

WALK NI

WALKING IN
NORTHERN IRELAND



03/06/2020

WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2020/2021

Introduction:

A newly redesigned and mobile friendly WalkNI.com attracted 452,580 users making 675,190 web visits in 2019/2020 confirming its position as the definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland.

With 53% of visits from Northern Ireland, 34% from Great Britain, 11% from 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:

- 50% of all adults in Northern Ireland indicated that they participated in walking for recreation at least once within the last year, increasing from 36% in 2011/12¹.
- 63% reported going outdoors for exercise everyday during COVID-19 lockdown, a much higher proportion than the 28% reported in the annual household survey (CHS 2017/18)²
- 51% expect to spend more free time outdoors than they did pre-lockdown³

¹ Continuous Household Survey 2017/18

² Engaging with the Outdoors during COVID-19 Lockdown in Northern Ireland 2020, ORNI

³ Engaging with the Outdoors during COVID-19 Lockdown in Northern Ireland 2020, ORNI

Tourism:

- Walking or rambling is the most popular activity (36%) undertaken by Northern Irish residents on domestic overnight trips⁴
- Hiking or cross-country walking was the most popular sporting activity (12%) undertaken by external overnight visitors whilst in Northern Ireland.⁵
- Intention by the Republic of Ireland market to take a short break post COVID-19 lockdown continues to increase – 48% intend to take a short break in Ireland / Abroad in the next 6 months⁶

WalkNI.com Key Stats:

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

- 452,580 users (2019/2020)
- 675,190 web visits (2019/2020)
- 25,439 social media subscribers (across Facebook, Twitter & Instagram)
- 19,000 e-newsletter subscribers
- Key driver of walking product information and content to DiscoverNorthernIreland.com

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 deliver 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 fifth 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 a 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.

⁴ Northern Ireland Domestic Tourism 2018, NISRA

⁵ External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2016, NISRA

⁶ https://covid19.failteireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19_Consumer-Sentiment-and-Behaviour_18-May_FINAL.pdf

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
- Volunteer Rangers:** ORNI deliver a Walk Volunteer Ranger Programme which audits over 200 Quality Walks, Ulster Way and Waymarked Ways. This ensures information provided to the customer can be accurately verified on a regular basis
- 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 tourist 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

- Annual audit of routes and incorporation in public liability insurance for private landowners
- Regular content management e.g. updating route info, news items, events

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.

Marketing Activity	Regional	National
Northern Ireland Promotional Campaigns including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature inclusion within <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WalkNI Blog http://walkni.com/blog/ ○ WalkNI E-zines min 12 e-zines per year to 13,520+ NI contacts ○ WalkNI Social Media Channels (Daily posts to 15,000+ NI followers) • PR in Regional and National Press via WalkNI Awards and other initiatives 	Y	Y
Republic of Ireland Visitors Promotional Campaigns including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature inclusion within <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WalkNI Blog http://walkni.com/blog/ ○ WalkNI E-zines min 12 e-zines per year to 5,100+ ROI contacts ○ WalkNI Social Media Channels (Daily posts to 5,000+ ROI followers) • PR in Regional and National Press 	Y	Y*
Walking Club Promotional Campaigns including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-marketing to 566 walking club contacts • Promotion via Mountaineering Ireland and Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs 	N	Y

*** National Partners will receive double the level of inclusion within campaigns 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 campaigns etc.

Support Required:

Partner Level	2020/21	2020/21 COVID-19 Reduction*
National	£6890	£5167.50
Regional	£3445	£2583.75

*** COVID-19 Reduction Rationale:**

A reduced (25% less) contribution has been requested for 2020/21 as:

- Current social distancing measures are limiting the opportunities to engage with Northern Ireland's walking offer
- Key ORNI staff that deliver the day to day marketing activity for WalkNI are currently on Furlough Leave.

ORNI is working on an assumption that marketing activity will take place between **July 2020 – March 2021**.

June 2020

- Outdoor sports / activity amenities and tourism sites where people are 'non-stationary' and can maintain social distancing can open
- Government guidance will continue to encourage people to 'stay local' when exercising in the outdoors
- Widespread travel for holidays and leisure will not be taking place

Outcome: Walking trails are promoted for use by population in their immediate locality. Limitations around car parking may be in place. WalkNI can perform an important role of encouraging public to engage with walking trails responsibly and in line with social distancing measures.

Late July 2020

- Tourism accommodation providers will re-open (albeit with limited capacity)
- People will start travelling within Northern Ireland for holidays and leisure

Outcome: Walking can be promoted for use by NI wide population

Autumn 2020

- ROI walkers will begin to travel within Ireland

Outcome: Walking is promoted for use by Island of Ireland wide population

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

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