

NEWS RELEASE 26 January 2007

Dublin Mountains Initiative Responds to Latest Coillte Clearfelling Plans

Last week Coillte placed a notice in the Southside People newspaper advertising their Clearfelling Plans for 2007 for the following forests:-

Ballyedmonduff (SE part of Ticknock mountain)
Cruagh
Seahan
Carrickgollogan (The Lead Mines)
Featherbed
Slievethoul
Crooksling
Glencullen
Tibradden

As a result of this notice members of the Dublin Mountains Initiative (DMI) met a representative of Coillte in order to view detail of the proposed clearfells. With one exception outlined below it is the feeling of the DMI that, for the most part, the areas affected will not greatly affect the amenity value or recreational usage of the Dublin Mountains. For example the area affected in Carrickgollan (The Lead Mines - a very popular walking area) is an area of 3 hectares in a total forested area of about 90 hectares. The area of greatest concern is that of Ballyedmonduff, immediately below the summit of Three Rock Mountain. This area is a prominent part of the skyline viewed from South Dublin and is also a popular walking area. DMI chairman Mark d'Alton said 'We feel that there has been enough felling on Three Rock in the last twelve months and that, if at all possible, this fell should be deferred for a considerable period. We will be talking to Coillte about this as soon as possible.'

The DMI has also been made aware of the clearfell plans for Co Wicklow and notes that some of these will affect both recreational usage and the aesthetic value of areas that are in frequent usage.

Mr. d'Alton said 'What is required is a long lasting strategy for forest recreation in the Dublin Mountains - we are working in conjunction with Coillte and the County Councils to develop this and the process is going well. And we do recognise that Coillte manage commercial forests where felling is part of the process - one of the problems is that Coillte has inherited a forest stock much of which was planted in the fifties and which is all reaching maturity at the same time.

However we feel that it in areas where there is high amenity usage or where the forest is of high aesthetic value due to its location then clearfelling should be a last resort. In the long term we would hope to see minimal felling in such areas and the planting of native forests where possible. The benefits of outdoor recreation are immense and the State needs to put a proper value on this.

The recent launch by Minister O'Donoghue of the National Trails Strategy represents a significant step in the right direction - however, as with any strategy, the question is how it will be implemented on the ground.'

* The DMI was brought together to represent the interests of those who use the Dublin Mountains for leisure and recreation. Its members are:

- i) The Mountaineering Council of Ireland
- ii) The Scout Association of Ireland
- iii) The Irish Mountain Running Association
- iv) Mountain Biking Ireland
- v) The Irish Orienteering Association
- vi) Slí na Slaínte (Irish Heart Foundation)

These organisations have a combined membership of over 55,000 people.

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