Emergency funds help protect treasured Mourne



National Lottery funding will help Mourne Heritage Trust protect the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as it receives unprecedented number of visitors.

When visitors to the Mournes in County Down began to peak after lockdown, the Mourne Heritage Trust found that they were struggling to keep up with the excess wear on the landscape.

> *“Although it’s great to see people enjoying the area, and the positive impact it has on our mental and physical wellbeing, the landscape has been under extreme strain.”*
>
> Martin Carey, Chief Executive of the Mourne Heritage Trust

However, thanks to a grant of £52,600 from our Heritage Emergency Fund, the Trust can now put extra resources into looking after this much-loved landscape in the south- east corner of Northern Ireland.



Emergency funding is going towards vital repairs

Keeping up with demand

Martin Carey, Chief Executive of the Mourne Heritage Trust, says the area has seen “unprecedented” numbers of families, hikers and ramblers visiting during the pandemic. This is putting pressure on their already stretched staff team and the landscape itself:

“The Mournes and surrounding areas has always been a popular hotspot, but during lockdown we noticed that many people rediscovered or explored the landscape for the first time.

"Although it’s great to see people enjoying the area, and the positive impact it has on our mental and physical wellbeing, the landscape has been under extreme strain.”



Two visitors enjoying the landscape

Making the landscape safe

The grant will help maintain the paths in the Mournes. With some trails already showing excess wear, funding will enable staff to safely make repairs alone or while socially distancing in teams.

In particular, funds will go towards a new motorised, dumper-barrow truck which will make shifting heavy boulders and materials easier and safer.

Clearing litter

Increased use of the Mournes has sadly also resulted in a significant increase in litter. Emergency funds will go towards equipping the Mourne Heritage Trust’s dedicated group of volunteers with pickers and other equipment to help collect rubbish.



Volunteers are helping to clear a build-up of litter

Martin Carey said: “*We know some of our newer visitors may not be aware of our Leave No Trace principle so we hope these funds go some way towards encouraging everyone to do their bit in looking after the landscape.”*

Protecting heritage for the future

The Mourne Heritage Trust said that without the emergency funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, their depleted staff resource and precious and fragile landscape could have buckled under the strain.

These funds will ensure they are able to protect and preserve the landscape at a time when it’s needed more than ever.



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Cara McCann. Credit: Pacemaker Press

Hope for Northern Ireland’s LGBT+ community, thanks to emergency funding