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GENERAL RECREATION POLICY

- Coillte recognises that forests provide an excellent landscape for a wide range of recreational activities and the company, as the country's largest land owner, has such a special place in the provision of access to recreation. As such Coillte seeks to provide low-impact non-motorised recreation to the general public and other specialist activities under special permit.
- The company will continue to provide recreation that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.
- Coillte welcomes all visitors to the forest and expects them to respect the Leave No Trace principles.
- While recognising it's role in the rural community, Coillte does not have a primary or lead role in the provision of tourist facilities in it's forests, but will facilitate such developments within partnership arrangements.
- Coillte see it's primary recreation objective as one of delivering maximum benefit to most users.



2

THE VALUE OF COILLTE'S RECREATION RESOURCE

- Coillte makes a valuable contribution to social well being through to the provision of an extensive range of recreation facilities.
- The company will seek recognition of this important resource and will include it as a performance indicator in its various reports.
- It is company policy to measure these on a regular basis using internationally accepted economic tools.



3

PLANNING

- It is the policy of the company to plan recreation as part of its overall management planning process.
- Consultation on the recreation planning process will be carried out in line with general guidelines on stakeholder consultation.



4

FACILITIES

- Forest sites will be designed and maintained to a level where they are fit for purpose to provide an enjoyable visitor experience and reduce the risk to users. The sites will be managed to comply with our stated policy on access for all and managing visitor safety
- It is company policy to manage recreation areas to deliver low impact recreation. Where more impacting recreation is taking place it will be in special designated areas and users are expected to limit their activity to this zone.
- Where recreation facilities are proposed or managed by other organisations they must have a full management and maintenance policy and must comply with best international practice.
- Coillte will endeavour to consult with all relevant parties before commencing the development of major recreation facilities.
- The use of Coillte forest facilities and car parks are based on the concept of responsible use. Where anti-social behaviour occurs Coillte retains the right to limit access or close facilities.



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ACCESS FOR ALL

- Given the nature of the forest it is not possible to provide access for all to all parts of the estate; Coillte will adopt an 'Access for All' policy in the provision of trails and facilities open to the public in line with best international practice.
- Coillte will provide information to all users to allow informed decisions on the suitability of facilities for their use considering their ability.
- Interpretation and signage will take cognisance of the abilities of all users of the forest in line with international practice.



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MANAGING VISITOR SAFETY

- Given the nature of the forest habitat, it is not possible to eliminate all hazards or risks for forest users. While every reasonable effort will be made to reduce risk, Coillte expects all users to act in a responsible manner, only undertake activities that they are competent in and equipped for and have due regard for the safety of other users.
- Coillte expects users to comply with all posted warning notices, staff instructions and any conditions that might apply under the issuing of permits or licenses.
- Coillte welcomes responsible users. The use of the estate is permitted subject to the conditions of the Occupiers Liability Act 1995.



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LEAVE NO TRACE

- Coillte promotes the Leave No Trace outdoor ethics programme as the code for recreation uses of all its forest properties.
- Principles of Leave No Trace
 - Plan ahead and prepare.
 - Travel on durable surfaces.
 - Dispose of waste properly.
 - Leave what you find.
 - Minimise campfire impacts.
 - Respect wildlife.
 - Be considerate of other users.
- Coillte do not provide bins on any of its properties. Recreational users are expected to remove all of their waste properly. We expect dog waste to be bagged and removed from site.





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PARTNERSHIPS

- Coillte recognises that partnerships are key to delivering important resources to assist with the provision, management and maintenance of recreation.
- Coillte will enter partnership arrangements to provide recreation infrastructure and services when projects are environmentally, socially and environmentally sustainable and dovetail with Forest management plans and objectives.
- Partnerships must take cognisance of the impact of any development on the environment of the estate, other forest users and on forest operations.
- Full consideration must be given to the long-term management, maintenance and liability implication of any proposed projects.
- Coillte does not have a primary role in the provision of tourism infrastructure per se, but will assist others where they meet with company's objectives.



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VOLUNTEERS

- Coillte recognises that volunteers and voluntary groups make a worthwhile contribution to the recreation management of the forest estate.
- Coillte will work with volunteer groups to ensure suitable projects are managed in an effective, safe and enjoyable manner.
- Where volunteer groups propose projects on Coillte land, they must meet with company objectives.



10

WALKING/HIKING

- Walking and hiking is the single biggest activity engaged in by forest users. As a low impact activity requiring only trails and roads it can be accommodated in most of our forest properties and will only be limited by safety or similar management concerns.
- Long distance walking routes will be managed to provide a challenging and, as far as possible primitive walking experience.
- Coillte will work with local and national hillwalking and similar groups to open and maintain mountain access routes.
- All new walking routes proposed by outside groups and agencies must apply National Trails Office trail building and design criteria which deliver sustainable trail networks.
- Walkers with dogs in Coillte lands are expected to exercise effectual control over their dogs at all times in compliance with Control of Dogs Act, 1986 (Section 9 - 1)
- In high use areas where there is signage in place walkers with dogs will be required to keep the dogs on a lead.



11 CYCLING

- Cycling is permitted in Coillte Forests on designated areas and tracks.
- The policy is to manage cycling for safe and sustained use, in line with best international practice.
- Coillte will seek to provide and manage facilities in cooperation with both statutory and NGO bodies for off road cycling.
- Coillte expects all cyclists to respect the forest, other users and follow the Off-Road Cycling Code.



12 CAMPING

- Accommodation facilities for visitor's caravans and tents are available at Lough Key Forest Park. No other accommodation services are provided in Coillte Forests.
- Wild Camping is permitted without permit only in designated sites in accordance with Leave No Trace principles.
- Coillte reserves the right to withdraw permission to camp at any time.
- Camping is an 'assumed risk' activity, and people camping in Coillte Forests do so at their own risk.



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RECREATIONAL FIRES

- Coillte permits the lighting of fires by the public in forest areas only in the following cases.
 - the use of barbeque units at designated sites.
 - lighting of campfires in designated areas.
- Coillte expects that the 'Leave No Trace' code will be strictly followed in all areas of the forest.
- Coillte expects that fires should be under control at all times and that every precaution against damage by fire to the forest and surrounding countryside be an absolute priority for all users of the forest.



14 WATER SPORTS

- Coillte will facilitate access to its lakes and rivers for suitable water sports as deemed appropriate by the company.
- Responsibility for safety on the water lies entirely with the user. All users should ensure that a sufficient level of competency has been reached as appropriate for the activity being undertaken.
- All users should check that their activity is suitable for a particular lake or river with the local forest manager.
- Suitable water sports in Coillte's property are canoeing/kayaking, rowing, sail boarding, sailing and fishing/angling. The use of powerboats/speedboats and jetskis is not generally appropriate in Coillte property.
- **Recreational users are advised not to enter the water. Anyone who does so at their own risk.**
- All users must satisfy themselves that appropriate licences have been obtained where necessary to pursue their activity, e.g., the local area Fisheries Boards issue licences for trout fishing on many of Ireland's inland waters.



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MOTOR SPORTS

- Motor sports are only permitted in Coillte Forests in designated areas or on designated roads and tracks.
- Motor sports will continue to be subject to licence, a licence fee and the requirements for motor insurance cover.
- The policy is to manage motor sports for safe and sustained use in line with best international practice.



16 HORSE RIDING

- Coillte welcomes visitors on horseback to ride in designated forest properties with permission.
- Horse-riding is not allowed on National Way Marked Ways and designated single-use cycle or walking trails (Excludes dual-use forest roads).
- Coillte expects all visitors to follow the Horse Riding Code.



17 RECREATIONAL HUNTING

- Hunting and shooting is restricted to selected forest areas where they are not considered to compromise public safety.
- Where appropriate, Coillte may permit the use of its lands for hunting and shooting by individuals, clubs/syndicates and commercial operators in accordance with the principles of Coillte's Sustainable Forest Management and the laws on the use of firearms.
- Where hunting/shooting rights on lands are held/owned by a third party, Coillte will inform users of existence of such rights.
- Foxhunting is not permitted on Coillte's lands except where there are long established rights or conventions which pre-date Coillte's ownership of the land. ONLY in these cases is foxhunting allowed under permit.
- No recreational hunting will be permitted in Coillte Forest Parts. Where culling is required in Forest Parks it will only be undertaken by approved Coillte personnel or contractors.
- All persons exercising sporting rights on Coillte's estate must comply strictly with conditions of the licence agreement, the relevant laws covering the use of firearms and any Coillte guidelines or codes of practice that may be in place.



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RECREATIONAL LICENCES

- Coillte allow a range of recreational and sporting activities under licence at appropriate locations where deemed suitable by forest management.
- All licences are subject to a licence fee and must be applied for with appropriate notice to the forest manager, usually one month.
- Appropriate insurance is required by a licensee for any activity undertaken under licence. There is an onus on the licensee to comply with the terms of the licence.



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MEMORIALS

Since 1989 when Coillte was formed, it has been up to local forest managers to decide if memorials in the form of benches, plaques, headstones, etc., were suitable for erection in the forests or forest parks managed by them. There has been many of these memorials installed over the intervening years and with management changes, there is little knowledge of the dedicators of these. It can be upsetting to dedicators when these memorials are removed due to dilapidation or when damaged by others. Some memorials have been found to have been installed without any knowledge of or consent from Coillte. A new policy is now required to reflect an up-to-date position for memorials.

POLICY

- **New memorials:**
Due to the difficulties outlined above, memorials in the form of benches, plaques, headstones, etc., are no longer permitted on lands managed by Coillte.
- **Legacy memorials:**
Coillte are not responsible for the upkeep of existing memorials on legacy sites. When a bench or similar, comes to the end of its life span, the dedicator will be informed where contact details are available. They will not be re-instated.