

WALK NI

WALKING IN
NORTHERN IRELAND



APRIL 2022

WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2022/2023

Introduction:

WalkNI.com attracted 584,239 users from the 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022, a 29% increase on 2019-2021 (the most comparable time period outside of 2020-2021 when figures are skewed because of Covid-19). This increase confirms WalkNI's position as the definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland.

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

It is clear that 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:

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

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

- Walking or rambling is the most popular activity (36%) undertaken by Northern Irish residents on domestic overnight trips³
- Hiking or cross-country walking was the most popular sporting activity (12%) undertaken by external overnight visitors whilst in Northern Ireland.⁴
- During 2019, of all estimated external overnight trips to NI, 25% of overnight trips were from residents of the Republic of Ireland⁵

WalkNI.com Key Stats:

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

- 584,239 users (2021-2022)
- 1,608,018 pageviews (2021-2022)
- 34,942 social media subscribers (across Facebook, Twitter & Instagram)
- 24,495 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 happier, healthier society where enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors improves wellbeing.'

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 sixth 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.

³ Northern Ireland Domestic Tourism 2018, NISRA

⁴ External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2016, NISRA

⁵ External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2019, 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

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 key part of a wider itinerary
- 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
Northern Ireland Promotional Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion within:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ WalkNI Blogs - http://walkni.com/blog/○ WalkNI E-zines - min 12 e-zines per year to 11,866 NI contacts○ WalkNI Social Media Posts• PR in Regional and National Press via WalkNI Awards and other initiatives such as the launch of the new Ulster Way website• Liaise with relevant social influencers to raise the profile of WalkNI.com with their followers	Y	Y
Republic of Ireland Visitors Promotional Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion within<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ WalkNI Blogs - http://walkni.com/blog/○ WalkNI E-zines - min 12 e-zines per year to 3,465 ROI contacts○ WalkNI Social Media Posts	Y	Y*
Walking Club Promotional Activity <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 Marketing Manager who will:

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

Support Required:

Partner Level	2022-2023
National	£7,235
Regional	£3,617

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

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A person wearing a blue jacket and a backpack stands on a rocky ridge, looking out over a vast landscape. In the foreground, there are large, grey rocks. The middle ground features a calm lake reflecting the sky. The background consists of rolling hills and mountains under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The text 'WALK NI' is prominently displayed in large white letters, with a vertical line separating 'WALK' and 'NI'. Below 'WALK NI', the words 'WALKING IN' and 'NORTHERN IRELAND' are written in smaller white letters.

WALK NI

WALKING IN
NORTHERN IRELAND

WALKNI CONSORTIUM

KEY STATS 2021/2022

WEBSITE

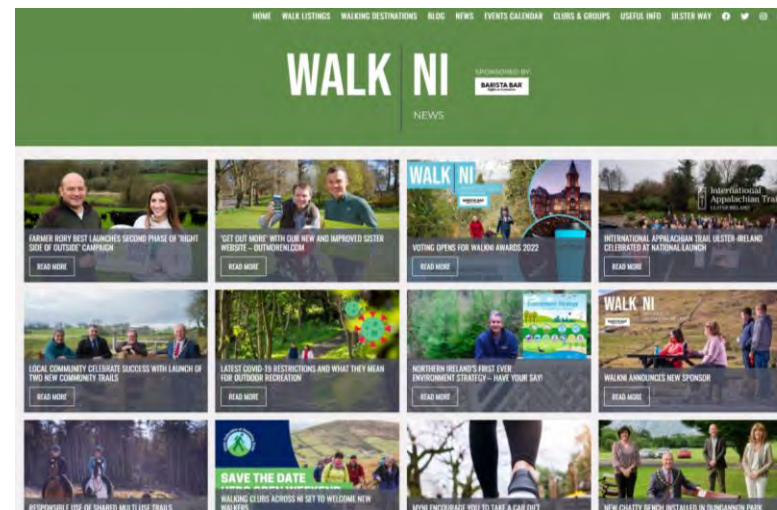
- Website visitors
 - WalkNI visitor numbers reached 584,239 in 2021-2022 – a small 10.8% decrease from the previous year of 655,427.

This year has seen a lot of changes and impacts on the website. Some major changes this year include removal of the IAT Ulster-Ireland webpage from within WalkNI as well as the ongoing impact of COVID 19 which saw a surge in 2020 as people emerged from COVID. **We therefore are best comparing to 2019-2020 where we can see this year's figures (based against a more comparable year) are up by 29%.**

- Website visitor by location:
 - NI – **316,207**
 - GB – **210,043** (significant increase in visitors to the website from Scotland 144% increase, Wales 144% increase and the Isle of Man 48% increase on previous year)
 - ROI – **66,156** (increase of 1.5%)

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social Media followers:
34,588 followers (**increase of 15.6% on previous year**)
- Following by channel:
 - Facebook – 23,596 followers (16% increase on previous year)
 - Twitter – 6,898 followers (16% increase on previous year)



E-ZINE

- Monthly themed e-newsletters including bespoke campaign emails.
- Significant pause on e-zines to ROI database due to lockdown restrictions impacting on travel.



CAMPAIGNS & PROMOTION

- ‘Danders Aroon’ with Graham Little and the Ulster Scots
- ‘Right Side of Outside’
- International Appalachian Trail Ulster-Ireland
- WalkNI Sponsorship – Barista Bar
- WalkNI Awards 2022 – 1,300 public votes
- National Walking Month – May 2022
- Launch of OutmoreNI Campaign



WALKNI COVID COMMUNICATION

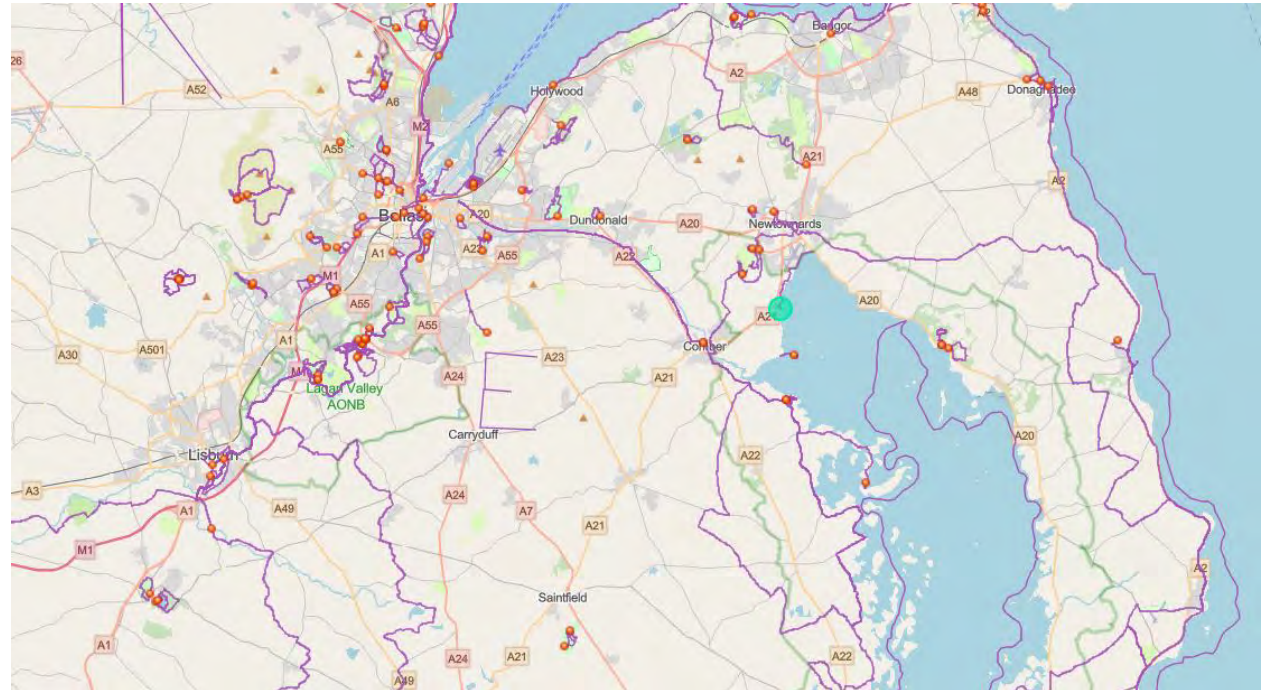
- Communication about location restrictions and their impact on walkers has been an ongoing update on WalkNI
- Promotion to walkers from ROI was paused but has now resumed as travel restrictions eased.

COMMUNITY TRAIL AWARENESS

- Preparation meeting took place to plan how WalkNI would Communicate information on community trails walkers can explore. This message is a legacy message from COVID lockdown restrictions.

TRANSFER OF WALK DATA TO ARC GIS

- Extensive work has taken place behind the scenes to transfer all walk data to ARC GIS this project has also included a review of all walks on the website.





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