



09/09/2025

To: The Mayor, Príomh Chomhairleoir and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

Recommendation to consider the Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan, prepared in line with Guidelines for Development – County Outdoor Recreation Plans, to proceed for noting.

A Chomhairleoir, A Chara,

The Community, Leisure, Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategic Policy Committee meeting was held on 9th July 2025. As recorded by the Chairpersons Report, a presentation was given by Karen Burke, Town Regeneration Officer on the Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Recommendation to consider the Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan, prepared in line with Guidelines for Development – County Outdoor Recreation Plans, to proceed to the September Full Council Meeting for noting, was proposed by Ms Marion Hurley seconded by Cllr F. Kilcoyne, that the Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan go to the Full Council for noting.

Please find the final Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan attached to this memo for presentation to the Full Council meeting on 22nd September 2025 for noting.

Is mise le meas,

Stephane Duclot

**Director of Service,
Rural, Community, Culture and Tourism Development**

Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030



Ríaltas
na hÉireann
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Ár dTodhchaí
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Comhairle Cathrach
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The development of this plan was supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

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Introduction

Background

Need for a County Outdoor Recreation Plan

Limerick boasts a wealth of natural and cultural assets, from the River Shannon and forested uplands to historic towns and vibrant communities. This diverse landscape, combined with rising demand for outdoor activity, underscores the need for a clear, stakeholder-led plan to shape the future development of outdoor recreation across the region. There has been rapid growth in the participation and interest in outdoor recreation across Ireland in recent years. This has been supported by significant levels of investment in the sector and the launch of new strategies, including *Embracing Ireland's Outdoors* – the National Outdoor Strategy 2023-2027. This has given rise to the need to develop a County Outdoor Recreation Plan for Limerick which prioritises local needs while cascading from the national strategy. The Plan promotes a collaborative, cross-sector, stakeholder-led approach to the development and management of sustainable outdoor recreation in Limerick, addressing local needs and enhancing opportunities for participation. The plan establishes a strategic action plan for the management and delivery of outdoor recreation across Limerick.

Definition of Outdoor Recreation

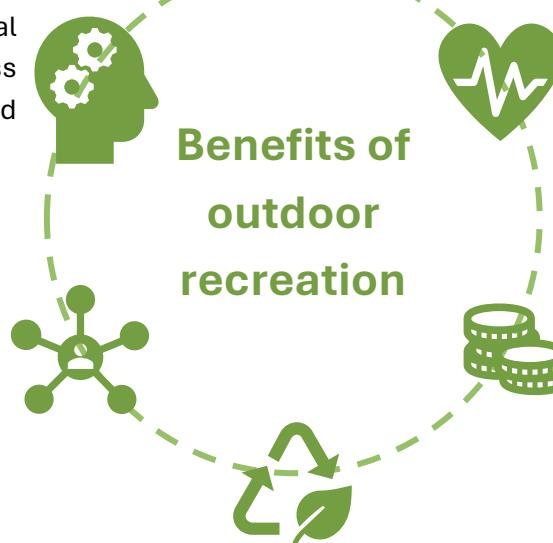
By 'outdoor recreation' we mean activities that take place in the natural environment, such as walking, canoeing, mountain biking, orienteering and wild swimming. A list of included activities is detailed below, however it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive.



The benefits and importance of outdoor recreation

Research¹²³⁴ shows that participation in outdoor recreation brings significant positive impact to people, communities and the economy.

MENTAL HEALTH: Spending time in the outdoors improves mental health, it can help to reduce stress and anxiety, improve moods and increase energy



SOCIAL INTERACTION: Natural spaces improve social cohesion and can reduce isolation and loneliness by providing shared social activities and spaces

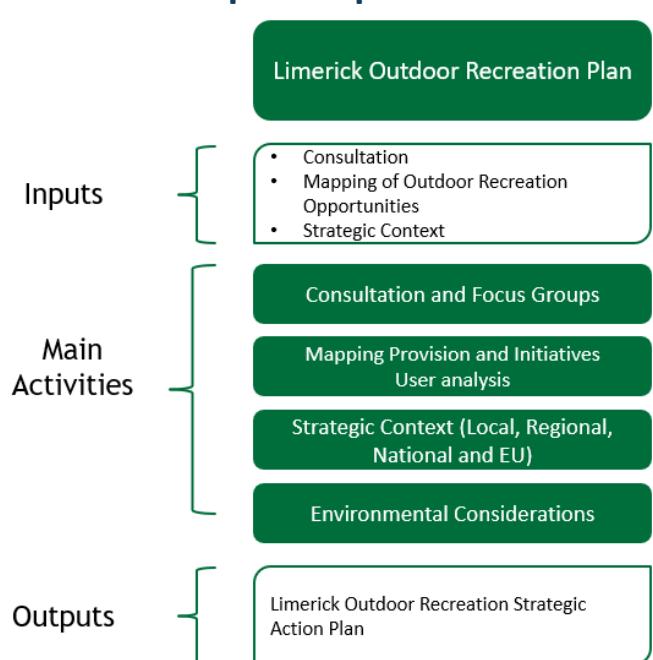
PHYSICAL HEALTH: Nature provides open spaces for physical activity which improves cardiovascular health, builds muscle and reduces the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes

ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Outdoor recreation offers economic benefits by attracting tourism, boosting local business and employment opportunities

ENVIRONMENTAL: Outdoor recreation connects people to nature and can improve environmental education and awareness. Active travel reduces fossil fuel consumption and creates a healthier environment

Overview of the Outdoor Recreation Plan development process

The strategic planning process involved significant engagement with stakeholders over an extensive period. The process began with a review and mapping of the current provision of outdoor recreation in Limerick and a review of the strategic context in which the Plan resides. A programme of online and in-person consultation took place followed by strategic planning workshops with the Limerick Outdoor Recreation Project Team to refine the strategic themes and priority actions for the next 5 years.



¹ Mental health and social interaction: [Improving access to greenspace: 2020 review](#)

² Environmental: [Benefits of Outdoor Sports on Society | Sport Ireland](#)

³ Physical health: Barton, J., & Pretty, J. (2010). *What is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health? A multi-study analysis*. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30(2), 203-214.

⁴ Economic benefits: [ORP_Screen.pdf](#)

Consultation

The consultation involved significant engagement with local, regional and national stakeholders over a seven-week period (from 8 October 2024 to 29 November 2024). A mixed-method approach was employed to ensure maximum participation using mediums such as, one-to-one semi-structured interviews; focus group meetings with key stakeholder groups; open public consultation sessions; online community survey; and an online children and young people's survey. The consultation provided valuable insights and perspectives that have directly informed the development of the Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan (See p10 SWOT & Needs Assessment). In total 582 participants engaged with the consultation.



Strategic and External Context

Strategic Context

The development of an Outdoor Recreation Plan for Limerick strategically aligns with several key national, regional, and local strategies. Central to the plan is alignment with Embracing Ireland's Outdoors, which provides the developmental framework. It also aligns with Project Ireland 2040, focussing on development that is environmentally sustainable, improves quality of life and contributes to long-term economic and social well-being goals. The plan is in line with Fáilte Ireland's Strategy for Outdoor Tourism 2023-2027, promoting Ireland as a destination for outdoor tourism. Additionally, it supports the Healthy Ireland



Framework, encouraging increased participation in outdoor activities to improve public health.

In developing the Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Project Team considered and sought alignment with key strategic local objectives and policies, including those shown in the graphic above. Through supporting sustainable development, environmental protection, fostering tourism and enhanced infrastructure the Outdoor Recreation Plan will contribute to the achievement of local objectives set out in the Local Development Strategy, Local Economic and Community Plan and Development Plan. The Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan complements and reinforces existing local strategies to maximise the role outdoor recreation can play in the Limerick's social, economic, and environmental future.

External Environment

This action plan has been developed with consideration for national and global factors and trends which impact outdoor recreation, these include:



CHANGING DEMAND

Significant growth in demand for outdoor recreation



AGEING POPULATION

Ageing population enjoying better quality of life



WELLBEING

Increased focus on mental and physical wellbeing



SUSTAINABILITY

Pressing need for climate action and sustainable future



VOLUNTEERS

Decline in community volunteerism and participation



REDUCED LIABILITY

Changes to Occupiers Liability Act and Duty of Care

Health restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic have re-emphasised the value of the natural environment and time spent outdoors. This plan has been developed with an aim to increase participation and provision of outdoor recreation across Limerick, whilst preserving and protecting its unique landscapes, habitats and built heritage. It aims to support responsible outdoor recreation, ensuring recreational activities do not negatively impact sensitive sites. The plan represents a prime opportunity to ensure sustainable development through collective action.

Summary of strategic and external context

The current strategic and external landscape has framed the development of the Outdoor Recreation Plan for Limerick. Nationally, there is an increasing demand for outdoor recreation, a growing interest in health and wellbeing, sustainable travel and environmental conservation. The plan aims to align with national priorities while addressing local needs, promoting sustainable and accessible outdoor recreation in Limerick. The importance of health and wellbeing, active aging, social connections, climate action, biodiversity and inclusion have been integrated into the plan through the adoption of three cross-cutting pillars which provide a central focus across all the outcomes and actions identified. These pillars are Inclusion, Sustainability and Connectivity.

Current Situation

Physical provision for Outdoor Recreation in Limerick

An audit of the baseline outdoor recreation offering in Limerick has been carried out to provide a point of reference and a better understanding of the regional spread of physical provision.

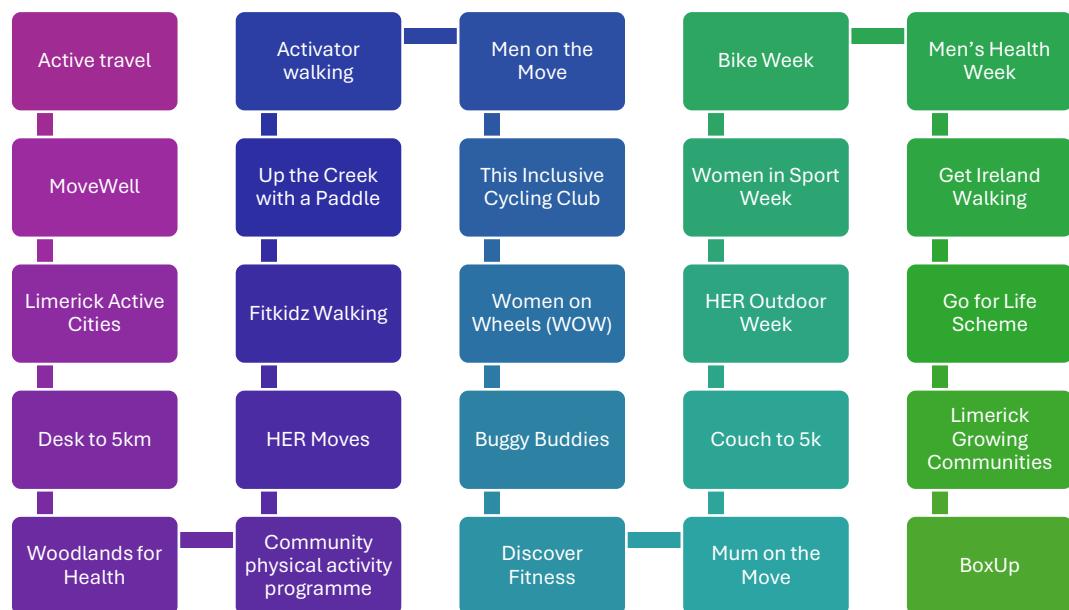


The review considered both the physical provision and participation opportunities available. Data was gathered using the National Digital Database of Sport and Recreation Activities and a desktop research exercise. Approved planned developments have been included in this analysis. The mapping exercise was further informed by engagement with key stakeholders and consultees, including National Governing Bodies, local community groups and residents from across Limerick.

There is a wealth of existing provision of outdoor recreation in Limerick. The area boasts an extensive network of walking and hiking trails, including the Slieve Felim Way, Curraghchase Forest Park and the Limerick Greenway, which also serves as a key route for cycling activities. Limerick features a large network of rivers include the River Shannon, the Abbey River and Ballynaclough River offering opportunities for water-based activities such as fishing and kayaking. Additional river-based amenities include scenic areas like Clare Glens and Castleconnell, which are popular for walking and angling. The Ballyhoura region is a key asset in the southwest, providing opportunities for hiking, walking, passive enjoyment of the outdoors, and one of the largest mountain biking trail systems in Ireland. In the city there are 450 acres of public open space, including playgrounds, dog parks, nature parks, urban forests and large open spaces. The combination of trails, parks and heritage sites across Limerick provides excellent opportunities for family-friendly outdoor recreation.

Participation initiatives

Limerick offers an array of outdoor recreation opportunities⁵, with numerous initiatives aimed at promoting and expanding access to outdoor activities, as detailed in the graphic below.



⁵ Programmes and activities listed here are primarily delivered by Limerick Sports Partnership. Bike Week is delivered by Active Travel Limerick City and County Council and Limerick Sports Partnership. Limerick Growing Communities is delivered by PAUL Partnership Limerick. Through the delivery of the Outdoor Recreation Plan it is anticipated that the number of outdoor recreation events organised by communities and clubs in Limerick will increase in the coming years.

Each year a variety of organised events take place across Limerick, including The Great Limerick Run; Joey Hannan Triathlon; Ballyhoura Walking Festival; Limerick County Pike Association Anglers League; Adare 200; and The Island Swim. In addition to these, a multitude of informal and ad hoc events are organised by communities throughout Limerick. While the existing provision offers extensive opportunity for outdoor recreation, there is scope to further enhance access, connectivity, and the quality of these areas, and further development across Limerick.



CASE STUDY

Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail Centre

Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail Centre is Ireland's first and largest purpose-built trail network, offering 98km of loops for all skill levels – from easy blue trails to technical red and black runs. The Trail Network is undergoing redevelopment, with plans for a new building featuring a café, accessible amenities, bike hire and repair workshop, and external canopy and seating. Supported by Coillte, Rural Recreation Development Fund (Department of Rural and Community Development) and Fáilte Ireland. The centre will serve as a recreational activity hub, offering a central base of walkers, bikers and outdoor recreational users to connect and explore the Ballyhoura region.

Environment

Limerick has a rich and diverse natural landscape, including a large network of rivers, lakes, woodlands, uplands, wetlands, and agricultural lowlands. Key assets include the River Shannon, Galtee Mountains, Ballyhoura Mountains, Curraghchase Forest Park, Askeaton fen, Sliabh Felim and Sliabh Reagh. Limerick City has 73m² of urban greenspace per capita, which compares favourably against ideal values set by the World Health Organisation (50m²)⁶. It is worth noting that 13% of the land in Limerick is designated for conservation, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). Limerick's architectural heritage includes multiple Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and over 3,500 Protected Structures, ranging from historic urban areas to nationally significant buildings and estates⁷. There is an opportunity to link architectural and built heritage to outdoor recreation trails and Greenways across the county to support an integrated and sustainable tourism network. This interconnected approach to the

⁶ Limerick City & County Council Integrated Action Plan (IAP): Health & Greenspace [20220631_Limerick_IAP.pdf](https://www.limerick.ie/20220631_Limerick_IAP.pdf)

⁷ Limerick City & County Council [Built Heritage & Architectural Conservation | Limerick.ie](https://www.limerick.ie/Built-Heritage-and-Architectural-Conservation)

environment should enhance engagement and enjoyment of sites across Limerick but also support rural economies.



CASE STUDY Limerick Greenway Project

The Limerick Greenway is the largest outdoor strategic tourism project in Limerick and a key driver of rural regeneration and development in the region. It is a key example of partnership working, led by Limerick City and County Council, in partnership with several local organisations. The project aims to rebalance growth in rural areas through investment and placemaking. It involved incorporating the Barnagh Tunnel, linkages to Listowel and Kerry, resurfacing and installing signage and interpretation, along with a marketing campaign. The project enhances tourism, local amenities, and mobility, while promoting economic growth and sustainability in line with Project Ireland 2040's rural development strategic outcomes.

End User

Key insights into the current usage and demand for outdoor recreation in Limerick are presented below. These findings have been informed by an extensive programme of engagement with local communities.

Residents surveyed (451 respondents):

- 87% participate in outdoor recreation at least once per week
- 63% are part of an outdoor recreation club or group
- Most often partake in outdoor recreation with friends (28%); alone (23%); and as part of a group (21%)

Children and young people surveyed (64 respondents):

- 88% participate in outdoor recreation at least once per week
- Most popular types of outdoor recreation are playing games and sport; riding a bike; going for a walk; and running
- Most popular outdoor spaces are the garden; sports pitches; nearby green spaces; school; and parks

Top 3 reasons why respondents participate in Outdoor Recreation in Limerick



Improve
health and
fitness



Improve mental
and emotional
wellbeing



Have
Fun



Stakeholder landscape

Key stakeholder organisations in outdoor recreation

Delivery and development of outdoor recreation spans across government departments, agencies and other organisations. Communities also play an important role in the delivery of outdoor recreation as well as being the end user. The plan seeks to facilitate improved coordination and partnership working across all stakeholders in the sector.

Stakeholder engagement:



Approach to key areas of outdoor recreation across Limerick

Outdoor recreation development in Limerick is prioritised and funded through a combination of local government and state body interventions, national programmes and community-led partnerships. The key funding streams for outdoor recreation come from a variety of sources which include: Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS); Fáilte Ireland assistance; the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF); Leader Programme; Coillte; National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS); Inland Fisheries programmes; Environmental and Biodiversity funds; Waterways Ireland assistance; European Union funding; and support from the private sector, universities and community and voluntary sectors. The responsibility for ongoing maintenance varies and can often rest with local authorities, state bodies or community organisations.



CASE STUDY

Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan

The Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan is a 15-year strategy aimed at enhancing and expanding recreational trails in the Ballyhoura region, which spans parts of Limerick and North Cork. The Masterplan integrates three overarching themes: Partnership Working, Product Development and Marketing and Promotion. It sets ambitious goals for accessibility, geographic diversity, and international appeal. The plan aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of skill level, has access to Ballyhoura trails, emphasising the importance of community and agency collaboration. Developed with community input, the Masterplan is supported by funding from the LEADER Programme and aligns with Fáilte Ireland's tourism goals.

Summary of current situation

Limerick boasts a diverse natural landscape and offers a wealth of existing physical provision and opportunities for outdoor recreation. However, access to outdoor recreation provision is not uniform across the city and county. While engagement in outdoor recreation is high, increasing provision, maintenance, access, networking and cross-sector collaboration are required to fully realise Limerick's potential.

SWOT and Needs Assessment

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) and Needs Assessment presented below reflects the views of residents, outdoor recreation groups, and key stakeholders gathered through the consultation process.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing collaboration among stakeholders and recent shift in central government support for outdoor recreation - Limerick's Active City status - Local grass roots development communities play a crucial role in developing outdoor spaces and activities <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New multifunctional offerings (E.g. O'Brien Park) creating inclusive spaces and reducing antisocial behaviour - Limerick's expansive rural areas, wealth of natural assets and beauty - Existing strong base of infrastructure and diverse recreational offering to build on - Growing interest in outdoor recreation - The variety of local clubs and groups and their activities <p>Expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong local knowledge and respect for the environment among residents - Signature outdoor recreation activities for Limerick include mountain biking (Ballyhoura), water sports activities (River Shannon) and hiking (Galtees) - Capacity and commitment of local groups and volunteers - The University of Limerick and the wide offering it provides 	<p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient maintenance plans, funding and ownership - Lack of strategic joined-up approach and communication between key stakeholders - Lack of engagement and co-design with local communities - Delays in planning and implementing outdoor facilities - Lack of government support and investment <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional balance between rural and urban areas - Potential is untapped and underdeveloped - Lack of supporting amenities for visitor servicing - Lack of natural green spaces in the city and urban areas - Poor maintenance and upkeep of green spaces and trails - Lack of water-based infrastructure <p>Expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smaller clubs struggle with leadership, capacity and governance hindering growth and sustainability - Lack of integration of local heritage, folklore and culture in recreational offerings - Overreliance on volunteers and local communities - Grant and funding applications are too complex 	<p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is scope to strengthen cross-department and inter-agency collaboration, and better linkages needed with key stakeholders in the sector - More collaboration with universities for community events - Involve local leaders and communities in the design of outdoor recreation spaces <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activate unused green spaces - Expand and enhance existing locations such as the greenway to create visitor and signature experiences - Develop the River Shannon area for active travel, recreation, and tourism - Engagement with young people to build awareness and participation - Maintain and develop existing spaces and trails for safety and usability - Support small community and grass-roots projects <p>Expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage local communities and support community-led initiatives - Sports Partnership, local environmental officers and other bodies are crucial for guiding and sustaining outdoor amenities 	<p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor information sharing and collaboration across stakeholders and duplication of effort - Fear of legal liability/ litigation causing reluctance to act - National bodies and local authorities lack understanding of local community needs - Slow response to issues, resulting in prolonged closures of trails and facilities <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community groups and volunteers lack adequate support and training, threatening the sustainability of local projects - The River Shannon and Estuary are underused - Lack of participative planning with local communities resulting in amenities that don't serve their needs - Insurance issues and red tape creates barriers for organising events <p>Expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shortage in expertise and capacity to navigate complex funding applications - Over-reliance on volunteers with limited engagement from younger generations - Insufficient funding for training and equipment is limiting growth - Lack of volunteers and club leaders, affecting youth offerings and development

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active Travel developments are improving access to outdoor spaces - Targeted programmes such as Summit Sisters and Outdoor Week supporting marginalised groups - Proximity to both city and countryside - New cycling infrastructure <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration with climate action team - Diverse natural landscapes, including mountains, forests, rivers, lakes and greenways - Well maintained parks including Mungret, Castletroy and Curraghchase Forest Park <p>Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renewed perception of Limerick as a vibrant and desirable tourist destination - Branding Limerick as 'The Sporting City' and promoting the benefits of active lifestyles - Growing interest in outdoor recreation activities 	<p>Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marginalised groups face barriers to outdoor recreation due to geography, affordability, skills, and confidence - Inadequate public transport and active travel infrastructure to outdoor locations - Poor supporting infrastructure such as signage, parking, toilets and unclear access points - Concerns around antisocial behaviour and safety in parks, green spaces and trails - Lack of infrastructure and access to the River Shannon - Greenways and trails need to be better connected to local communities and settlements <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - River Shannon is tidal and protected creating restrictions for development - Weather is a challenge and outdoor recreation should be promoted beyond fair-weather conditions <p>Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing facilities are under-promoted - Promotion and marketing lack strategic planning and collaboration - Poor public awareness of outdoor facilities, trails, and activities - Lack of clear information about outdoor recreation opportunities to include limited signage, unclear access points and poor marketing 	<p>Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage farmers and landowners to address access and land use challenges - Improve connectivity between urban and rural areas and outdoor recreation - Upgrade lighting and CCTV in existing parks / trails / greenways to increase safety - More supporting infrastructure needed such as toilets, parking and signage <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing awareness and engagement with environmental, climate, and biodiversity issues and opportunity to build on this - Increased public appreciation of natural landscapes and passive outdoor enjoyment <p>Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlocked potential for local authorities and partner organisations to work together to increase visibility, engagement and participation in outdoor recreation - Diversify promotion channels beyond social media - Untapped tourism potential due to lack of infrastructure, marketing, and promotion - Local campaigns to raise awareness of Limerick's natural beauty and amenities - Education and awareness of how to engage in outdoor recreation 	<p>Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal, insurance and land ownership issues - Lack of basic skills and safety knowledge for some participants is a risk and a barrier - Safety concerns to include vandalism, antisocial behaviour, poor lighting and CCTV - Without adequate infrastructure and targeted programmes, marginalised groups are excluded from fully participating - Lack of public transport to outdoor recreation <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to balance access with conservation to prevent overcrowding and degradation of heritage sites - Unpredictable weather patterns impacting on land and water resource management as well as the management of outdoor events - Irresponsible behaviour and lack of respect for nature; issues with illegal dumping, litter and vandalism - Harm to local ecosystems from tree felling, hedgerow removal and lack of native forest planting <p>Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of awareness reinforces perceived barriers such as lack of skills or lack of confidence - Assets are 'best kept secrets', not enough promotion of the opportunities

Needs	
<p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for clear leadership and collaboration with stakeholders, including local authorities, NGBs, landowners, communities and businesses to ensure a coordinated and cohesive approach across the Limerick - Establish criteria for recreational spaces, focusing on access, population, and proximity to amenities - Local authorities need to proactively address community needs, especially in underserved areas. There is a need for a dedicated role to lead these efforts - Outdoor recreation assets should be viewed as regional assets rather than county-specific, cooperation across county lines serves the needs of tourists and recreational users - Public participation and advocacy, foster more community-led initiatives <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversify and broaden outdoor recreation experience by exploring opportunities such as: water sports hub; River Shannon development; multi-activity hubs; wild swimming; fishing; community trails; equestrian trails, signature projects; and scaling up existing projects - Audit of all existing trails, paths and greenways in the Limerick (including cross-county and long-distance trails) to create a trails development and maintenance plan - Encourage informal, community-driven outdoor participation, not just structured events - Improve infrastructure connecting urban and rural areas which includes cycling lanes, footpaths, greenways, and off-road trails, - Support communities in the development and maintenance of local outdoor spaces - Develop more green spaces in the city and urban areas - Develop civic and multi-use spaces to accommodate diverse range of activities beyond traditional sports - Develop infrastructure tailored to the needs of visitors and tourists; develop hubs that offer a mix of services (food, accommodation and activities) and civic spaces - Scaling and expanding existing projects such as the Greenway and BoxUp 	<p>Expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outdoor recreation clubs rely on volunteers, developing community expertise is essential for sustainability and growth - Development workers and funded posts to support increased activity and participation - Develop and improve data capture and analysis - Prioritise and strengthen the commercial outdoor recreation sector in Limerick. Support initiatives that ensure commercial providers have easy access to a range of support and advice - Community-led project development utilising local expertise - Integrate outdoor recreation into all county and city plans, prioritising physical activity, health, and wellbeing in infrastructure - Understanding the needs of visitors, ensuring outdoor spaces and activities cater for their needs - Consult experts in design and sustainability, adopting best practices and learning - Develop a network for outdoor clubs and groups to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing and support for sustainable development, business models, and leadership recruitment <p>Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investment is needed in promotion and awareness raising and to create a strategic communication plan, this requires dedicated resources and a single agreed information source - Promote Limerick as destination for all, offering easy access, quality amenities, and outreach to support health, wellbeing, and participation - Raise basic awareness and build confidence in outdoor recreation through education and 'try it' events like biking, fishing, and pony riding - Opportunity to establish Limerick as a leading outdoor recreation destination in Ireland - Improve engagement to raise awareness of support programmes and help communities utilise them - Evaluate the potential for Limerick to host international scale outdoor recreation events and forge links with national and international outdoor recreation bodies - Enhance understanding and appreciation of the natural landscape and attributes of Limerick

Needs	
<p>Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted efforts are needed to improve accessibility and tackle barriers faced by disadvantaged communities and marginalised groups such as lack of knowledge, skills, resources and confidence - Improve connectivity between rural and urban areas with better active travel links and public transport to outdoor recreation sites like Ballyhoura, Lough Gur, and the Greenway - Improved access points (including car parks and trail head signage) are needed across outdoor recreation sites to make trails and spaces accessible to a wider range of users - Outdoor spaces should apply universal design principles to create inclusive, user-friendly amenities catering to diverse needs - Active Cities initiative showed that antisocial behaviour issues can be resolved by changing the audience which visits the area and increasing the level of respect exhibited by visitors - Enhance safety with better lighting, CCTV, park rangers, and well-maintained facilities - Develop infrastructure for water-based activities, including boat houses, slipways, changing facilities, and more access points - Increase facilities for all ages and abilities, including spaces for families, people with disabilities, and disadvantaged groups 	<p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure all new developments include long-term maintenance plans and necessary funding for sustainability - Integrate climate, biodiversity, and sustainability into planning, using locally sourced materials and creating spaces that support biodiversity (e.g. native trees, wildflower meadows) - Prioritise natural parks over concrete structures to foster a connection with nature - Support green infrastructure and ecological corridors, linking Natura 2000 and protected sites while allowing controlled access - Educate users from childhood on responsible recreation, including Leave No Trace principles - Support the development of infrastructure and services to enable low carbon and active travel - Incorporate biodiversity measures as standard practice and raise awareness through education, signage, and wildlife-friendly trails - Address environmental challenges like river pollution and dumping, and encourage sustainable practices across recreational spaces, including waste management

Strategic Themes and Priorities

Leadership

To create a more coordinated, cohesive approach at national and local level to ensure best use of our resources

Our ambition is to establish a clear leadership structure at county level and ensure funding is better aligned with national and county priorities. The Department of Rural and Community Development will be the lead government department and Sport Ireland will assume a co-leadership role. Comhairle na Tuithe will retain the oversight and advisory role. At local level, our ambition is to achieve a more planned and coordinated approach, with the introduction of a Limerick Outdoor Recreation Committee and Plan. This will ensure that county needs are identified and prioritised, as well as aligned with the national strategy.

Opportunities

To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors, especially young people and under-represented groups

Our ambition is to increase the number of people active in the outdoors and to support a rise in physical activity levels, with an increased focus on those with the lowest participation levels. Our ambition is also to expand the role of outdoor activities in formal education and early learning.

Awareness

To create awareness of our outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly

Our ambition is to significantly raise people's awareness of where to go and what to do in the outdoors. Our ambition is to ensure they understand how to enjoy the outdoors respectfully and are fully aware of their personal responsibilities

Leadership

Leadership

Awareness

Awareness

Environment

Environment

Opportunities

Opportunities

Expertise

Expertise

Access

Access

Expertise

Expertise

Our ambition is to equip those working in this area with the skills and expertise awareness of where to go and what to do in the outdoors. Our ambition is to ensure they understand how to enjoy the outdoors respectfully and are fully aware of their personal responsibilities.

Environment

To protect the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation, in keeping with best practice management of landscape and habitats

Our ambition is to protect our landscapes, habitats and built heritage by better planning where and how we develop our outdoor recreation infrastructure. Given the increase in visitor numbers, our ambition is to develop visitor management approaches for Ireland that prevent adverse impacts to sensitive habitats and species.

Access

To protect and improve access to the outdoors, for the benefit of all

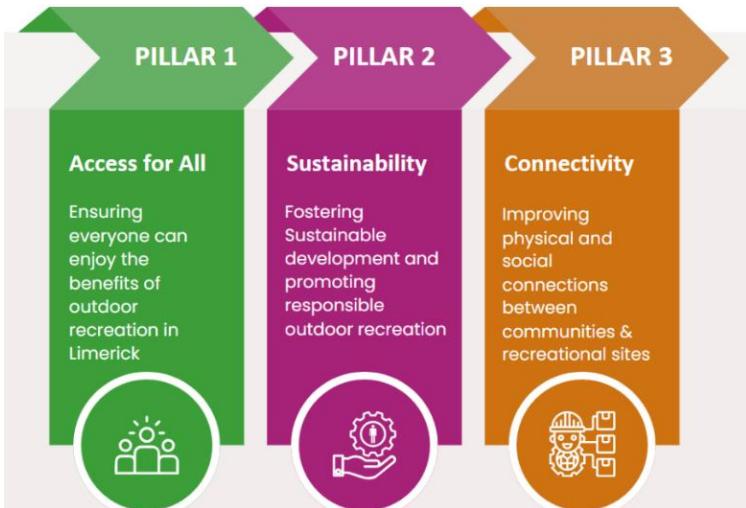
Our ambition is to work with landowners to protect and enhance the access that is currently facilitated and seek to improve access in other locations.

Ways will be explored such as through the expansion of the Walks Scheme and changes in legislation. Our ambition is also to change behaviour, so when people access the outdoors, that they do so with respect for other people, care for the environment and with responsibility for their own actions.

Action Plan

The vision, '*Limerick Outdoors: inspiring exploration, connecting community, celebrating heritage and protecting nature*', articulates the core objectives and guiding principles of this Action Plan.

The Plan sets out to achieve the strategic priorities and objectives across the key themes from *Embracing Ireland's Outdoors*: Leadership; Environment; Awareness; Opportunities; Infrastructure and Access; and Expertise. It is underpinned by three pillars: access for all; sustainability; and connectivity, which will be a central focus within all actions and outcomes.



The Limerick Outdoor Recreation Plan adopts a collaborative approach with shared responsibility for outdoor recreation and has been developed with extensive stakeholder consultation. Among the agreed actions in *Embracing Ireland's Outdoor* is the establishment of a County Outdoor Recreation Committee and an Outdoor Recreation Stakeholder Forum for each county. The roles and membership of the various structures within Limerick are set out below:

- **Limerick Outdoor Recreation Project Team:** A project team of key outdoor recreation stakeholders was formed to lead the development of the Plan.
- **Limerick Outdoor Recreation Committee:** A partnership of primary decision-makers and key stakeholders in the development and management of outdoor recreation activities will be established as a primary action of the plan. The committee will share responsibility for its implementation.
- **Limerick Outdoor Recreation Forum:** A forum that is open to all stakeholders and participants in outdoor recreation, which will take place two or more times per annum.

This structure will be best placed to ensure that value for money is achieved from the significant levels of public investment in outdoor recreation. The Limerick Outdoor Recreation Committee and Stakeholder Forum will ensure that everyone can have their say, county needs are prioritised as well as being aligned with the national strategy.

Leadership



Leadership and Collaboration Action Plan

Feedback from the community consultation demonstrated that there is growing interest and demand for outdoor recreation in Limerick. There has been significant investment in outdoor recreation and growing collaboration between the local authority and key stakeholders. However, effective delivery of outdoor recreation in Limerick requires collective action. Through the development of the plan and over the course of its implementation a more coordinated approach will be fostered.

Objective: To establish a clear leadership structure for outdoor recreation to deliver a coordinated and cohesive approach to outdoor recreation across Limerick that meets the needs of both local communities and visitors.

Action 1: Limerick Outdoor Recreation Committee embedded as the leadership structure for outdoor recreation across Limerick

Description: The Limerick Outdoor Recreation Committee will lead on the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan, adopting a proactive and innovative approach to addressing challenges and serving the needs of local communities and underrepresented groups. The Project Team members will all be retained as part of the Committee alongside new partners with expertise in other areas e.g. environment.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
LCCC	LORC	Local population and visitors	2025–2030	Establish clear criteria for planning and development of outdoor recreation

Action 2: Secure dedicated resource i.e. Outdoor Recreation Officer to drive forward outdoor recreation participation and opportunities in Limerick

Description: The Outdoor Recreation Officer will support the management and sustainable development of outdoor recreation across Limerick, engaging with communities and stakeholders to increase participation particularly from disadvantaged groups.

LSP	LORC	Local population	2025	Secure a funded outdoor recreation officer post
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Abbreviation	Meaning	Abbreviation	Meaning
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland	NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
LAWPRO	The Local Authority Waters Programme	NTA	National Transport Authority
LCCC	Limerick City & County Council	OPW	Office of Public Works
LDCs	Local Development Companies	ORO	Outdoor Recreation Officer
LORC	Limerick Outdoor Recreation Committee	RRO	Rural Recreation Officer
LSP	Limerick Sports Partnership	TMO	Trails Management Officer
NGBs	Non-governing Bodies		



Environment

Environment Action Plan

Outdoor recreation takes place in the natural environment, a fragile resource that must be protected. While this plan aims to improve opportunities and participation, it must be implemented in a way that preserves and protects landscapes, habitats and built heritage.

Objective: Sustainable development of outdoor recreation in Limerick promotes the protection of the natural environment through careful and informed planning and management, in line with best practice and legal obligations.

Action 3: Support the development and implementation of infrastructure and services that promote public transport, low-carbon and active travel options

Description: Connecting residents and visitors to outdoor recreation through healthier and more sustainable travel options.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
LCCC	LDCs; NPWS; Local Link; NTA; LROC; Coillte; N/M20 Project team	Local population	2025-2030	Development, creation and maintenance of active travel routes e.g. 31Km Active travel proposed as part of N/M20 project. Interventions which reduce congestion, lower emissions and connect communities e.g. bicycle parking; bike repair stations.

Action 4: Consider the environmental sustainability of all proposed outdoor recreation provision and seek to minimise the impact of outdoor recreation activity

Description: Promoting environmental design to deliver initiatives and projects that encourage biodiversity and long-term sustainability. To include the promotion of key guidelines and resources produced for organising outdoor activity events in Ireland.

LCCC; LORC	Coillte; LDCs; NPWS; LAWPRO; Community Groups; TMOs	Recreational users and local communities	2025-2030	Enhance or create green infrastructure and green corridors; highlight good air and sound quality; wash down kits for kayaks; natural play parks
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Awareness



Awareness Action Plan

The consultation findings highlighted that promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities in Limerick is limited and fragmented. Lack of awareness of available opportunities and how to access outdoor recreation was identified as a key barrier to participation in outdoor recreation.

Objective: To increase awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities in Limerick among both residents and visitors.

Action 5: Promote Limerick as a destination for outdoor recreation, supporting the health and wellbeing of communities

Description: Showcasing Limerick as a prime destination for outdoor recreation and fostering outdoor recreation as an everyday occurrence for the local population.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
LCCC; LSP; LORC; Tourism Bodies; LDCs	Fáilte Ireland; Munster Vales; TMOs; Coillte	Local population	2025 - 2030	Awareness raising activities and signage.

Action 6: Promote education and awareness regarding Outdoor Recreation

Description: Create an understanding of the importance of respecting nature and outdoor spaces from an early age and foster lifelong habits of environmental stewardship. This should align with responsible recreation principles such as the "Leave No Trace" campaign.

LSP; LORC	ORO (when secured); Youth Groups; Schools; Leave No Trace; Transition Year Programmes; Third Level Projects; Coillte	Children and young people; Schools; Colleges; Community Centres; LDCs; Education and Youth Services residents; Active Communities	2025–2030	Interactive education trail; geodome outdoor classrooms
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Action 7: Signpost participants to Get Ireland Active website, raise awareness of this central resource and work towards its further development through provision of quality information

Description: A cohesive approach to promoting outdoor recreation that provides clear and accessible messaging through agreed information sources to encourage participation.

LORC; ORO when secured	Tourism Bodies; TMOs; LSP; Community Groups; NGBs; LDCs; LCCC; Coillte	Local population; National and International Visitors	2025-2030	Collaborating with regional stakeholders to enhance the Get Ireland Active Database as a key information resource.
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Opportunities



Opportunities Action Plan

There is a wide range of opportunities for outdoor recreation on offer across Limerick, which will continue to grow and develop with the implementation of this plan. However, it is recognised that participation levels and provisions of opportunities are not uniform across Limerick, highlighting the need to support people, especially under-represented groups, to be more active outdoors.

Objective: To expand and maintain high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities while increasing participation for all, with a particular focus on increasing engagement among young people and under-represented groups

Action 8: Broaden and layer the outdoor recreation experience across Limerick

Description: There is an opportunity to diversify the range of activities on offer and broaden the experience of outdoor recreation on offer in Limerick in both urban and rural areas.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
LORC; ORO (when secured)	LSP; Outdoor Recreation Forum (when established); NGBs; Tourism Bodies; Coillte	Local population; tourists and visitors; youth groups	2025-2030	Water sports hub; develop outdoor recreation opportunities along the River Shannon; multi-activity hubs; signature experiences; Taster days and 'try it' events.

Action 9: Creation of a community trail development and maintenance plan

Description: Identify trail and path maintenance priorities, new trail development opportunities and resourcing commitments⁹.

LORC; ORO (when secured)	RRO; LCCC; LDCs; TMOs; Coillte	Local population; local and visiting recreational users	2025-2030	Audit to be carried out of existing trails, paths and greenways in Limerick; development of new and existing trails
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Action 10: Support the development of new and existing infrastructure

Description: Upgrading current infrastructure to enhance the quality, accessibility and sustainability of facilities to meet the evolving needs of communities and realise user benefits.

LCCC; LDCs; LORC	RRO; TMOs; LDCs; Coillte	Local population; local and visiting recreational users	2025-2030	Signature experiences; water sports storage and changing facilities; CCTV and lighting; feasibility studies
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⁹ 'A Community Trail is defined as one which: 'Connects communities to local outdoor spaces [amenities], including urban spaces and may also connect different communities together e.g. connects two villages. A community trail may also be a linear route or short looped walk from a town/ village'

Action 11: Expand and develop the range of outdoor recreation events across Limerick

Description: Expand the offering of outdoor recreation events across Limerick and evaluate the potential for Limerick to host larger events, including those of a national and international scale, while establishing connections with relevant organisations.

LORC: ORO (when secured); Tourism Bodies	National and International Outdoor Recreation Bodies; LCCC; LDCs; Coillte	Local population and visitors	2025-2030	Outdoor festivals and competitions
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Infrastructure and Access Action Plan

Participation in outdoor infrastructure requires access to the land and waterways. Lack of clarity around access and ownership and irresponsible behaviour can create barriers to access and outdoor recreation. There is a need to protect and enhance access to our outdoor spaces.

Objective: To increase and improve access to the outdoors for all in Limerick

Action 12: Protect and improve access to the outdoors

Description: Focus on maintaining and improving access to outdoor spaces across Limerick, working collaboratively with landowners to allow people to enjoy and benefit from these spaces while promoting sustainable and respectful engagement from all users.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
RRO; ORO (when secured); LDCs	Landowners; TMOs; Community Groups; Limerick Outdoor Recreation Forum; Coillte; Waterways Ireland; ESB	Community Groups; Recreational Users; Recreational Groups and Clubs	2025-2026	Public education campaigns; signage; creating new access points; additional walks registered on National Walk Scheme

Action 13: Support the development and expansion of programmes and projects aimed at increasing outdoor recreation engagement among under-represented groups

Description: Address barriers to participation and create sustainable and equitable opportunities to benefit from the outdoors.

LSP; LORC; ORO (when secured)	Education and Youth Services; Sports and Outdoor Recreation Groups; NGBs; Community Groups; LDCs; Coillte	Under-represented groups	2025-2026	Inclusive multi-use outdoor spaces; adaptive bikes; outdoor recreation programmes aimed at marginalised groups
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Expertise



Expertise Action Plan

The growing interest and demand for outdoor recreation in the last decade presents a need to improve outdoor recreation practices. From the consultation, it is clear there is a need for more support within the sector, particularly for local groups, clubs, volunteers and organisations.

Objective: Support for those operating in the outdoor recreation sector and improve knowledge, skills and expertise.

Action 14: Development of an Outdoor Recreation Forum for outdoor recreation groups

Description: A network to encourage collaboration and information sharing between clubs and groups and for all stakeholders and participants to have their say, that is connected but distinct from the Outdoor Recreation Committee. This is an open forum for all stakeholders and participants to attend and awareness raising will be fundamental to achieving this.

Lead delivery organisation	Stakeholders	Primary target groups	Delivery timescale	Example projects / programmes/ initiatives
LSP; LORC; ORO (when secured)	RRO; Community Groups; Outdoor Recreation Forum (when established);	Outdoor Recreation Forum	2025-2030	Shared spaces and facilities; training and development

Action 15: Support and strengthen the commercial outdoor recreation sector in Limerick

Description: Working in partnership with commercial providers and supporting initiatives that ensure providers have access to a range of support and advice to foster growth in the sector and enhancing the quality and diversity of services offered.

LORC; ORO (when secured); Tourism Bodies; LDCs	NGBs; LCCC; LDCs; Outdoor Recreation Forum (when established)	Outdoor activity providers; Outdoor Recreation Forum	2025-2030	Infrastructure upgrades; multi-activity hubs; signature projects
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Action 16: Support capacity building, sustainment and growth among outdoor recreation clubs and community volunteers

Description: Strengthen the skills and capabilities of local clubs and volunteers, supporting them to deliver high-quality outdoor activities and programmes.

LORC; ORO (when secured); NGBs; LSP	TMOs; LDCs	Local population	2025-2030	Community-driven participation initiatives
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Action 17: Exploratory analysis to consider potential water-based recreation development opportunities

Description: A focus on understanding the potential benefits, environmental impact, challenges and costs associated with water-based recreational development

LORC; LCCC	LAWPRO; IFI; OPW; Waterways Ireland; NPWS; LSP; NGBs; Outdoor Recreation Forum (when established);		2025-2030	Feasibility study; stakeholder working group; development options analysis; waterways strategy for Limerick
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