

Comhairle na Tuaithe

Progress and Delivery in 2015

- Comhairle na Tuaithe (CnaT) was established in 2004 to develop a national strategy for leisure use of land and waterways, dealing with conflicts where it exists and bring about a satisfactory resolution and to agree a countryside code between recreational users and landowners.
- The representation is broad including tourism bodies, recreational users, relevant departments and farm organisations. The Department of the Environment is the lead Department.
- It is vital that IFA participates in this group given the varied representation and to ensure that there is no change to existing land laws governing access in Ireland.
- Comhairle na Tuaithe met on three occasions in 2015/2016 and issues discussed were Mountain Access Scheme, the Blueways (Water Routes), National Indemnity Scheme, issues with the Department of Agriculture on land eligibility on Walkways, integration of countrywide recreational strategy in tourism plans.
- On the National Indemnity Scheme, the Department planned to have the State Claims Agency cover all users of land. IFA had expressed concern that this could be seen as a way to introduce general access to land and will be seeking firm political commitments on this.
- On the Walks Scheme, all 1,900 participants have been offered second 5 year contracts on the 39 trails that are covered. This scheme is worth €1.8m to farmers.
- IFA is pursuing an extension of the number of walks and has got broad support from CnaT on this issue.
- In relation to the eligibility of lands which are on trails for farm schemes, the Department of Agriculture has informed CnaT that they have got favourable feedback from Brussels on this issue so farmers will not lose out on payments.
- The Rural Social Scheme continues to play a key role in the creation of walks and it is estimated that 400 farmers support the walks under the RSS.
- On the Land Access Bill which was being pursued by the Labour Party in the last Government, IFA ensured that this Bill was not supported by CnaT.

Priorities for 2016

- Seeking additional funding for the development of new walks.
- New walks to increase from 40 to 80.
- Promoting the development of walks through various tourism organisations and that they are part of development plans in each Leader area.
- Resisting any attempts to change legislation in land access.
- Monitoring very closely the increased emphasis on greenways. This will be done in conjunction with the Environment Committee as there are moves made for CPO legislation to be used to create greenways. IFA will continue to reject this.
- Ensuring that land on walks continues to be eligible for all farm payments.

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