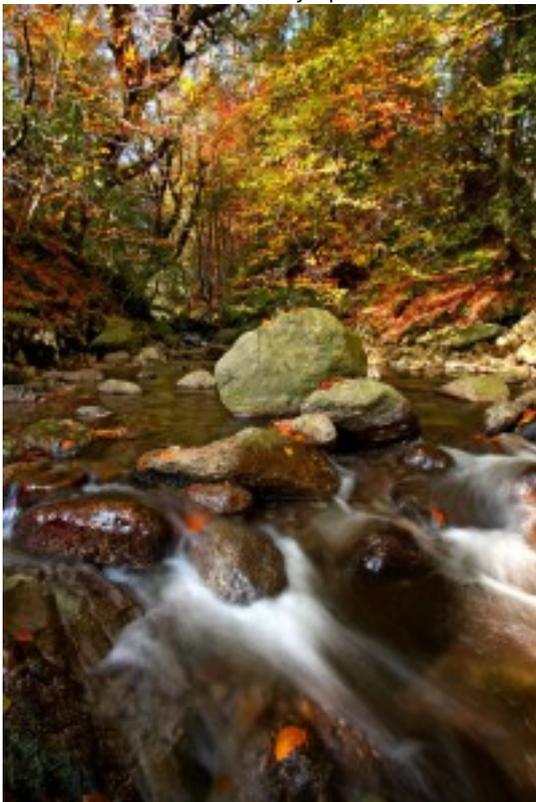


A Wonderful Woodland Walk

Waterford City & County Council is currently considering plans by the Comeragh Community Development Group to extend the beautiful Crough Wood walkway to Mahon Bridge.

PLANS are well underway to extend a beautiful County Waterford walkway which will further increase the area's tourism offering. Crough Wood is a tranquil retreat nestled beneath the Comeragh Mountains. The wider area is already a popular tourism hotspot thanks to the presence of the enchanting Mahon Falls and the stunning Coumshingaun. Waterford City & County Council is currently engaged in a Part VIII planning process in relation to the development of a walking trail in Kilcomeragh and Crough from Mahon Bridge to Crough Wood. An update on the project was presented to local Councillors at the October Comeragh District meeting of Waterford City & County Council which was held in Dungarvan last week. The current proposed trail section, which will be the subject of the upcoming Part VIII process, will encompass the next phase of the walk from the original entrance at Crough Wood to the bridge in Mahon Bridge on the R676 Carrick-on-Suir to Lemybrien road.

The first phase of the Crough Wood Walk was developed by the Comeragh Community Development Group in conjunction with Coillte and was officially opened in 2007.



Picturesque Crough Wood. Photo: Noel Browne.

The walk, which is a wonderful example of community collaboration and a brilliant showcase for what can be achieved when people work together for the betterment of their area, has proven very popular with local people and visitors alike in the intervening years. It has featured prominently in national media, including high profile slots on RTÉ's 'Nationwide' on a number of occasions.

A lot of planning and decision making went into developing Phase 2 of the walkway which stretches as far as the cattle grid near the famous Magic Road. Approximately three quarters of a mile in length, Phase 2 traverses a route which was previously impassable. A huge amount of work was undertaken in extending the walkway, including the mammoth task of clearing an area of extremely rough terrain. The walkway further opens up the Comeragh's, making an area of natural beauty more easily accessible and providing an important local recreational facility.

Not an overly challenging walk, but demanding nonetheless, the walkway offers various incline levels.

Another proposed phase of the project will see the walkway progress along the side of the River Mahon and up towards the

Mahon Falls. The extension of the walk to Mahon Bridge will represent a significant development in County Waterford's tourism offering. It will act as a complement to the fantastic Waterford Greenway which is accessible nearby at McGrath's Cross. While Crough Wood is a popular recreational spot for many locals, it remains something of a hidden gem for large sections of the wider public. In fact, it won in the 'Best Kept Secret' category in WLR's 'Best of Waterford' competition which featured on 'The Big Breakfast Blaa' in August. A visit to this stunning location clearly shows why it is such a gem. The gorgeous mixture of colours, particularly during autumn, creates a magical wonderland which would rival any scene from New England in the Fall.



The cascading River Mahon.

Declan Mulhearn of the Comeragh Community Development Group explained that the wood is a haven for wildlife and has become a favourite location for many artists and photographers.

"Since it was opened to the general public photos of the River Mahon taken from the walk have appeared in magazines all over the world. It seems to be a haven for artists and photographers who spend hours wandering around the wood. Many schools from the county and beyond visit the area and use the wood as a nature walk," he explained. Declan has a huge passion for the area and is keen to promote the Comeraghs as much as possible. Many different fundraising events have been staged to enable the work of the Comeragh Community Development Group to continue and Declan says the huge support which has been shown is indicative of the seal of approval in the area for the group's activities.

The current proposed trail section which will be the subject of the upcoming Part VIII process will encompass the next phase of the walk from the original entrance at the Crough Wood to the bridge in Mahon Bridge on the R676 Carrick-on-Suir to Lemybrien road. The proposed section of walking trail is approximately 750m long. Both the start and finish point of this trail section are within Coillte Woodland while the middle section through open farmland provides some breath taking views of Coummahon, Mahon Falls and the Comeragh Mountains as it winds its way along the River Mahon.

As part of the proposed Part VIII timeline, the advertisement period runs until December 5th with the submission period closing date on December 19th. The Chief Executive's report on the Part VIII process will come before Councillors for consideration at the January Comeragh District meeting of Waterford City & County Council. The extension to this wonderful walk would certainly augment County Waterford's tourism attractions and would also create a fabulous amenity for all locals to enjoy. If you haven't already visited Crough Wood, then a visit to this stunning location is a must.