

WALK NI

WALKING IN
NORTHERN IRELAND



JANUARY 2023

WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2023/2024

Introduction:

WalkNI.com attracted 302,809 users from April 2022 – January 2023 confirming its position as the definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland.

With 60% of visits from Northern Ireland, 23% from Great Britain and 11% from the Republic of Ireland it is clear the website is an important platform for locals and tourists alike.

It is also clear walking brings significant tourism and local participation benefits:

Local Participation:

- 7 in 10 adults visit the outdoors each week¹
- 91% of the most common activities taken in the outdoors is for short walks and dog walks²

Tourism:

- Walking or rambling is the most popular activity (36%) undertaken by Northern Irish residents on domestic overnight trips³

¹ People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland 2020-2021, ORNI

² People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland 2020-2021, ORNI

³ Northern Ireland Domestic Tourism 2018, NISRA

- Hiking or cross-country walking was the most popular sporting activity (12%) undertaken by external overnight visitors whilst in Northern Ireland.⁴

WalkNI.com Key Stats:

The following statistics clearly highlight the reach and engagement level of WalkNI.com:

- 302,809 users (April 2022 – Jan 2023)
- 736,001 pageviews (April 2022 – Jan 2023)
- 35,083 social media followers (across Facebook, Twitter & Instagram)
- 23,805 e-newsletter subscribers

Rationale and Benefits:

WalkNI.com is delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI), a not-for-profit organisation with the vision to create ‘a more active and healthy society appreciating the outdoors.’

In recent years, ORNI has transformed from an entirely core funded position to now delivering its strategic not-for-profit role through a [variety of arrangements](#) including delivering for Strategic Partnerships, Consortia, Service Level Agreements and on a project by project basis. In 2016 / 2017, ORNI successfully established the WalkNI Marketing Consortium to ensure local authorities could continue to benefit from the success of WalkNI.com. The consortium is therefore entering into its seventh year. By continuing to contribute to the WalkNI Marketing Consortium – local authorities can reap the following benefits:

Solid Foundation:	Significant investment has already been made to establish a website, e-marketing and social media channels.
Engaged Visitors:	As indicated by ‘WalkNI Key Stats’ the website / brand has an extremely strong engagement from the target market.
Combined Resources:	The small investments from a number of local authority partners can be combined to produce an outcome greater than the sum of its parts.
Cross Sell:	There will be opportunities to cross sell between destinations e.g. visitors to the Mourne Mountains will be able to learn about the Sperrins and vice versa
Redeveloped Website:	A redeveloped WalkNI.com was launched in 2019 providing an enhanced user experience, responsiveness across platforms (mobile, tablet, desktop) and availing of the latest interactive mapping which has recently been updated. A new mini website has also been developed for the Ulster Way which now includes interactive mapping, suggested itineraries, trail updates and more.

⁴ External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2016, NISRA

Why Outdoor Recreation NI?

The benefits of ORNI delivering the project are:

- Not-for-profit:** ORNI's not-for-profit status means that all the investment will be retained within this project
- Product Knowledge:** ORNI has significant knowledge of Northern Ireland's walking portfolio gained through its strategic role in walking development, management and promotion since 1999 and more specifically since the launch of WalkNI.com in 2006
- Track Record:** ORNI has been successfully delivering the MountainBikeNI Consortium since 2012 and the WalkNI Marketing Consortium since 2016

For more information on Outdoor Recreation NI see www.outdoorrecreationni.com

Partnership Approach:

Funding from DAERA (NIEA's) Environment Fund ensures that all Councils receive free walk listings on WalkNI.com. Councils that wish to **proactively promote** their walking offer to the local population and tourists can avail of the activity of the WalkNI Marketing Consortium. The two available packages are outlined below:

Regional Partner

Definition:

An area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of:

- Local walkers
- Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is a key part of a wider itinerary

National Partner

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- Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is the primary reason to visit
- Walking Clubs from Republic of Ireland

Marketing Activity

All Councils receive WalkNI.com Website Listings which also includes:

- Annual audit of all route listing information on the website
- Regular content management of the website e.g. news items, events etc.

However, those investing in the WalkNI Marketing Consortium receive proactive inclusion within the following marketing activity. It is this key activity which drives visitors towards specific sections of the website and therefore to visit specific areas of Northern Ireland.

Marketing Activity	Regional	National
<p>Northern Ireland Promotional Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WalkNI Blogs - http://walkni.com/blog/ - min 12 blogs per year ○ WalkNI E-zines - min 12 e-zines per year to 11,677 NI subscribers ○ WalkNI Social Media Posts to an audience of 31,200 followers from NI • PR in Regional and National Press via WalkNI Awards and other initiatives • Liaise with relevant social influencers to raise the profile of WalkNI.com with their followers 	Y	Y
<p>Republic of Ireland Visitors Promotional Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion within <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WalkNI Blogs - http://walkni.com/blog/ - min 12 blogs per year ○ WalkNI E-zines - min 12 e-zines per year to 3,356 ROI subscribers ○ WalkNI Social Media Posts to an audience of 3,883 followers from ROI 	Y	Y*
<p>Walking Club Promotional Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion via the Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs to their 34 walking clubs 	N	Y

* National Partners will receive double the level of inclusion within promotional activity than Regional Partners

Accountability:

The WalkNI.com consortium will be managed by ORNI's Head of Communications and Training who will:

- Agree an annual work programme including KPIs
- Provide Quarterly progress reports
- Hold two meetings per year to report on progress and discuss future promotional activity

Support Required:

Partner Level	2023-2024
National	£6,890
Regional	£3,617

If you have any questions or queries regarding this proposal, please contact:

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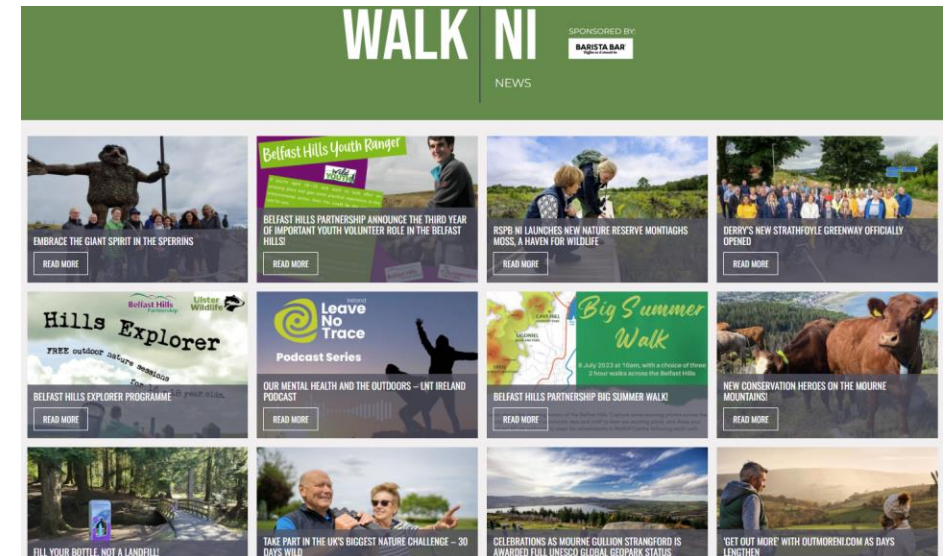
WALKNI CONSORTIUM – KEY STATS 2022/2023

WEBSITE

- Website Visitors:
 - 366,839 Users
 - Drop of 37%** on previous year. This can be understood in the context of Covid-19, which led to the largest surge in website visitors WalkNI has ever had. An audience of 1/3 of a million users per year however illustrates the continued power of WalkNI to draw outdoor enthusiasts to the website.

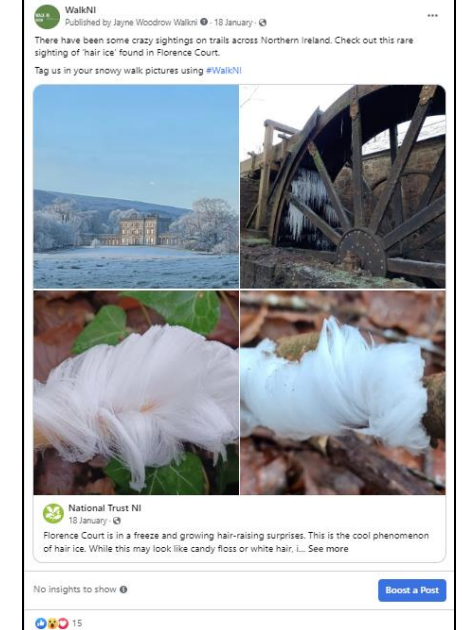
- Website Sessions:
 - 491,380 sessions

- Website visitor by Location:
 - NI – 136,516 users
 - GB – 138,656
 - ROI – 40,639




SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social Media followers:
 - 36,800+ followers across all social channels
 - Increase of 6.4% on previous year
- Following by channel:
 - Facebook – 24,005 followers (increase of 1.7% on previous year)
 - Twitter – 6,759 followers (decrease of 2% on previous year)
 - Instagram – 6,036 followers (increase of 19% on previous year)



E-ZINE DATABASE

- Total subscribers – 23,143 subscribers
- NI Database:
 - 11,427 subscribers
 - Monthly themed e-newsletters including bespoke campaign emails
- ROI Database:
 - 3,282 subscribers



Get your walking boots ready and discover the beauty of the Sperrins

This September 2022 and March 2023 is the perfect opportunity to get out and explore the Sperrin Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB).

Not only will you enjoy discovering a destination filled with unique tourism experiences, but a great choice of walks ranging from leisurely strolls to more demanding longer walks, all in small groups, guided by experienced leaders.

[Find out more](#)



Mid Ulster Council Launch Dog Foul Campaign at Lough Fea

Mid Ulster Council in partnership with the Dogs Trust and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, recently launched the Walk this Way campaign to tackle dog foul at local beauty spot, Lough Fea. As part of the campaign, the popular dog walking route at Lough Fea now has seen new maps installed to show where bins are placed, new signage highlighting length of the walk and where to find bins as well as the addition of new bins to the route.

[Find out more](#)



Dungannon Park - Something to brighten your walk!

Recent visitors to Dungannon Park may have noticed a brand-new mural brightening up the pathway along their journey! The colourful mural was completed by mother and daughter team, Pat and Elizabeth England. Pat, a Mid Ulster District Council employee, was the driving force behind the project, and was assisted in the design and production of the mural by Elizabeth.




Mid Ulster District Council Support Big Clean Event

Mid Ulster District Council is delighted to support those who wish to take part in the Big Clean Event by loaning litter pickers, providing bin bags and collecting the rubbish after the clean ups.

If you want to follow this great example and organise a Big Spring Clean in your area, please email recycling@midulstercouncil.org or call 03000 132 132.

[Find out more](#)



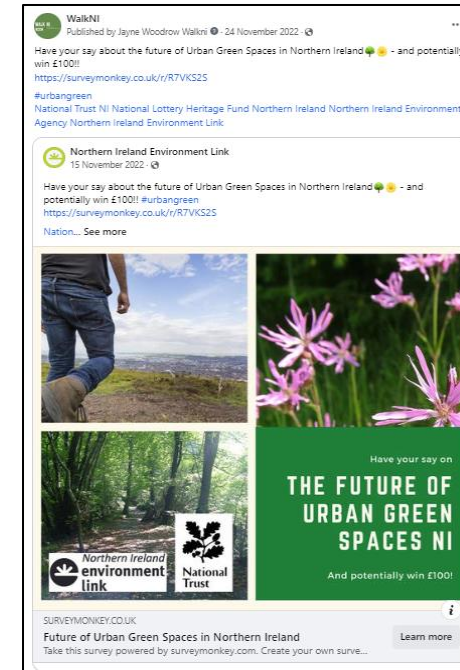
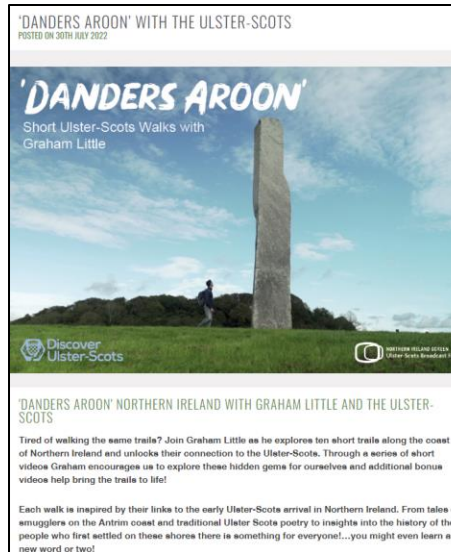
Giant's making their mark on trails in the Sperrins

Have you met the trio of giants of the Sperrins? This interrelated trio of unique art pieces have been created by world acclaimed artist Thomas Dambo.

The art pieces are part of the Sperrin Sculpture Trail being delivered by Derry City and Strabane District Council in partnership with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council. The aim of this project is to drive rural tourism and investment in the local natural and built heritage.

CAMPAIGNS & SUPPORT

- 📌 WalkNI Awards 2022 – Over 1,300 Public votes
- 📌 ‘Danders Aroon’ Ulster-Scot walks with Graham Little
- 📌 ‘Right Side of Outside’ campaign, 'Live Here Love Here' campaign and NIEA's 'The Future of Greenspaces' campaign
- 📌 Beginning to create downloadable GPX files for walking trails



A photograph of two hikers standing on a wooden bridge, looking out over a lush green forest. A waterfall is visible in the background. The hiker on the left is wearing a red jacket and a blue floral backpack. The hiker on the right is wearing a purple jacket and a green backpack. The scene is filled with dense foliage and trees.

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