

**DO: GACH BALL DE CHEANTAR BARDASACH DHÚN GARBHÁN/LEASA MHÓIR
TO: EACH MEMBER OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF COMERAGH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT**

Economic Development Report March 2024

1. Mount Congreve

Since last reporting progress on the various elements of the project has been as follows:

Avenue Car Park & Universal Access Improvements.

- Works are now substantially complete on the car park apart from 'surface dressing' of the access road and some minor electrical works, it is envisaged that the car park will open in late March/Early April

Glass House Restoration

- Works are still ongoing and will continue until the end of March.

2024 Works

- Preliminary design and preparation of Part 8 Planning documentation for the proposed onsite accommodation works (Eco Pods & Gate Lodge Restoration) are ongoing, it is expected that majority of all the works will be complete by Q4 2024.

2. Trails

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) 2023 – Project Development Measure:

Comeragh Mountains Outdoor Recreation Management Plan: The preparation of this plan will be carried out throughout 2024 with a final plan due to be in place in Q2 2025. Key element of the preparation of the plan will be consultation with key stakeholders regarding Outdoor Recreation in the Comeragh Uplands. Public and stakeholder consultation will be due to get underway before summer 2024.

An announcement regarding funding applications submitted under Measures 1, 2 and 3 are anticipated in the coming weeks, including:

- Tower Hill Woods Walking Trails Development, Portlaoigh
- Comeragh Mountain Trails Upgrades works to: East Munster Way, Nire Valley Walks, Rathgormack Walks
- Crough Wood Walk
- Benvoy Beach Access

ORIS 2022:

- Measure 2: Anne Valley Walk – Phase III. Some minor repair and upgrade works required following Sport Ireland Outdoors inspection carried out in February.

ORIS 2021:

- Measure 2: Kilmacthomas River Walk improvement works. River Mahon Loop Walk, Kilmacthomas was officially opened by Mary Butler, TD Minister for Mental Health, and Older People in the presence of Cllr. Seánie Power, Cathaoirleach of the Comeragh Municipal District Council in recognition of the hard work and commitment of Kilmacthomas River Walk Committee and local community on the 9th

February 2024. This project was developed by Waterford City and County Council with funding support from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.



- Measure 3: Mahon Bridge/Crough Wood trailhead and improved car parking area. Project progressing well. Outstanding works include landscaping, development of playground, amenity seating, trailhead signage, bicycle parking etc.
- Project Development Measure: Proposed Copper Coast Walking Trails - Waterford City & County Council proposes submitted a Section 177AE planning application to An Bord Pleanála in December 2023 for the development a series of walking trails and ancillary works along the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark between Stradbally and Bunmahon, Co. Waterford:
 - Trail 1 Stradbally to Killelton (4.5km)
 - Trail 2 Ballydowane Beach (1.1km)
 - Trail 3 Cooneennacartan to Trá na mBó (2.0km)

Submissions and observations were invited up until 16th February. A decision by ABP is anticipated in 2024.

Expansion of Walks Scheme

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, announced the largest ever expansion of Ireland's National Walks Scheme on 28th February with 62 new trails announced across 17 counties. 12 of these walking trails are located in Co. Waterford (5 in Comeragh MD) and include:

- **The Boolas Loop Walk, Rathgormack**
- Mount Melleray Pilgrim Paths (5 trails)
- **Nire Valley Walks (4 trails)**
- Dunmore East Coastal Walk
- Ardmore Cliff Walk

The Walks scheme is administered locally by Waterford Leader Partnership's Rural Recreation Officer.

The Minister has also opened a new EOI process from LDC's for new trails and substantial extensions to existing trails. The closing date for EOIs is **11th October 2024**.

Waterford Greenway to Suir Blueway Connection:

- Feasibility study ongoing with a range of route options being considered in advance of further public, stakeholder, and landowner engagement.

Waterford Trails

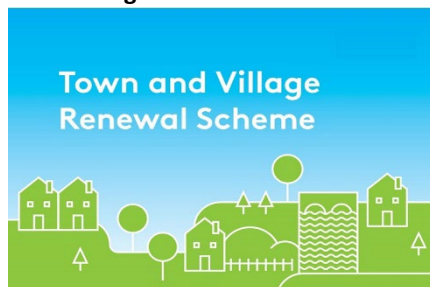
- Continuing to engage with Sport Ireland Outdoors and local trail development groups around Waterford with regard to ongoing monitoring, maintenance, development and promotion of Waterford's existing recreational trail network. www.visitwaterfordtrails.com

3. Rural Economic Development

Town Centre First

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, Wednesday, 7th February 2024 announced a €4.5 million package to support rural towns and villages. As part of a suite of measures, a new Town Team Support Fund will be established to build and develop a network of Town Teams nationwide. Additionally, the Minister announced a Project Development Measure, this measure will assist local authorities to contribute to a pipeline of significant, well-developed projects by providing funding of €50,000 each to support two projects. These supports will specifically target rural towns with a population of under 10,000 people. This support will be delivered under the umbrella of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. Waterford City & County Council are currently seeking expressions of interest from towns and village committees; completed expression of interest forms are to be returned by email to tcf@waterfordcouncil.ie before 5.00pm Wednesday 20th March 2024.

Town Village Renewal Scheme



Waterford City & County Council will administer the 2024 Town & Village Renewal Scheme funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development. The objectives of the 2024 Town and Village Renewal Scheme are focused to align with the commitments within Our Rural Future and the Town Centre First policy documents. The focus of the Town & Village Renewal Scheme is on ensuring the development of Waterford's rural towns and villages and making them more attractive places to live and work and increase their economic potential. Waterford City & County Council now seeks expressions of interest from towns and villages, for funding of suitable projects under this initiative. Expression of interest form and details of the Scheme's outline can be obtained by e-mailing townvillagerenewal@waterfordcouncil.ie and completed expression of interest forms are to be returned before **5.00pm Friday 19th April 2024.**

Rural team continue to work with the local community promoters delivering the 2022 approved Town Village Renewal Scheme projects. Project locations as follows:

- Tramore
- Passage East
- Cappoquin
- Dunhill
- Clonea Power

Completion date for the five projects is August 2024.