

Press release

Our Rural Future: Minister Humphreys announces over €209,000 for the upgrade of 23 walking trails

From [Department of Rural and Community Development \(/en/organisation/department-of-rural-and-community-development/\)](/en/organisation/department-of-rural-and-community-development/).

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- funding to enhance mountain trails, forest walks, heritage trails and bog walks
- investment under the Walks Scheme designed to boost outdoor recreation and rural tourism
- walking trails to be 're-routed' as part of initiative to improve safety

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, has today (21 June 2023) announced funding of over €209,000 to upgrade and enhance 23 walking trails across the country.

The funding, under the Walks Scheme, will improve trail surfaces and deliver additional seating and signage for the benefit of walkers, tourists and families alike.

A number of trails and walks will also be 're-routed' to improve their safety and to protect the rural countryside.

The initiative is designed to boost outdoor recreation and adventure tourism and to enhance some of the country's most popular outdoor trails.

Under the Walks Scheme, funding is provided to farmers and other landholders to maintain the trails that travel through their land. Funding is also provided to local development companies for the management of the scheme and the upkeep of the trails.

Among the schemes funding projects, Minister Humphreys said:

- Co. Offaly: Offaly Way - Maintenance and repair of 2 pedestrian bridges - €10,000
- Co. Kerry: Glanageenty Loops - Provision of Safety Fencing to protect the trail - €10,000
- Co. Roscommon: Lung Lough Gara Way - Installation of boardwalk across a bog section to improve walking experience - €10,000
- Co. Mayo: Croagh Patrick Heritage Trail - Reroute at Knockraha with relocation of an existing walkway bridge and drainage installed - €10,000
- Co. Waterford: St. Declan's Way – Resurfacing of trail and installation of drainage at Cush of Grange - €10,000
- Co. Cork: Slí Gaeltacht Mhuscraí - Works include cutting back growth from path edges, installation of fencing, pedestrian gates and resurfacing of a short re-route of the trail - €10,000

“Our walkways and outdoor trails really showcase the unique beauty of our rural towns and villages.

“They are hugely popular assets among families, hikers, cyclists and tourists alike and it's therefore so important that we continuously maintain and protect them.

“So today, I'm delighted to announce this funding of over €209,000 under my department's Walks Scheme.

“This funding will enhance 23 of our most popular walking trails across the country.

“I'm pleased too that these projects will be delivered through local contractors and workers, therefore providing a boost to our rural economies.

“This funding, along with my recent announcement of the Walks Scheme’s expansion, builds on the unprecedented investment in our outdoor amenities, underpinned by our most ambitious rural development policy in decades – ‘Our Rural Future’.”

The Minister concluded:

“Outdoor recreation tourism is a growing sector internationally, and has the potential to have major economic spin-off benefits for our rural towns and villages.

“I would encourage everyone to visit their local trails to see the fantastic work that is being done in conjunction with our farmers and landowners.

“A visit to your local trail also gives you the opportunity to enjoy the fresh air, beautiful views and the peace of mind that being in the outdoors brings.”

The projects being funded are led by local development companies in collaboration with landowners, Community Trail Management Organisations and other stakeholders.

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The Walks Scheme Development Fund supports projects that require more extensive work, which would be additional to ongoing maintenance. Over the last two years the department has provided funding of over €400,000 for 48 projects under the fund.

Along with the recent announcement of a major expansion of the Walks Scheme, this funding will support the growth of outdoor recreation across rural Ireland and will provide high quality recreation opportunities which are key commitments of the new ‘Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors’, National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023 – 2027.

Notes

Our Rural Future

Our Rural Future is the whole-of-government policy for rural Ireland for the period 2021-2025. It represents a new milestone in the approach to rural development policy for Ireland and adopts a more strategic, ambitious and holistic approach to investing in and maximising opportunities for rural areas.

The Walks Scheme

The Walks Scheme facilitates the development and maintenance of key walking trails by private landholders. The scheme is administered by 20 local development companies (LDCs) who deliver the scheme in their area on behalf of the department.

The department funds 21 Rural Recreation Officers (RROs) in these LDCs, with a contribution from Fáilte Ireland, to assist with the delivery of the Scheme and support other rural recreation initiatives at a local level.

There is currently approval in principle for 80 trails to be included on the Walks Scheme. To date, 64 trails have been brought onto the Scheme with work underway to bring the remaining trails onto the Scheme as soon as possible.

On 10 February 2023 Minister Humphreys announced a further expansion of the Scheme by opening a call for expressions of interest for new trails. This major initiative will support the growth of outdoor recreation across rural Ireland by increasing the number of trails on the Scheme from 80 to 150 trails over the next 2 years. This is in line with the recently published Embracing Ireland's Outdoors – the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027, which committed to further expanding the Walks Scheme to 150 trails by end of 2024.

[More information on the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027. \(/en/policy-information/43eee-embracing-irelands-outdoors-national-outdoor-recreation-strategy-2023-2027/\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/43eee-embracing-irelands-outdoors-national-outdoor-recreation-strategy-2023-2027/)

Walk Scheme Expansion Expressions of Interest

The department has opened a call for expressions of interest from LDCs for new trails and substantial extensions to existing trails. Potential applicants (for example: trail management committees, community groups, local authorities, and other similar entities) are advised to make contact with the relevant LDCs in respect of trails that are eligible for inclusion in the scheme. The closing date for EOIs is 23 June 2023.

Walks Scheme Development Fund

Criteria for the funding:

- maximum €10,000 funding per project
- consideration will only be given to requests for funding for approved Walks Scheme trails
- the local development companies must demonstrate the necessity of the works for the continued good functioning of the trail
- the works must be completed within the calendar year

Details of projects funded are available in the document below.



Walks Scheme Development Fund 2023

[Download \(https://assets.gov.ie/261256/17c1400e-02e8-4340-b2e4-f14e07cd8deb.pdf\)](https://assets.gov.ie/261256/17c1400e-02e8-4340-b2e4-f14e07cd8deb.pdf)

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