Public liability Insurance in place (for amenity usage)                                       |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Training programmes in place (e.g. management / guiding/ visitor servicing)                   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Level of amenity maintenance/ littering of the site   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Maintenance of signage, stiles, path surfaces, gates/ entry points for enhanced assessability |             |             |            |            |   |
| <b>5. TOURISM ATTRIBUTES/ OPPORTUNITIES OF AMENITY</b> |   | <b>Yes</b>  | <b>No</b>   | <b>N/A</b> |            |   |
|  | Visitor Centre in place, fully serviced WC  |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Interpretation in place (leaflets; panels; signage; audio-visual)                             |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Guides available  |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Managed picnic facilities available at site   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | On-site cafe/ restaurant/ WC  |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Local availability of food in shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants                                 |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Availability of Accommodation close to site (<5-10km)   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Availability of existing SME/tourism packages & operators                                     |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | <i>Any other accessible Amenities near site (&lt;10km) - provide some details</i>             |             |             |            |            |   |
| <b>6. MARKETING POTENTIAL</b>                          |   | <b>Yes</b>  | <b>No</b>   | <b>N/A</b> |            |   |
|  | Website/ social media/ Apps/ marketing media in place   |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Opportunity to cross-sell with other activities and attractions                               |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Links to sales intermediaries - potential?  |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | Links to existing activities and festivals in the area/ county                                |             |             |            |            |   |
|  | <i>Comments on Marketing/ promotional opportunities</i>                                       |             |             |            |            |   |

## APPENDIX 2 - POLICY REVIEW

### ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION & ANGLING IN COUNTY TIPPERARY, 2024



March 2024

## APPENDIX 2. Introduction

The provision of accessible Outdoor Recreation across County Tipperary will increasingly seek to offer an array of walks, trails, boating and angling for citizens and visitors of all abilities. This will be aligned with relevant policies that influence various aspects of the socio-economic development of the county, including recreation, physical health, well-being and sustainable tourism.

**Table A1** presents the summary list of policies and plans reviewed, while **Table A2** provides the key elements and initiatives to underpin the development of an accessible recreational offer across County Tipperary, as a core element of tourism development.

**Table A1 List of Policies, Strategies & Plans Reviewed, Co. Tipperary**

| <b>POLICIES, PLANS &amp; STRATEGIES THAT BROADLY INFLUENCE ACCESSIBLE RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COUNTY TIPPERARY</b>                                       |
|--|
| <b>INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN POLICIES INFLUENCING ACCESSIBLE RECREATION &amp; TOURISM DEVELOPMENT</b>   |
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)  |
| United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals  |
| UN World Tourism Organisation - Strategy   |
| EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2021)   |
| EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030  |
| European Green Infrastructure Strategy   |
| <b>NATIONAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT &amp; TOURISM POLICIES INFLUENCING ACCESSIBLE RECREATION</b>   |
| National Planning Framework - Project 2040   |
| Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 (RSES) for Southern Regional Assembly (RSES).   |
| National Climate Action Plan (2023) Dept. Environment, Climate and Communications  |
| Ireland’s Disability Act 2005  |
| Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service<br>Dept. Public Expenditure and Reform                                   |
| Tourism Strategy – Ireland<br>Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media   |
| ‘People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025’<br>Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport   |
| Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands – Shannon Region Tourism Development Strategy 2022-2026 - Fáilte Ireland   |
| Ireland’s Ancient East – Eastern Region Tourism Development Strategy 2022 – 2026 - Fáilte Ireland  |
| Tourism Motivations Framework Feb 2023 - Fáilte Ireland  |
| Sustaining Tourism in Ireland: Understanding the Opportunity (2022) - Fáilte Ireland   |
| ‘Realising our Potential’ Action Plan for Rural Development Dept. Rural & Community Development, 2017  |
| EU LEADER Rural Development Programme 2023- 2027   |
| Changing Places Regulations (2022) – ensuring that accessible changing facilities/WC are provided nationally   |
| <b>IRELAND – NATIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION, ACCESSIBILITY &amp; BIODIVERSITY POLICIES</b>  |
| National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (NORS) - (2023-2027)<br>Dept. Rural & Community Development   |
| National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2017-2021<br>Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth –with National Disability Authority |
| Best Practice Access Guidelines: Designing Accessible Environments (Nov. 2020, ed.4)<br>Irish Wheelchair Association   |
| Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)<br>Dept. Rural & Community Development, May 2020   |
| Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways   |

|  |
|--|
| Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2018   |
| Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands (2017-2021) Coillte, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Móna, Inland Fisheries Ireland                                    |
| Guide to Planning & Developing of Small Vessel Water Trails in Ireland (2013)<br>Waterways Ireland, with ISC, NTO, Canoe Ireland                                 |
| Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020<br>Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport – updated Nov. 2022 |
| The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 - Department of Transport  |
| National Strategy for Angling Development 2015-2020 - Inland Fisheries Ireland / DAFM  |
| New Strategic Vision for Forestry in Ireland - Climate, Biodiversity, and Recreation Coillte, April 2022   |
| National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2027 - Dept. Housing, Local Government & Heritage   |
| The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025 (5-year Road Map) Dept. Environment, Climate, Communications   |
| <b>TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL - POLICIES/ PLANS &amp; STUDIES – An Overview</b>  |
| Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 (Shaping our Future)   |
| Tipperary Transforming, Tourism Product Development Plan 2020-2030.  |
| Lough Derg Destination & Experience Development Plan (DEDP) 2020-2024.   |
| Tipperary Local Transport Plans (LTP). These have been prepared for Clonmel, Nenagh and Thurles in conjunction with their Local Area Plans.                      |

**Table A2: Summary of Policies, Strategies & Plans Reviewed for Tourism Development in Co. Tipperary**

| Policy / Strategy   | Key Elements   |
|---|--|
| <b>INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN POLICIES INFLUENCING TOURISM</b>  |  |
| <p><b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)</b></p> <p><a href="#">Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)   Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) (un.org)</a></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The UNCRPD is an international human rights treaty intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons living with disabilities.</li> <li>Article 9 of the UNCRPD obliges State Parties ‘...to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. These measures ...shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility’.</li> </ol> <p>The Irish Government signed the Convention in 2007, and ratified it in March 2018. Ireland’s initial <a href="#">State Report under the UNCRPD</a> was issued to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in November 2021.</p>  |
| <p><b>United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals</b></p> <p><a href="https://sdgs.un.org/goals">https://sdgs.un.org/goals</a></p>                  | <p>The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals aimed at addressing various social, economic, and environmental challenges internationally. These goals are designed to create a more sustainable and equitable world for all. When it comes to disabilities, the SDGs recognize that disability is an issue that cuts across all aspects of development. The SDGs explicitly include disability and persons living with disabilities in multiple parts of the SDGs, specifically in the parts related to Education, Growth and Employment, Inequality and Accessibility.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDG 1 and SDG 2: These goals focus on ending poverty and hunger for all persons with disabilities. Ensuring economic empowerment and access to food security are crucial components of achieving these goals.</li> <li>SDG 3: This goal emphasizes ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all persons with disabilities. Access to quality healthcare, rehabilitation services, and mental health support are essential aspects of achieving this goal.</li> <li>SDG 3 and SDG 5: These goals highlight the importance of accessing sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights for all persons with disabilities. Ensuring equal access to family planning, sexual education, and reproductive healthcare is critical.</li> </ol> <p>The UN Flagship Report on Disability and Sustainable Development Goals (2018) provides further insights into how disability intersects with the SDGs. It aims to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by, for, and with persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Of the 17 SDG’s, the recognition and incorporation of Nos. 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are critical for sustainable development of Tourism at national, regional and local levels. Thus, balanced socio-economic development that is good for citizens, also supports the balanced development of Tourism.</p> |

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| <p><b>UN World Tourism Organisation - Strategy</b><br/> <a href="http://www.unwto.org">www.unwto.org</a></p>  | <p>UNWTO is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. UNWTO strives to promote tourism development that supports conservation of biodiversity and social &amp; economic security of the host countries and communities. Its work is based around five distinct pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. making tourism smarter through celebrating innovation and leading the digital transformation of the sector;</li> <li>2. making tourism more competitive through promoting investment and promoting entrepreneurship;</li> <li>3. creating more and better jobs and providing relevant training;</li> <li>4. building resilience and promoting safe and seamless travel; and</li> <li>5. harnessing tourism’s unique potential to protect cultural and natural heritage and to support communities both economically and socially.</li> </ol> <p>UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.</p>   |
| <p><b>EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2021)</b><br/> <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0109_EN.pdf">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0109_EN.pdf</a></p> | <p>EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism recognises that tourism is a cross-cutting economic activity with a wide-ranging impact on the EU’s economy as a whole, on the regions’ economic growth, employment and social and sustainable development, but also on the environment and climate. The tourism industry directly and indirectly employs 27 million people, which accounts for 11.2 % of total EU employment, and 10.3 % of EU GDP in 2019. Tourism helps to promote a balanced regional structure, has a positive impact on regional development, and should contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, social welfare, and the economic security of local communities. The tourism value chain is one of Europe’s main industrial ecosystems, made up of a complex of closely linked, key vectors of transport, accommodation, experience, and intermediation. The success of the industry lies in the balance among these four vectors, although tourism has an impact on climate change by contributing to 8 % of global CO2 emissions. The sector encompasses a great diversity of services and professions; but is dominated by SME enterprises, whose activities generate employment and wealth in regions that depend on it e.g. in 2018, 51.7 % of EU tourist accommodation was in coastal and maritime areas, which are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, while 32.9 % of them were in rural areas. These outermost regions are characterised by their remoteness, insularity and strong economic and social dependence on the tourism and transport sectors.</p> |
| <p><b>EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030</b></p>   | <p>The European Commission adopted the new <a href="#">EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and an associated Action Plan (annex)</a> - a comprehensive, ambitious, long-term plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems. It aims to put Europe’s biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 with benefits for people, the climate and the planet, underpinning EU’s contribution to international negotiations on the global post-2020 biodiversity framework. The Biodiversity Strategy aims to build resilience to future climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks, including by protecting wildlife, with specific commitments by 2030:</p>   |
| <p><b>European Green Infrastructure Strategy</b></p>  | <p>The EC adopted an EU-wide strategy to promote green infrastructure, to restore the health of ecosystems and ensure that natural areas remain connected together and allow species to move across their entire natural habitat, so that nature keeps on delivering its many benefits to us. The strategy promotes the deployment of green infrastructure across Europe as well as the development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure in Europe, a TEN-G network. Green infrastructure will support the development of sustainable tourism experiences and services.</p>  |

**IRELAND – NATIONAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM POLICIES**

**National Planning Framework  
 Project 2040**

**National Planning Framework and its National Strategic Outcomes and Priorities of the National Development Plan**



<https://npf.ie/project-ireland-2040-national-planning-framework/>

The NPF (Project 2040) sets out ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) or priorities to guide future development: Compact Growth; - Enhanced Regional Accessibility; - Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities; - High Quality International Connectivity; - Sustainable Mobility; - A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills; - Enhanced Amenities and Heritage; - Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society; - Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources; Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health. Community and Recreation are key issues in providing facilities and amenities that support access for all to public amenities.

The NPF noted that there were c. 650,000 people living with a disability in Ireland in 2016, comprising around 13.5% of the population. Notably, a significant proportion of the population will experience disability at some stage in their lives, particularly as the population ages. This is reflected in National Policy Objectives as follows:

National Policy Objective No. 27: Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments, and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

National Policy Objective No. 28: Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in delivery of sustainable communities and provision of associated services.

**Project 2024 goes on to state (p.84)**

*“.....Providing access of opportunity to citizens of Ireland is not a finite exercise, particularly where distinct and tailored solutions are required to continually address the needs of our citizens, particularly those who remain vulnerable or marginalised.”*

As a key enabler to support the objectives of the NPF, the Government approved four funds, with a total allocation of €4bn over the first 10-year period of the NDP, to support innovative, collaborative projects in relation to Urban Regeneration and Development (€2bn), Rural Regeneration and Development (€1bn), Climate Action (€500m) and Disruptive Technologies (€500m), each overseen by the relevant Government Department.

A key focus for all four funds will be on collaboration between organisations and sectors, and on projects that will deliver impactful and transformational change.

**The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Regional Assembly Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) Southern Region 2020-2032**

The objectives and actions contained in the NPF are developed in detail in the RSES for each of the three Regional Assembly Areas. The RSES for the Southern Region (including Tipperary) seeks to integrate sustainable economic and social development with the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

The RSES recognises the necessity of protecting such corridors and encouraging the management of features of the landscape that support the Natura 2000 network. It is an objective to promote the concept of connecting corridors for the movement of wildlife and to encourage the retention and creation of features of biodiversity value, ecological corridors and networks that connect areas of high conservation value such as woodlands, hedgerows, earth banks,

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|   | <p>watercourses and wetlands. Natural assets such as mountains, lakes, rivers, waterways, trees and hedgerows play important roles in supporting opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation and angling in the Great Outdoors.</p>   |
| <p><b>National Climate Action Plan 2023</b><br/> <b>(The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) is the second annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019)</b><br/> <b>Dept. Environment, Climate and Communications</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/">https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/</a></p> | <p>CAP23 provides an update on the National CAP19. The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to by Government. CAP23 sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development. Progress Reports on the Climate Action Plans are published each quarter. For CAP23, the progress reports highlight ‘high impact’ measures, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), state of play on emissions targets, recent emissions trends, action case studies and foresight on key actions due by target dates.</p> <p>CAP sets out 493 actions to be taken across all Government Departments and Agencies, in association with enterprise, agriculture, energy industries, as well as civil society, ten (10) of which are specifically focused on expanding our sustainable tourism offer, principally outdoor recreation, connectivity along greenways, blueways and peatways, as well as setting measurable targets to reduce the impacts of tourism on the environment.</p> |
| <p><b>Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service</b></p> <p><b>Dept. Public Expenditure and Reform</b></p>   | <p>Connecting Government 2030 sets out an approach to deliver digital government for all, benefitting both society and the broader economy. The objective is for the Public Service to harness digitalisation to drive a step-change in how people, businesses, and policy makers interact, ensuring interoperability across all levels of government and across public services. In digitalising our public services, we take a “user first” and “business first” approach. As a key reform initiative of the Department, delivering on Connecting Government 2030 will help achieve these ambitions. It will also drive the wider GovTech priorities as well as bring significant public value benefits.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.ie">gov - Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service (www.gov.ie)</a></p> <p>In terms of accessible recreation, access to timely and accurate e-information about what public amenities are available to them will be critical in delivery of equitable access for people living with disabilities.</p>  |
| <p><b>Tourism Strategy – Ireland</b><br/> <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/3fcc3a-tourism/#introduction">https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/3fcc3a-tourism/#introduction</a><br/> <b>Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media</b></p>  | <p>The Irish government seeks to have a vibrant and competitive tourism sector that contributes positively in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner, promoting a positive image of Ireland overseas, and enabling local communities to prosper.</p> <p>Government policy framework and objectives for the tourism sector have the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Growing and sustaining tourism employment.</li> <li>✓ Increasing the economic contribution of tourism across local communities.</li> <li>✓ Ensuring that contribution of tourism to economic growth and regional development is fully recognised.</li> </ul> <p>Tourism is recognised as one of Ireland’s most important economic sectors, particularly in rural areas. In 2018, out of state tourists generated €5.6 billion for the Irish economy, rising to €7.3 billion when fare receipts to Irish carriers are included. Domestic tourism was worth €2 billion, thus as a whole, tourism was worth €9.4 billion to the economy.</p>  |

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|   | <p>Domestic tourism is the bedrock of the Irish tourism industry. It sustains a level of investment in tourism product that is of considerable benefit to Ireland’s attractiveness as a destination and provides an opportunity to both extend the season and deliver additional business that is more regionally dispersed. The tourism sector is an essential component of Ireland’s employment base. It supports around 325,000 jobs on the island of Ireland.</p> <p>The interaction between overseas visitors and those employed in our tourism sector is highly important. It creates a positive link between the qualities of Ireland as a place and the qualities of the Irish people. It is essential that the level of service provided to visitors is of the highest possible standard. The government aims to strengthen the capacity of people working in the tourism sector, so the highest quality experience can be delivered to visitors. This also lets Ireland compete effectively for business in the international tourism marketplace.</p>  |
| <p><b>‘People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025’</b><br/> <b>Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport</b></p>   | <p>The Government’s vision for tourism is that Ireland will have a vibrant and attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country, as set out in People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025. The objective of investing in and developing the tourism proposition will seek to maximise tourism’s potential to support regional economic and social development.</p> <p>Key elements of the policy that are relevant to Tipperary’s tourism development are:</p> <p>4.1.1 Local Authorities will be encouraged to support communities in tourism development and will co-operate with neighbouring authorities as appropriate to maximise tourism opportunities for their region as a whole.</p> <p>4.1.2 The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and Fáilte Ireland will encourage the sharing of expertise between communities that have been successful in building the tourism capacity of their localities, and those that are at an earlier stage of development.</p> <p>4.1.4 The identification of tourism as a priority in the Local Economic and Community Plans, and provision of support to start &amp; developing tourism enterprises will be aligned with Local Authorities tourism objectives and plans for their areas.</p>  |
| <p><b>Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027</b><br/> <b>Fáilte Ireland</b></p>  <p><a href="#">Ireland-s-Hidden-Heartlands-Regional-Tourism-Development-Strategy.pdf (failteireland.ie)</a></p> | <p>The Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 is a roadmap for the tourism industry and all stakeholders involved in tourism development in the region. The strategic challenge is to increase awareness and consideration of IHH as a distinctive region and to support the industry in sustainably leveraging the abundance of available natural and cultural assets, to develop compelling visitor experiences resulting in increased visitor revenue and local jobs, while protecting the unique environment of the region.</p> <p>The 10-year vision is to ensure that Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands is one of Europe’s leading regenerative tourism destinations (top 10 ranking), a place where tourism works to create flourishing places and thriving communities. The region will be a sustainable destination where visitors can reconnect with nature while taking time out to reconnect with family and friends. With the River Shannon and the Beara Breifne Way at its heart, and a well–connected web of Greenways and Blueways spread throughout the region, this is a place where nature is the backdrop to a wide range of compelling visitor experiences, from outdoor activities to uncovering intriguing heritage and cultural gems that continually surprise and exceed visitors’ expectations. Active fun–filled days roll into relaxing, cosy evenings in historic hotels and lakeside lodges. Its characteristic towns and villages are vibrant and bustling with great restaurants and musical pubs. The region, which is highly valued for its special environmental qualities and biodiversity and its easy access to the outdoors, has also earned a reputation for its wellness qualities, where the visitor is re–energised by nature.</p> |

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| <p><b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: BUILD COMMITTED INDUSTRY AND STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS TO GUIDE SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE REGION.</b></p> <p><b>STRATEGIC INITIATIVES.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and create accessible facilities, infrastructure and transport in order to create an environment that is varied, stimulating and easily accessible.</li> <li>2. Ensure tourism information, communications and all promotional resources used include clear indications of accessible services and facilities.</li> <li>3. Liaise with the tourism industry and our stakeholders, who play an important role in identifying potential deficiencies in access, to support training in accessibility awareness and ensure the development and promotion of tourism for all.</li> <li>4. Seek to increase the availability of adapted and accessible accommodation and transport and ensure booking services and websites are accessible for all.</li> </ol> | <p>Strategic Focus 5 (3.5.3): Accessibility is a central element of sustainable development, enabling all people to participate in and enjoy tourism experiences. Improved accessibility to basic infrastructure and tourism amenities is essential in meeting the needs and requirements of all visitors to Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands. This does not only equate to providing access to those with disabilities, but it also addresses the importance of creating universally designed environments to support people with physical needs, the increasing ageing population and those who have difficulty with mobility or access to information. Implementing the principles of accessible tourism involves a collaborative process. Fáilte Ireland, working in partnership with public agencies, Local Authorities, NGOs and local stakeholders, will continue to use best practice in implementing the principles of universal design across all projects to ensure that all persons, regardless of their physical or cognitive needs, are able to use and enjoy all available amenities in an equitable and sustainable manner.</p>  |
| <p><b>Ireland’s Ancient East – Eastern Region Tourism Development Strategy 2022 – 2026 -Fáilte Ireland</b></p>  <p><a href="https://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Irelands%20Ancient%20East/irelands-ancient-east-project-updated.pdf">https://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Irelands%20Ancient%20East/irelands-ancient-east-project-updated.pdf</a></p>   | <p>Ireland’s Ancient East was launched in 2015 as a mechanism to unify the eastern region (outside of Dublin) as an internationally marketable tourism proposition. By 2019, tourism in IAE was worth €1.7bn to the regional economy, supporting approximately 55,000 jobs. Failte Ireland’s goal is to make Ireland’s Ancient East the most personally engaging cultural destination in Europe by harnessing the authentic character of its living culture, lush landscapes, and hidden history to create unique visitor experiences, unite stakeholders and support vibrant communities. IAE will support sustained economic growth and community wellbeing while valuing our heritage, history and environment. The IAE Regional Tourism Strategy 2022 - 2026 identifies five strategic objectives to develop the tourism economy in the region. The objectives are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability so that it can thrive over the period of this strategy and create sustainable jobs in the local community.</li> <li>2. Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region.</li> <li>3. Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Ireland’s Ancient East.</li> <li>4. Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism.</li> <li>5. Ensure the region is easy to access, navigate and consume.</li> </ol> <p>Failte Ireland will continue to work closely with tourism businesses to build their capability and capitalise on growing post-covid demand.</p> |
| <p><b>Fáilte Ireland – Motivations Framework Feb 2023.</b></p>  | <p>Failte Ireland published the results of extensive behavioural research in early 2023, to inform the positioning of Irish tourism at the heart of sustainable best practice. The Motivations Framework has been developed from rigorous research and insights, analysing over 5,000 travel occasions. None of the motivations are mutually exclusive, but the primary motivation will always be the most important for a particular trip. The percentages in the Motivations Framework wheel reflect the total size of each motivation in domestic travel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Energy. This motivation is driven by a desire to have fun, to be in a high energy atmosphere with like-minded individuals and to immerse oneself in all that a travel occasion has to offer.</li> <li>2. Adventure, at 16% of all travel motivations, is led by the desire to test one’s own personal limits or to go outside of one’s own personal comfort zone. At the same time, it is not about extreme sports and instead about doing something physical over and above normal activities.</li> </ol>  |

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|  <p>7 Travel Motivations were identified</p> <p><a href="https://issuu.com/discoverireland/docs/segmentation_study_pdfs_fm_100622_v3_lowres?fr=sYzVkJNzU1NDU4NTc">https://issuu.com/discoverireland/docs/segmentation_study_pdfs_fm_100622_v3_lowres?fr=sYzVkJNzU1NDU4NTc</a></p>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Exploration, at 17%, is heartland territory for tourism and is about discovering and exploring new and unfamiliar places. It is also the motivation where landscape, history, culture and place all come together.</li> <li>4. Time Out is what it says – time to turn off the phones and step away from day-to-day life. It is time to spend with one’s significant other, time that is cherished and which is low key in activities.</li> <li>5. Reconnection, at 11% is that time spent with friends where the focus is on relaxation, reconnecting and enjoying treasured moments. It is all about ease and convenience and not having to worry about anything..</li> <li>6. Bonding is a strongly emotive segment and is all about creating lasting family moments and memories. It’s about focusing on those relationships which are most important to us and feeding the sense of nostalgia</li> <li>7. Celebration, which is focused on celebrating and rejoicing in special milestones and achievements such as birthdays, weddings, graduations etc. It is characterised by short stays that are in convenient locations.</li> </ol>  |
| <p><b>Sustaining Tourism in Ireland: Understanding the Opportunity (2022) Fáilte Ireland</b></p>  <p><a href="https://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/sustainable-tourism-understanding-the-opportunity.pdf?ext=.pdf">https://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/sustainable-tourism-understanding-the-opportunity.pdf?ext=.pdf</a></p> | <p>This document aims to identify the opportunities available to the Irish tourism industry based on critical international benchmarked research undertaken 2022. This is an impressive ‘call to action’ to adopt principles of sustainability at the heart of the Irish tourism Accommodation, Restaurants/bars/ cafés; Activities; and Attractions sectors. Travellers are increasingly sustainability minded, and are demanding immersive experiences, with opportunities to connect with local culture; have authentic meetings with local people and communities; with options for mental relaxation – all of which should be easy to access, with minimal impacts on the environment.</p> <p>It is critical to bridge the ‘Say-Do’ gap and implement practical sustainability solutions for environmental, social, and economic dividends across the visitor offer. The three drivers of such experiential demand are (i) Immersion in nature; (ii) Culture &amp; Connection; and (iii) Mental Wellbeing – which must have positive impact, with proof points to call out to visitors.</p> <p>Most of all, such experiences must be enjoyable and immersive, preferably in nature, but with sustainability built into the core of the tourism product: e.g. no single use plastics; renewable energy use, local foods with zero waste; pollinator gardens; e-biking and active travel; access to public transport; ecological and educational guides tours/ walks; accessible to all ages and capacities; partnerships with local producers; etc.</p> |
| <p><b>‘Realising our Potential’ National Action Plan for Rural Development Dept. Rural &amp; Community Development, 2017</b></p>   | <p>The National Action Plan for Rural Development commits to delivering funding for recreational infrastructure, training, and jobs creation, using our natural assets. It identified several pillars to promote rural development.</p> <p>Key future policy for outdoor recreation and management</p> <p>Based on 5 Pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pillar 1: Supporting Sustainable Communities</li> <li>• Pillar 2: Supporting Enterprise and Employment</li> </ul>  |

|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pillar 3: Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential</li> <li>• Pillar 4: Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities</li> <li>• Pillar 5: Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity</li> </ul> <p>Pillar 3 commits to delivering funding for recreational infrastructure, training, and jobs creation, using natural assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pillar 3 ‘Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreational Potential’, focuses on the development of greenways and blueways, and other recreational opportunities, and to support sustainable rural jobs through targeted tourism initiatives.</li> <li>• Pillar 5 Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity includes improvement of connectivity of rural areas through broadband connection and improved transport links.</li> </ul> |                           |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
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| <p><b>EU LEADER Rural Development Programme 2023- 2027</b></p>   <table border="1" data-bbox="163 898 714 1118"> <thead> <tr> <th>Economic</th> <th>Social</th> <th>Environmental</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The Green Economy</td> <td>Local Services</td> <td>Water Resources</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Farm Diversification</td> <td>Community Facilities</td> <td>Biodiversity Protection</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rural Tourism and Recreation</td> <td>Digital Literacy</td> <td>Renewable Energy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Enterprise Development</td> <td>Youth Participation and Leadership</td> <td>Climate Change Awareness</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Artisan Food &amp; Beverage</td> <td></td> <td>Climate Change Mitigation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Enterprise</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Economic   | Social                    | Environmental | The Green Economy | Local Services | Water Resources | Farm Diversification | Community Facilities | Biodiversity Protection | Rural Tourism and Recreation | Digital Literacy | Renewable Energy | Enterprise Development | Youth Participation and Leadership | Climate Change Awareness | Artisan Food & Beverage |  | Climate Change Mitigation | Social Enterprise |  |  | <p>Since 1991, the EU LEADER RDP has provided rural communities across the EU with resources to enable local partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their own area, through community-led local development. The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) is responsible for the implementation of the LEADER Rural Development programme (RDP) in Ireland.</p> <p>POBAL supports DRCD in the administration of a number of elements of LEADER Programme. LEADER supports the local development of Ireland’s rural areas (excepting our five main urban City areas). The LEADER Programme works with communities and individuals through funding, supports and resources to assist in the development of stronger, resilient, and prosperous communities. LEADER has supported projects and initiatives in the areas of enterprise, farm diversification, tourism, community facilities, greater social inclusion, or climate action.</p> <p>The current LEADER Programme will run from mid-2023 – 2027. The broad areas in which support can be offered are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economic Development and Job Creation, including farm diversification ideas and tourism projects.</li> <li>2. Rural Infrastructure and Social inclusion, including improving services and ideas for young people.</li> <li>3. Sustainable development of rural environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation</li> </ol> <p>Funding for the next five years of the two Tipperary LEADER companies (South Tipp/ North Tipp) is underway in 2024. Within the Economic strand, Rural Tourism and Recreation are a core element of the programme and will offer significant supports to enterprises in Tipperary.</p> |
| Economic  | Social   | Environmental             |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| The Green Economy   | Local Services   | Water Resources           |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| Farm Diversification  | Community Facilities   | Biodiversity Protection   |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| Rural Tourism and Recreation  | Digital Literacy   | Renewable Energy          |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| Enterprise Development  | Youth Participation and Leadership   | Climate Change Awareness  |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| Artisan Food & Beverage   |  | Climate Change Mitigation |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| Social Enterprise   |  |                           |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Changing Places Regulations (2022, 2023)</b></p>  | <p>One of the key physical issues raised in consultations with disabled user groups in Tipperary is the lack of accessible Changing Places / WCs.</p> <p>This concern underpins the development of national Changing Places regulations (entitled <a href="#">Building Regulations (Part M Amendment) Regulations 2022 (S.I. No. 608 of 2022)</a>). The objective is that accessible changing places/ toilets will enable people with complex care needs to take part in everyday activities nationwide.</p>   |                           |               |                   |                |                 |                      |                      |                         |                              |                  |                  |                        |                                    |                          |                         |  |                           |                   |  |  |  |

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|   | <p>The Changing Places regulations came into effect in 2023– see <a href="#">Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use 2022</a></p> <p>However, the scope of the regulations is not to provide accessible changing places in all public amenities, but rather to commence the process at key locations and roll out into the future.</p>  |
| <p><b>NATIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION, DISABILITY, LANDSCAPE &amp; BIODIVERSITY POLICIES</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (NORS) - (2023-2027)</b></p>  <p><b>Department of Rural &amp; Community Development (DRCD) and Comhairle na Tuaithe</b></p> | <p>The NORS provides an overarching framework for the development of outdoor recreation in Ireland, creating a shared approach for the many strategies, programmes, agencies and elements in Ireland’s outdoor recreation sector. It adopts six strategic themes for the integrated development of Outdoor Recreation in Ireland:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Leadership: to create a more coordinated approach at national and county level to make best use of resources</li> <li>4. Environment: to protect and enhance the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation in keeping with best practice in management of landscape and habitats</li> <li>5. Awareness: to create awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly</li> <li>6. Opportunities : to increase and support the numbers of people active in the outdoors</li> <li>7. Access: <u>to protect and improve access to the outdoors for the benefit of all.</u></li> <li>8. Expertise: to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and expertise of stakeholders and partners.</li> </ol> <p>Under each Strategic Objective, a number of key actions were identified within specific timeframes (1-5+ years), for delivery by key partners in recreational development countrywide, including DRCD, statutory agencies, local authorities with inputs from national organisations, recreational governing bodies and communities for various actions.</p> <p>The contribution access to outdoor recreation makes to our physical and mental wellbeing has been recognised in the public response during the global pandemic of 2020-2021. The NORS Strategy 2023-2027 addresses ‘Inclusion’ linked to the UN SDGs (see above).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NORS notes that 6-7 % of young people under the age of 20 have a disability (while the total population of adults living with Disability in Ireland based on Census 2022 may be as high as 10.5%).</li> <li>• The NORs refers to measure undertaken by Sail Ireland via programmes such as ‘Sailability’ and all of the Get Ireland Walking/ Cycling/ Swimming/ Running aim to be as inclusive as possible irrespective of ability, with a focus on participation and engagement.</li> <li>• NORS references mental health in ‘Woodlands for Health’ a joint initiative between Mental Health Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland and Coillte to provide access to nature-based activities for all.</li> <li>• Finally, NORS promotes the Sport Ireland/ CARA/ Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of all sports in Ireland to provide integrated guidance on development of accessible infrastructure, which will encourage people of all abilities to venture into the Outdoors.</li> </ul> <p>To achieve these goals, NORS will seek to focus integrated delivery, with clearly articulated objectives, actions and responsibility for delivery. Application of best practice, common standards, sustained resourcing and funding will aim to increase participation of citizens of all abilities in outdoor recreation for societal wellbeing.</p> |

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| <p><b>National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2017-2021</b></p> <p><b>Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth – in association with National Disability Authority</b></p> <p><b>Note: A new National Disability Inclusion Strategy is anticipated to be published in late 2024 with consultations currently on-going.</b></p> | <p>Strategy represents a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities. The National Disability Authority (NDA) work to support its implementation with the Dept of CEDiy as the formal coordinating body for the Strategy. The roll-out aims to deliver on Ireland’s obligations in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which was ratified in 2018. The ambitious Strategy has 125 actions spread over eight key themes. These include - Equality and choice; Joined-up policies and public services; Education; Employment; Health and well-being; Person-centred disability services; Living in the community and (importantly for this Tipperary Recreation and Angling Access Study), Transport and Accessible Places.</p> <p>Short video here explaining how the process works, based on a Walkability audit in Kilrush Co. Clare: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyxyKtgO_Jw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyxyKtgO_Jw</a></p> <p><b>Note: The NDA produces a wide range of practical guidelines, which are presented in Useful References (Appendix 2 of this document)</b></p> <p>In relation to recreation and tourism facilities, having <u>information in advance</u> is critical to enable disabled people to make decisions about whether they want to visit. Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A Universal Design Approach: <a href="https://universaldesign.ie/communications-digital/customer-communications-toolkit-a-universal-design-approach">https://universaldesign.ie/communications-digital/customer-communications-toolkit-a-universal-design-approach</a></p> <p>Code of Practice on Accessible Heritage Sites – takes a user journey approach <a href="https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/Code-of-Practice-on-Accessible-Heritage-Sites-Report.pdf">https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/Code-of-Practice-on-Accessible-Heritage-Sites-Report.pdf</a></p> <p>Active Disability Ireland have a series of publication on outdoor recreation, including beaches, playgrounds, trails and public parks: <a href="https://activedisability.ie/resources/outdoors/">https://activedisability.ie/resources/outdoors/</a></p> |
| <p><b>Best Practice Access Guidelines: Designing Accessible Environments</b></p> <p><b>Irish Wheelchair Association<br/>                 Edition 4, November 2020</b></p>   | <p>This evidence-based and practical document understands the concept of accessible design from a human rights perspective where disability is understood, nationally and internationally, to arise from the interaction between a person’s health condition or impairment and the multitude of influencing factors within their environment (including access to recreational and angling facilities).</p> <p>The top five issues that continually impact on the lives of people with disabilities in Ireland are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Poor or no access to public transport or taxi services.</li> <li>2. Not enough and badly designed accessible parking.</li> <li>3. Narrow, uneven, and dangerous footpaths.</li> <li>4. WC facilities that are too small and not fit for purpose.</li> <li>5. Public access terminals that cannot be reached or used e.g. ATMs.</li> </ol> <p>The IWA has developed guidance in universal design and access to overcome these issues: <a href="https://www.iwa.ie/app/uploads/access-guidelines/best-practice-access-guidelines/3188_IWA_Best_Practice_Access_Guidelines_4.pdf">https://www.iwa.ie/app/uploads/access-guidelines/best-practice-access-guidelines/3188_IWA_Best_Practice_Access_Guidelines_4.pdf</a></p>  |

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| <p><b>Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)</b><br/> <b>Dept. Rural &amp; Community Development, May 2020</b></p>                           | <p>ORIS contributes to the strategic objective of strengthened rural economies and communities as set out in the Project Ireland 2040 strategy. The objective is to provide funding for new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for necessary repair, enhancement, or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in countryside areas. The scheme invests in physical infrastructure that underpins sporting and recreational activities based on the use of the resources of the countryside; contribute to active lifestyles while building on the economic and tourism potential, and so are to the benefit of both local communities and tourist visitors alike. The scheme may also provide some limited funding for the marketing and promotion of such infrastructure, typically as part of a wider project involving capital supports.</p>   |
| <p><b>Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways</b><br/> <b>Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2018</b></p>           | <p>Aims to assist in strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard to deliver a quality experience for all users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years resulting in a significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity. The Strategy recognises the benefits that can arise from the further development of Greenways (mainly as ‘rail to trails’) as a tourism product with significant potential to attract overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and for all users as an amenity for physical activity and a contributor to health and wellbeing. This poses significant opportunity for Tipperary to develop selected amenities as universally accessible greenways.</p>  |
| <p><b>Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands (2017-2021) Coillte, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Móna, Inland Fisheries Ireland</b></p>                 | <p>The national for public lands and waters was developed by five public landowning organisations (Coillte, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Móna and Inland Fisheries Ireland), as a strategic development plan for recreation on public lands and waters, comprising 15% of Ireland’s land surface. The plan focused on seven strategic themes including: managing &amp; maintenance of recreational infrastructure; improving recreational facilities; developing consistent standards; promotion of outdoor recreation; and maximising the benefits to communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessed that investment in outdoor recreation would reduce obesity, increase well-being and generate potential savings of €132 million per annum in health budget savings.</li> <li>• Potential for job creation in rural areas is significant – Fáilte Ireland estimates that €1 million of tourism expenditure generates 29 jobs in tourism.</li> </ul> <p>It is highly significant that the relevant public bodies are promoting the value of recreational investment and that sustained investment by Government would create multiple benefits in rural enterprise, tourism and health gains, as well as being a significant jobs and revenue generator.</p> |
| <p><b>Guide to Planning &amp; Developing of Small Vessel Water Trails in Ireland (2013)</b><br/> <b>Waterways Ireland, with ISC, NTO, Canoe Ireland</b></p> | <p>This practical guide sets out the general considerations for planning and development of a small vessel water trails for kayaking and canoeing, including snorkelling, exemplified by case studies. The guide proposes practical considerations of requisite trail attributes, safety, strategic planning &amp; partnership, development costs, as well as responsibilities for longer term management &amp; maintenance. Key considerations are issues of ownership rights in relation to the navigation, as well as fishing rights and the need for landowner consultation and agreement to gain permissive access.</p>  |
| <p><b>Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020</b></p>  | <p>This strategy sets out a vision for how Ireland’s sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport, including cycleways and walkways, to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development. The Government reaffirms its vision for sustainability in transport and sets out five key goals: i. to reduce overall travel demand ii. To maximize the efficiency of the transport network iii. To reduce reliance on fossil fuels iv. To reduce transport emissions v. to improve accessibility to transport.</p>   |

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| <p><b>Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport</b></p>   | <p>See : <a href="https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&amp;ik=262f038dcc&amp;attid=0.1&amp;permmsgid=msg-a:r152418079348750774&amp;th=18d5a5920774aa6e&amp;view=att&amp;disp=inline&amp;realattid=18d5a58ce70cee5588d1">https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&amp;ik=262f038dcc&amp;attid=0.1&amp;permmsgid=msg-a:r152418079348750774&amp;th=18d5a5920774aa6e&amp;view=att&amp;disp=inline&amp;realattid=18d5a58ce70cee5588d1</a><br/>                 Note: The Study also reviewed the 'Review of Actions of Smarter Travel Policy' however few had concrete recommendations in relation to enhancing universal access to recreation / angling from a public transport perspective.</p>   |
| <p><b>The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020</b><br/>                 Department of Transport</p>   | <p>The NCPF is derived from Smarter Travel policy document sets out a national policy for cycling, to create a stronger cycling culture, a safer environment for cycling and improved quality of life.</p>   |
| <p><b>National Strategy for Angling Development 2015-2020</b><br/>                 Inland Fisheries Ireland<br/>                 (Dept. Agriculture, Fisheries &amp; Marine)</p>  | <p>The National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD) is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of Ireland's angling resources. Within an overarching conservation ethos and focus, the Strategy sets out three strategic objectives for angling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To make angling accessible and attractive through information, infrastructure and support.</li> <li>- To develop tourism through the promotion of our angling resource.</li> <li>- To recognise angling as a key leisure and recreation pursuit.</li> </ul> <p>DAFM provided €2 million directly for capital projects and a further €537,000 under the Action Plan for Rural Development (to 2020). Total funding available to Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) to date is €3.437 million across all aspects of fisheries development, which are to be delivered under the umbrella of NSAD. Drawdown of funds is subject to all governance, environmental and other project requirements, such that delivery could take up a three-year period reflecting the complex nature of fisheries projects.</p> <p>IFI officers promote capacity building and collaboration with voluntary organisations in delivering projects and to progress projects through governance and into delivery phase.</p> <p>Funding has been allocated to 174 fisheries development and management projects nationwide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 45% of the projects have been completed to date;</li> <li>- Angling access has been upgraded in 78 locations with a further 22 due for completion in 2019;</li> <li>- Over 20 Information and Education initiatives supported, introducing approximately 1000 people to angling and informing visiting anglers; including equipment to value of €60,000 for angling events, signage, marketing.</li> <li>- Riparian enhancement, conservation and regeneration work completed on river channels;</li> <li>- Anti-poaching equipment purchased and installed;</li> <li>- 10 organised angling events funded to encourage positive social inclusion in communities;</li> <li>- Over 5,000 hours of engagement from IFI local staff to provide support, information, assistance and advice.</li> </ul> |

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| <p><b>New Strategic Vision for Forestry in Ireland climate action, biodiversity, and recreation Coillte, April 2022</b></p>  <p><a href="https://www.coillte.ie/coillte-launches-new-forestry-strategic-vision-to-optimise-its-contribution-to-irelands-climate-targets/">https://www.coillte.ie/coillte-launches-new-forestry-strategic-vision-to-optimise-its-contribution-to-irelands-climate-targets/</a></p> | <p>Coillte aims to deliver multiple benefits from its forests and to focus to climate action, biodiversity and recreation, as well as developing the forest and wood products industry. Coillte aims to grow 100,000 ha of new forests by 2050, supporting the delivery of &gt;30% of Ireland’s afforestation target. The company aims to create a carbon sink of 18 million tonnes (Mt) of CO<sub>2</sub> in new forests and to manage its existing forest estate to capture an additional 10 Mt of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2050.</p> <p>Coillte intends to increase the area of its forest estate managed primarily for nature from 20% to 50% in the long term, by enhancing and restoring biodiversity and planting new forests, half of which will be native woodlands. In terms of recreation, Coillte will enable investment of €100 million to create world class visitor destinations by 2030, aiming to double the number of recreation areas nationally to 500, to support local communities and the Irish tourism sector. The new strategic vision will be underpinned by Coillte’s commercially successful business, aiming to enable creation of 1,200 direct and indirect jobs in rural communities to support the just transition to a low carbon economy in Ireland. Coillte reported in 2016 that it provides over 2,000km of waymarked trails, 180 recreation sites and 12 forest parks in the estate attracting 18 million visits annually.</p> <p>Coillte remains a key partner in delivery of universal access to the outdoors, as recognised in the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy - and is a key provider of accessible sites in County Tipperary. It has recently committed to ‘advance screening’ their outdoor recreation developments at key sites with a wider range of users to ensure the infrastructure will meet the needs.</p> |
| <p><b>Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan 2023-2033</b></p>   | <p>Waterways Ireland launched an ambitious 10 Year Plan at the end of 2023. with significant opportunities for investment, tourism, and expansion. Covering 1,100km of canals, rivers, and lakes as well as over 600km of cycleways and trails by waterscapes, Waterways Ireland plays a significant role in creating value for the public good – through providing increased economic, social, and environmental benefits. They offer a considerable number of recreational assets for persons of all abilities in Tipperary including the Lough Derg Blueway and the Suir Blueway with several mature features (e.g. toilets, car parking, accessible jetties and changing facilities) in both enhancing access. of the WI service blocks and amenities e.g. Ballina, Dromineer, Terryglass and Garrykennedy are also accessible for disabled anglers.</p>   |
| <p><b>TIPPERARY COUNTY – POLICIES / TOURISM, HERITAGE PLANS &amp; STUDIES</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028</b></p> <p><b>Of particular relevance to this Study is Objective 9: I which references access for all to tourism, sport, and recreational assets in Tipperary.</b></p>   | <p>The Tipperary CDP recognises that the County’s tourism sector has significant potential for future growth. Tipperary has an actively growing tourism economy and the county punches above its weight in terms of international visitor numbers attracted by our strong natural and heritage assets, including the Rock of Cashel. The county has a wonderful mix of built and natural heritage, complemented by attractive towns and villages, excellent food and an abundance of activities for all ages and abilities.</p> <p>Within the CDP it is Objective 9 of the Council commits to delivering the following: -</p>  |

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|   | <p>9 - A a) Continue to collaborate with Fáilte Ireland, OPW and other tourism stakeholders in the development and delivery of Regional Tourism Plans and DEDPs to ensure that Tipperary’s established and emerging attractions and activities are continually developed to their maximum potential.</p> <p>b) Support tourism by collaborative product development and clustering, and proactive bidding for funding through schemes such as the ‘Platforms for Growth’ Investment Programme, the URDF and RRDF (and any review thereof).</p> <p>9 - B Support the development of Tipperary as a national leader in ‘Responsible Tourism’ in line with the actions of the Tipperary ‘Marketing, Experience &amp; Destination Development Plan’, 2016-2021 and to encourage and promote the development of the Fáilte Ireland ‘Irelands Ancient East’ and ‘Irelands Hidden Heartlands’ regional brands through sustainable tourism.</p> <p>9 – C Support the implementation of ‘Tipperary Marketing, Experience &amp; Destination Development Plan (2016-2021) and ‘Tipperary Transforming’ (and any review thereof) and associated tourism strategies and plans set out therein. Support existing and emerging tourism programmes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lough Derg Visitor Destination Plan 2020</li> <li>• Shannon Tourism Master Plan 2021</li> <li>• Munster Vales programme</li> <li>• Cashel Town Plan for Tourism</li> <li>• Butler Trail</li> <li>• Suir Blueway Tipperary</li> <li>• Beara Breifne Way</li> <li>• Thoroughbred Country Destination Experience Development Plan.</li> </ul> <p>9 - D Develop a ‘Greenway and Trails Strategy’, and to support and seek funding opportunities for the development of green and blue ways, incorporating walking, cycling and equine trails and supporting the tourism economy.</p> <p>9 - E To continue to enhance and re-imagine the towns and villages as visitor-led tourism destinations, through existing collaborative heritage and tourism-led regeneration programmes and projects funded through Project Ireland 2040.</p> <p>9 - F To co-operate with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and other relevant bodies and agencies, in promoting the county’s waterways and Lough Derg Lakelands as part of an overall tourism development and marketing strategy.</p> <p>9 - G To collaborate with Fáilte Ireland, TII and other key stakeholders in the development and implementation of a digital technology enhancement programme, including interpretation and wayfinding to support our tourism economy, to include branded orientation signage, digital innovation, and roadside signage.</p> <p>9 – H To support, encourage and promote sports tourism within the county.</p> <p>9 - I Support the provision of accessible tourism in Tipperary, thereby ensuring that facilities are accessible to people with mobility issues, people with learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairment, young children, and elderly people.</p> |
| <p><b>Tipperary Local Economic &amp; Community Plan 2024-2029</b></p> <p><b>Tipperary Co. Council</b><br/> <a href="http://tipperarycoco.ie">905-High Level Goals A1 (tipperarycoco.ie)</a></p> | <p>Based on the CDP, Tipperary Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) sets out for six years, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic and community development of the county. The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is the primary tool for delivering actions from national and regional strategies at a local level, to integrate actions and initiatives related to economic and community development in Tipperary consistently.</p>   |

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| <p><b>Note: SCO2 speaks about the need to provide full access to all to all services and facilities.</b></p>   | <p>The strategy conforms with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. Over the lifetime of the county’s first LECP (2015-2020), substantial progress was made towards implementing the plan’s High-Level Goals through a coordinated effort between the County Council and other local agencies and organisations. The High-Level Goals that form part of the Tipperary LECP 2024-2029 build on the foundation of the first LECP:<br/>                 The LECP’s five High-Level Goals are:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Resilience and Wellbeing - Tipperary will be a proactively socially inclusive county, and that all communities would improve in terms of their resilience and capacity to contribute to the wellbeing of their members.</li> <li>2. Economic Development - Tipperary will be characterised by a diverse, innovative and environmentally-aware economy in which enriching employment opportunities are available for all its citizens and the necessary education and training opportunities are easily accessible by all.</li> <li>3. Climate Action - Tipperary will be rich in biodiversity, at a minimum contribute its fair share to national targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, that its households, communities and businesses would be active in adapting to climate change, and that environmental impact considerations would inform all decisions in the county.</li> <li>4. Education and Skills - the people of the county will have the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive, supportive and innovative members of society</li> <li>5. Culture and Heritage - that a positive culture will develop within the county that values and links the achievements of the past to the creativity and innovation of today</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>Tipperary Transforming – Tourism Product Development Plan, 2020-2030</b></p> <p><b>Note: There are a significant number of key projects identified under the themes of Heritage; Landscape; and Water that should include an enhanced ‘access for all’ element in their design and delivery.</b></p> | <p>The Plan suggests ideas for creating exciting new tourism experiences and significantly enhancing existing ones. These will lead to building greater capacity among tourism providers and extending visitor length of stay in the county, whilst also building synergies and collaborations between tourism product offerings to deliver top quality visitor experiences.</p> <p>Summary of Transforming Tipperary Concepts: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cashel Heritage Capital of Ireland</li> <li>• Cashel Living History Repertory Company of Ireland</li> <li>• Cashel Tipperary Tribes Ireland’s Latest Evening Entertainment Show</li> <li>• Lough Derg Ballina Floating Village - Floating Cultural, Educational, Entertainment &amp; Food Experience</li> <li>• Lough Derg Iconic Viewpoint and Waterside Activity Park</li> <li>• Lough Derg Fleet of Self-Drive Eco Boats at Ballina</li> <li>• Fethard Tipperary Equine Experiences</li> <li>• Tipperary Bushcraft Survival and Activity Park Tipperary Centre Sports</li> <li>• Tipperary Youngworld</li> <li>• Templemore Policing Ireland Crimes of the Past &amp; Crime Prevention of Today &amp; Tomorrow</li> <li>• Blueways, Greenways and Future Trail Development Slieve Na Muc Viewing Platform</li> <li>• Clonmel Creating a Tourism Destination – Flights of Discovery Clonmel Bulmers Food Experience</li> <li>• Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter (including Nenagh Gaol);</li> <li>• Cahir Destination Development</li> <li>• Carrick-on-Suir Destination Development.</li> </ul>   |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Butler Trail</li> <li>• Tipperary Giant Sculpture</li> <li>• Lorrha Ireland’s Medieval Village</li> <li>• Loughmore Village Regeneration &amp; Purcell Worldwide Family Roots Project</li> <li>• Roscrea Castle</li> </ul> <p>Viewed as a collective whole, the delivery of these concepts will significantly alter the trajectory of the Tipperary tourism economy for the coming generation. The aim is to move the county up the national league table of tourism-performing counties by 2030. This plan is formally the ‘tourism roadmap’ for the county over the coming decade.</p>  |
| <p><b>Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan, 2020-2024</b></p>   | <p>Lough Derg straddles three counties, Tipperary, Clare, and Galway. The Tipperary side of the lake is recognised as being moderately well developed with notable facilities and services to facilitate access for all users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The four-year plan has four key actions namely: Destination Management; Destination Innovation; The Visitor Experience and Destination Marketing.</li> <li>• Lough Derg will frame experience development within four Destination hubs with distinctive experiences and each with a cohesive story to tell. Killaloe/Ballina Destination Hub; Holy Island and Connected Destination Portumna Destination Hub and; Nenagh Gateway .</li> <li>• Visitor Experience Development in each hub will be driven by the motivations of the most likely visitors segments namely: Connected Families; Great Escapers; Culturally Curious; and Footloose Socialisers. The initial segment presents the main opportunity for the partners to better service and benefit from visitors with access challenges.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>HEALTH FOCUSED POLICIES &amp; RESEARCH UNDERPINNING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Role of Sport Ireland<br/>                 National Governing Body for sports and recreation development in Ireland</b></p> | <p>Sport Ireland is the national governing body whose mission is “to plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland”. The roles and relationship of Sport Ireland with county-based Sports Partnerships is an important enabler in successfully increasing participation in sport and delivering change across the country. The role of the partnerships is to create an appropriate ‘sports environment, decision-making rationale, and participation opportunities such that participants and providers are at an appropriate level of readiness’.</p> <p>Through the consultation process for this Strategy, Sport Ireland expressed confidence in the capacity of Westmeath (and the partnership) to deliver progress on many fronts.</p> <p>Underpinning Sport Ireland’s role is the National Sports Policy (2018-2027) – see below. The NSP underpins all sports and recreational related development in Ireland.</p> <p>Recent research identifies the following challenges for local partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the number of participants and their different needs, the number of ‘communities’ and locations (urban and rural), and the range of sports required to reach and engage with the different participants.</li> <li>• the range of roles required of the Partnership (complexity).</li> <li>• most sports are reliant on a self-funding volunteer base with considerable variance in sport provider capacity.</li> </ul> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• finite, competing resources sometimes dictated by national trends/policy versus local needs.</li> </ul> <p>Partnerships are required to concentrate on the following three spheres of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational: a focus on the volume and diversity of sports programmes. Partnership actions include developing, promoting and delivering sports programmes, typically the start point for most partnerships.</li> <li>• Management: securing and using local resources to provide settings, opportunities (programmes) and sufficient awareness for sports participation, including relationship management and communications.</li> <li>• Strategic: Shaping and evaluating the local sports culture and environment. Partnership actions include leadership, advocacy, and evaluation.</li> </ul> <p>The overarching role of Sport Ireland in supporting these objectives and provision of critical funding is essential. However, their remit also includes distillation and dissemination of international research that helps local decision making and case making. They help network all the local partnerships around Ireland. SI encourage joint project working and introduce best practice initiatives from both at home and abroad. They advise on standards, governance and support the national governing bodies. Local Authorities now employ Sport Inclusion Disability Officers (SIDO) which advance the objectives of inclusivity and access to sports for all, including people living with disabilities.</p> |
| <p><b>National Sports Policy (2018-2027)</b><br/> <b>Sport Ireland</b><br/> <b>Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media</b></p> | <p>The National Sports Policy underpins all sports and recreational related development in Ireland. The vision can be summarised as follows:</p> <p>“people will be inspired, their lives enriched, their enjoyment enhanced, and their quality of life improved as a result of their own active or social participation in sport ...”</p> <p>Outlines the long term policy objectives and aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity in Ireland. The policy contains 57 actions across three key pillars of increasing participation, improving high performance and building capacity and capabilities.</p> <p>The policy aims to increase sport participation in Ireland from 43% to 50% by 2027, with the subsequent Programme for Government increasing this target to 60%. To help achieve the ambitious participation target the policy actions include a plan to increase investment in sport over the lifetime of the policy so that the amount invested doubles over the life time of the plan from €111 million in 2018 to exceeding €220 in 2027.</p> <p>It starkly estimates that 4,000 deaths a year are attributable to Irish people not engaging in enough physical activity, both able bodied and those mobility challenged. Physical inactivity has been estimated to cost Ireland approximately €1.5 billion per year. The National Sports Policy is underpinned by a range of supporting strategies (see below).</p>   |

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| <p><b>Get Ireland Active: National Physical Activity Plan (2016) with annual implementation reviews undertaken to latest (2022)</b><br/> <b>Department of Health</b></p>  | <p>The National Physical Activity Plan (and updates)<sup>20</sup>, emerging from Healthy Ireland Framework and other policies, all point to the need for increased physical activity by the populace. These are supported by various activity initiatives such as Get Ireland Walking! Get Ireland Cycling! etc.</p> <p>The aim of the National Physical Activity Plan is to increase physical activity levels across the whole population, including marginalised groups and people living with disabilities, to improve the health and wellbeing of all. The plan is based on evidence-based strategies for physical activity, equity and improvement of physical, social and environmental determinants. Action areas within the plan include public awareness, education, communication, health settings, workplaces, research, monitoring, evaluation and implementation.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that groups of people living in Ireland may face different barriers to accessing opportunities to be physically active. People experiencing social or economic disadvantage are often the least active or the most sedentary and may experience other health risks due to their diets, social connectedness or other behaviours. The plan seeks to ensure that no group is disadvantaged and recognises that targeted interventions are required to address and overcome barriers to participation which are experienced by some people. Action 49 targets people living with Disabilities as follows:</p> <p>Action 49 - Extend existing and developing physical activity programmes for people with disabilities and their families This action identifies the requirement to extend existing and developing programmes for physical activity for people with disabilities and their families, with a particular focus on participation in Sport. In 2022 this action was deemed to be completed. This included the appointment of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers in Local Authorities (SIDO incl. Tipperary).</p> |
| <p><b>Every Move Counts - National Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (2024)</b><br/> <b>Health Service Executive/<br/>                 Department of Health</b></p>   | <p>The new National Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines are a set of evidence-based recommendations that outline the minimum amount of physical activity required for health benefits, as well as the maximum amount of time a person should spend on sedentary behaviours to achieve optimal health outcomes.</p> <p>The Guidance encourages people of all ages and abilities, regardless of physical or intellectual ability, to become more physically active.</p> <p>Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years, including those living a disability should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at least an average of 1 hour per day of moderate-to vigorous-intensity, mostly aerobic, physical activity, across the week,</li> <li>• additional activities that strengthen muscle and bones, should be incorporated at least 3 days a week.</li> <li>• for some people with certain disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy) a reduced level of physical activity may be adequate to attain significant health benefits, considering their higher energy cost of physical activity.</li> </ul> <p>Adults aged 18-64 years, aged 65+ including those living with a disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at least 2 hours and 30 minutes to 5 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity; or at least 1 hour and 15 minutes to 2 hours and 30 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week</li> </ul>   |

<sup>20</sup> <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Get-Ireland-Active-the-National-Physical-Activity-Plan.pdf>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional muscle-strengthening activities at moderate or greater intensity that involve all major muscle groups are recommended on 2 or more days a week</li> <li>• as part of their weekly physical activity, older adults (aged 65+) and older adults living with a disability should do varied multicomponent physical activity that emphasises functional balance and strength training on 3 or more days a week, to enhance strength and capacity and to prevent falls.</li> </ul> <p>People Living with Disability, of all ages and abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being active is good for all ages and disabilities – guidance is similar as for other adults, children &amp; adolescents to include whatever activity you can undertake.</li> </ul> <p>Sedentary activity includes most desk-based office work, driving a car, watching television or other screen time activities. Replacing sedentary time, where possible - with activity of any intensity, essentially moving more everyday – is strongly advised to protect health.</p> <p>The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland refer to exercise as a “wonder drug” for general health, enhanced sleep, improved mood and self-esteem; and management of everyday stresses. In the longer term, exercise reduces the risks of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and depleted mobility in older age. People who are active throughout their lives are happier, healthier and more independent in their 80s and 90s - thus the HSE advises that taking small steps today to become more active will benefit people of all abilities in the longer term.</p> |
| <p><b>Healthy Ireland 2013-2025 – A Framework for Improving Health and Wellness</b></p> <p><b>Dept. of Health</b></p>  | <p>The vision is “a Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility”.</p> <p>The Plan was based on the first 7 years of implementation of the Healthy Ireland Framework, which provides a road map for the next 5 years of implementation. The aim is to reduce smoking, alcohol use, poor diets, physical inactivity and obesity and also to promote health and well-being. A Healthy Communities Programme for disadvantaged communities will be established to address health inequalities in the poorest areas. A second Healthy Ireland Council will be established to build the scope and capacity of the existing Healthy Ireland Network.</p> <p>Improved access to recreation is an integral part of the strategy. Greater community connections and cohesion are critical to a successful delivery “the impact of positive social interaction cannot be underestimated. Social interaction and supporting social connectedness and involvement in community life are a keystone in empowering people at the individual level and building strong communities for health and wellbeing.”</p> <p>Targets include to Increase by 20% proportion of the population undertaking regular physical activity, including people living with disability.</p>   |

## The Benefits of Recreational Activity

Recreation provides one of the key mechanisms through which to engage with people who may be finding life challenging either societally, physically and/or emotionally. In all jurisdictions this creates a challenge for policy makers and implementing bodies. However, there are good practice learnings that may be adopted in Westmeath based on national and international research.

The benefits associated with involvement in physical recreation are well researched<sup>21</sup>: It provides a major contribution to personal health and wellbeing; Is key to human development; is essential to quality of life; Reduces self-destructive and anti-social behaviour; helps to build strong families and healthy communities; and reduces health care, social service, and Garda/penal costs.

Consistent research demonstrates that physical inactivity is an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease, a risk factor for type 2 diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure. According to the research carried out by SLAN (2007), it was suggested that 29% of the Irish population were inactive/sedentary (26% male; 31% female) taking less than 5,000 steps per day. The generally accepted view is that the physical activity level required to maintain good health does not have to be strenuous to maximise the impact, rather it needs to be consistent. The national guidelines for levels of activity in Ireland (2009)<sup>22</sup> are shown in the Table at the end of this section. In summary:

- Adults should build up at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week;
- Children should build up at least one hour of moderate activity on most days of the week.  
(Moderate activity is using about five to seven calories a minute – the equivalent of brisk walking)
- People living with Disability: Be as active as your ability allows. Aim to meet adult guidelines of at least 30 minutes of moderate to intensive activity on 5 days of the week.

There is also increasing evidence that physical inactivity is a ‘major causative physical link’ between ill health and social inequality (Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, 2016)<sup>23</sup>.

Investing in mechanisms to get inactive people more active, so that chronic illness and deaths associated with inactivity will fall, leads to a significant medium to long term economic saving for society.

Physical inactivity globally has critical implications for the cost of healthcare required to treat related chronic illnesses. In Sweden, it is estimated that up to 60% of all illnesses can be attributed to lifestyle choices<sup>24</sup>.

Studies worldwide validate very well the concept that ‘spending money now in recreational infrastructure and measures saves healthcare costs later’ as the cost to society of physical inactivity is enormous.

UK data shows that people who do not participate in sports have 80,000 more hospital in-patient visits a year. It is estimated that if everyone did 12 minutes more daily activity, savings of £6 billion could be made to the NHS, to welfare and in loss of earnings for mental health issues. There is also evidence that a 20% increase in cycling would save £107 million in reducing premature deaths, £52 million in lowered NHS costs and £87 million because of reduced absenteeism. The direct and indirect costs of inactivity in UK are estimated to be £20 billion p.a.

Recent research commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) using a health data-led approach (deploying self-reported health, mortality, and disability as health indicators) suggests that the presence of green and blue

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|  | <p>recreational infrastructure (GBI) contributes to the improvement of health<sup>25</sup>. Irrespective of the approach taken (i.e. GBI led, or health led), the argument that the presence or introduction of GBI has potential health benefits is sustained. The deployment of access to GBI enhances public health and should underpin policy development in this area.</p> <p>It is thus prudent to introduce and support public recreational initiatives to encourage greater levels of physical activity across all ages, contributing to the longer-term health and wellbeing of the citizens of Ireland.</p> |
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<sup>21</sup> EU Physical Activity Guidelines (2008)

<sup>22</sup> Irish Department of Health. The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland. Dublin 2009

<sup>23</sup> RCPI (2016) Physical-activity-a-wonder-drug-the-evidence.pdf

<sup>24</sup> [http://avbp.net/docs/huddinge\\_map.pdf](http://avbp.net/docs/huddinge_map.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> *Green and Blue Spaces and Health: A Health-led Approach* (EPA Research Report 264, Dec. 2018).

[https://www.researchgate.net/institution/EPA\\_Research\\_Ireland/post/5c056ad9f8ea522e5653d369\\_EPA\\_Research\\_Report\\_264\\_Green\\_and\\_Blue\\_Spaces\\_and\\_Health\\_A\\_Health-led\\_Approach](https://www.researchgate.net/institution/EPA_Research_Ireland/post/5c056ad9f8ea522e5653d369_EPA_Research_Report_264_Green_and_Blue_Spaces_and_Health_A_Health-led_Approach)

## APPENDIX 3– INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE FOR ACCESSIBLE OUTDOOR RECREATION

### REVIEW OF BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE FOR ACCESSIBLE RECREATION

This section explores how other jurisdictions (e.g. EU, UK, Canada, and USA) have learned from providing accessible recreational opportunities for all: including systems that have been adopted; resources required; partnership and engagement models; and ultimately, what ‘good’ practice looks like.

Tipperary may learn from the experience of both Ireland and other jurisdictions in delivery of best practice. Sample international case studies are presented below, where each provides slightly different learnings (but importantly all acknowledging that they are on a journey, far from arrival at a satisfactory ‘end point’).

#### Project 1: Victoria Regional Parks, Canada<sup>26</sup>

Canada is likely the global leader where ‘accessibility for all’ is enshrined in policy and guidelines (both national and regional). Universal design and access principles are adopted and followed up with varied measures from changing attitudes, training and capacity building to delivery of practical facilities and recruitment of disabled staff/ volunteers.

#### Universal Design for Recreation:

The intent of universal design is to accommodate the broadest spectrum of people through a single, all-encompassing design, rather than through the provision of multiple elements specially designed for use by distinct groups.

##### Universal design for Recreation is governed by seven principles:

1. Equitable Use: the design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities
2. Flexibility in Use: the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
3. Simple and Intuitive Use: the use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skill or current concentration level
4. Perceptible Information: the design communicates information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities
5. Tolerance for Error: the design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions
6. Low Physical Effort: the design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use: appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach and manipulation, regardless of user’s body size, posture, or mobility.

#### Changing Attitudes & Culture

Changing attitudes begins by focusing on universal access training for all managers and field staff, providing the tools needed to provide the highest standard of service delivery to all regional park and trail visitors. An accessibility checklist was developed to be used in all project management and facilities planning processes.

<sup>26</sup> Victoria Regional Parks, Canada - Everyone’s Parks and Trails: A Universal Access Plan for CRD Parks - <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/everyone's-parks-and-trails-a-universal-access-plan-for-crd-parks.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

### **Changing Recreational Facilities**

Changing facilities is a long-term investment in providing an accessible environment in regional parks and trails. An *access audit* provides the information needed for upgrades, updates and future access initiatives to at least minimum standards. As part of the audit process, the Victoria Parks identified future large scale access projects as part of their Parks 10-year capital projects plan.

### **Changing Services**

Once accessible facilities have been provided to regional park and trail visitors, accessible services can be developed. Key actions in this area are to provide digital and print information highlighting accessible opportunities for park and trail experiences, with environmental interpretation to include people with disabilities in interpretive experiences. In more specifically, the Victoria Parks identified volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities, and targeted recruitment through advocacy organisations.

### **Practical Learnings from Victoria Parks, Canada:**

Some specific learnings from Canada to make recreation in parks and trails more inclusive:

- Universal access to points of interest
- Smooth, even trail surfaces
- Opportunities to sit and rest along trail routes
- Use of grades and ramps instead of stairs
- Use of symbols to indicate trail difficulty
- Placement of park benches at accessible viewpoints
- Digital and print-based public information identifying accessible park and trail experiences.
- Development of universally designed picnic areas.
- Recruitment of disabled recreational users as volunteer advisors.

## **Project 2: Supporting Inclusive Outdoor Access in the UK: Outdoor Accessibility Guidance (2023)**

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-18April2023.pdf>

The Sensory Trust (UK) is a leading authority on inclusive and sensory design. They use the outdoors to improve the health and wellness for all. This contemporary (2023) national research and guidance are insightful and practical, flagging some excellent examples of 'how to' that could be adopted in Tipperary. The document provides a step-by-step guide on how to re-engineer mainstream recreational infrastructure to make it more 'universally friendly' for all.

### **Common barriers to recreational access include:**

- Physical barriers such as steep gradients, steps, uneven paths, limited seating, or excessive distances.
- Limited information about accessibility, poor wayfinding information and lack of information provided.
- Lack of accessible toilets and changing facilities.
- Lack of confidence, not feeling welcome, fear over safety or getting lost.
- Lack of accessible transport and parking options, and costs of both.
- Lack of staff awareness of access needs.
- Limited range of activities and opportunities to use places in different ways.
- Poorly maintained environment.

### **Some Simple Solutions to Prioritising Access Improvements:**

- When planning physical access improvements, and with limited budgets, it is important to identify the following:
- Which barriers can be removed, e.g. simply leaving a gap rather than retaining a restrictive kissing gate.
- Which barriers can be avoided, for example by creating an alternative route to bypass steps.
- Which barriers can be mediated e.g. adding seating alongside a gradient or replacing a tricky stiff bolt with an easy access latch on a gate.

- Which barriers are a priority for action e.g. an area of uneven path, steps, stiles, and steep gradients.

### The Visitor Journey – The Access Chain

The Sensory Trust's 'Access Chain' is a useful approach, which was developed to ensure that access planning starts with the decision to go somewhere; followed by the journey, then the experience itself, and ending with a safe return home. If any link in the chain is broken then what should be an enjoyable day out, can turn to disappointment, or may never happen. It is a good basis for reviewing or planning access.

The **Access Chain** steps include:

- *Decision to visit* [information about access / access features; suitably formatted communications]
- *Journey and arrival* [transport options; car parking; free admission for carers; welcoming entrance and orientation; inclusive toilets, changing and café]
- *On-site experience* [routes and trail accessibility; inclusive events planning; accessible information and interpretation for all]
- *Return home* [parking pick-ups; feedback encouraged; information packs available for all (including languages)]

### Route/ Trail Review Tools

There are two primary types of review tools, namely, the Site Review, where there are facilities and activities to consider as well as routes, and the Route Review, which assesses the specific characteristics of a route, such as surfaces, widths, and gradients. These should be carried out as part of site planning and management schedules.

#### Practical Actions to Improve Recreational Access

- Visitor Centre / Indoor Facilities
- Staff and Volunteer Awareness
- Toilets / Changing Facilities
- Car Parking
- Routes and Wider Access
- Play Facilities
- Information Provision for ALL
- Interpretation
- Events
- Building Relationships (listening to users)

#### Practical Examples of Good, Simple Practice

- Seats near a path, with space for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs ensure that people can sit and enjoy the space together.
- Careful location of seating ensures that blind and partially sighted people find the seating easily and it does not cause an unexpected hazard or obstacle.
- Seating layout impacts on how people can sit and have a conversation e.g. using sign language.
- Provide arm rests and accessible seating locations and angles.
- Seating - make the most of existing features such as boulders or clay banks. While incidental opportunities to sit shouldn't replace more inclusively designed seating, the use of existing features such as fallen trees can be a bonus for walkers.
- Tables with seating that is not fixed and can be moved is more flexible for everyone. Comfortable table height ensures a wheelchair user can sit up to the table.
- Timber structures provide shelter, seating and viewing points along the trails should be investigated further.

### Project 3: USA National Parks/ Adaptive Outdoor Recreation

The American National Parks Service has been a world leader in accessibility since the first park was designated in Yellowstone (1872).

Currently there are 63 parks spread across 30 states, all with deeply embedded universal access principles and innovative practices to facilitate as many people as possible, of all abilities to enjoy the outdoors.

This is known as Adaptive Outdoor Recreation – further information at:

<https://www.travelbreatherepeat.com/accessible-outdoor-activities/>

Also: <https://www.nationalparks.org/explore/programs/accessibility-all-americans>.

### Project 4: European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) [www.accessibletourism.org](http://www.accessibletourism.org)

Accessible tourism is of growing international interest, and an EU network was established in 2006 to share best practice and learnings for accessible tourism across member states.

The **European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)** is a **non-profit association** that brings together tourism enterprises, organisations, and individuals from various sectors. Their focus is on:

1. **Evaluating Good Practices:** ENAT aims to evaluate and endorse good practices related to accessible tourism. By leveraging the knowledge and experience of its network members, ENAT works to improve the accessibility of various aspects of tourism, including **tourist information, transport, infrastructure, design, and services**. These efforts contribute to creating models of excellence in accessible tourism for the entire industry .
2. **Promoting Accessible Tourism:** ENAT strives to make European tourism destinations, products, and services accessible to all travellers. Their vision is to help Europe become an accessible destination where everyone can move freely.

ENAT's mission is to create a more inclusive and accessible travel experience for everyone, and their work contributes to making tourism destinations welcoming and barrier-free. The Irish representative at ENAT is Universal Access ([www.universalaccess.ie](http://www.universalaccess.ie)) with a focus on business making their products, services, premises and destinations more accessible for all visitors.

## APPENDIX 4 – USEFUL REFERENCES

### Ireland: Useful References

**Universal Access / Good Practice for Local Authorities and partner** - practical design and building guidelines: -

*Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach* is our main publication for built environment. Booklet 7, Building Types has guidance on Outdoor Access to different types of facilities.

<https://universaldesign.ie/uploads/publications/7-Building-Types.pdf>

**Guidelines for access auditing in the built environment;** advising that audits should be carried out against Building for Everyone, as well as Part M.

<https://nda.ie/publications/guidelines-for-access-auditing-of-the-built-environment>

**User involvement in the design process is a key part of a Universal Design Approach.**

Our Participation Matters guidelines will support public bodies to meaningfully consult with and actively involve disabled people and their representative organisations in decision-making.

[https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/NDA-Participation-Matters\\_Web-PDF\\_092022.pdf](https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/NDA-Participation-Matters_Web-PDF_092022.pdf)

**IS EN17161:2019 is a standard that enables businesses to apply a Universal Design approach for accessibility.** This means, products, and services can be accessed, understood and used by a wide range of people, including older persons and persons with disabilities. The document sets out requirements for an organisation so that they can extend their range of users by identifying diverse needs, by directly or indirectly involving users, and by using knowledge about accessibility in its processes and procedures. Available for purchase from the NSAI

<https://www.nsa.ie/about/news/a-design-standard-that-works-for-all/>

**Local authorities should be aware of their obligations under Section 25 of the Disability Act.** See the executive summary of the Operational Review of the Effectiveness of Section 25 of the Disability Act for more information:

<https://nda.ie/publications/an-operational-review-of-the-effectiveness-of-section-25-of-the-disability-act-2005-nda-report>

**Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool for Roads and Streets:**

<https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/walkability-auditing/universal-design-walkability-audit-tool>

Short video here explaining how the process works, based on a Walkability audit in Kilrush, Co.

Clare: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyxyKtgO\\_Jw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyxyKtgO_Jw)

In **relation to recreation and tourism facilities**, having **information in advance** is critical to enable disabled people to make decisions about whether they want to visit. **Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A**

**Universal Design Approach:**

<https://universaldesign.ie/communications-digital/customer-communications-toolkit-a-universal-design-approach>

**Free eLearning module on Universal Design in the Built Environment**

<https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/elearning-module-building-for-everyone-central-bank-of-ireland>

**Code of Practice on Accessible Heritage Sites** – takes a user journey approach

<https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/Code-of-Practice-on-Accessible-Heritage-Sites-Report.pdf>

**Active Disability Ireland** is a national pan-disability sport organization that aims to enhance sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities across Ireland. **ADI** have developed a series of practical publications

on outdoor recreation, including beaches, playgrounds, trails and public parks: available at:  
<https://activedisability.ie/resources/outdoors/>

ADI's vision is to create an Ireland where people with disabilities have equal opportunities to be active:

1. **Sport Inclusion Disability Charter:** Active Disability Ireland has developed Ireland's first-ever Charter specific to the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity. [This charter promotes inclusion and ensures that everyone is included at a level appropriate to them<sup>1</sup>.](#)
2. **Active Healthy Me:** This health and well-being program is delivered directly to people with disabilities in adult day service locations. [It aims to build awareness and understanding of the health benefits of physical activity<sup>2</sup>.](#)
3. **Accessible Club Toolkit:** [Empowering clubs to provide meaningful opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity<sup>2</sup>.](#)
4. **Training & Education:** [Active Disability Ireland delivers training and education initiatives to create a more inclusive sport and physical activity sector for people with disabilities<sup>3</sup>.](#)

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design in Ireland <https://universaldesign.ie>

## Fáilte Ireland - Accessible Tourism

[Accessible Tourism \(failteireland.ie\)](https://failteireland.ie)

Accessible Tourism offers a means of unlocking potential of tourism business to grow, while future-proofing the business to be more inclusive for all.

## International: Useful References

Physical accessibility is regulated not only by international and European regulation, but also by national regulation. The main accessibility regulations and other instruments on an international and European level are as follows:

- UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities
- The global code of ethics for tourism
- Council of Europe [recommendation on ageing and disability](#)
- Council of Europe [resolution on universal design](#) to achieve full participation
- Committee of the Ministers recommendation on the action plan to [promote the rights and participation of the disabled](#)
- Commission [regulation on rights of disabled people in air travel](#)

### Equity in Access to Outdoor Recreation—Informing a Sustainable Future

*Sustainability* 2020, 12(1), 124; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010124>

### US National Parks/ Adaptive Outdoor Recreation

[The great outdoors: accessible outdoor activities for people of all abilities | Travel Breathe Repeat](#)

## Other Useful Resources

- visit Britain offers [case studies on physical accessibility in tourism](#).
- watch the 'Mind the accessibility gap' conference video summary from June 2014.
- [the European Network for Accessible Tourism \(ENAT\)](#)
- [Europe For All](#) accessible tourism directory – where you can register as a provider of accessible tourism services, evaluate your property and get in touch with customers
- learn about some good practices of accessible tourism from the [European Capital of Smart Tourism competition's compendium of best practices](#)

**This study was  
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**For further information, please contact:**

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