



The Chairman's View



Richard Gillen
Chairman of Binevenagh
AONB Management Forum

The coming months continue to be an interesting time within Binevenagh AONB. The community consultation for the AONB management plan is now well under way with Craggatak Consultants leading the process.

Local primary schools helped to launch a questionnaire as the first step in this consultation. This has proved useful highlighting what you think are some of the key issues within the area. Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust and Craggatak Consultants are always keen to hear your views so please keep feeding information in via e-mail, telephone or drop them a line. This landscape is one of our greatest resources, for some its home, for others it's a place of work as well as our playground. This process will help shape the way Binevenagh AONB is managed over the next 10 years so your opinions really do count no matter how great or small.

The calendar and posters produced as part of the raising awareness campaign have been really well received. As intended they have helped to generate the wow factor about the area. Building on the raising awareness theme the Picture This! project, which worked so well in the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB last year, will be rolled out to the various primary schools in Binevenagh within coming months. I look forward to the results being used to further build on the reputation of Binevenagh as a special place, especially as they will provide a photographic record from those who live within the AONB.

The new Rural Development Programme presents a valuable funding opportunity to further build on our infrastructure and product throughout the Causeway and North West Region. It will be encouraging to see new products developed within the AONB allowing for the greater enjoyment of this landscape.

The winter cold snap showed a wild, rugged and atmospheric side to the AONB. Spring and summer will show a different side but one that will allow us all to enjoy Binevenagh fully.

Whether you live, work or play within Binevenagh AONB I would urge you to think about why the area is special to you and contribute to the consultation process.

A View From Over The Water



Cambrian Mountains NOT an AONB! (photo: Cambrian Mountains Society)

The Cambrian Mountains in Wales was identified as a potential national park in 1945. In 1974 it failed to achieve this status, and since then many people (me included) have been campaigning to have it designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). On the other hand, Binevenagh was re-designated in 2006. Lucky Binevenagh!

However, if this designation is to mean anything, it needs commitment and positive engagement by the various groups and individuals who live and work in the area and have an interest in its future.

Why worry about landscape? There are always other priorities, such as education, houses, health and services. Well, these concerns are about people's livelihoods, and in an area like Binevenagh 'livelihoods' means agriculture, tourism, local services and small-scale primary production – these provide the economic, social and environmental background to people's lives. Landscape isn't just pretty flowers and views.

In late 2008 the AONB forum appointed Paul Tiplady and myself to help the production of a management plan. As part of this process, a questionnaire has been doing the rounds to find out what people think (it can still be found on the CCGHT website). Thanks you to all those who took the trouble to fill in the questionnaire, especially the parents who recognised the importance of this for their children's futures.

The responses generated some important points, such as:

- How can agriculture produce more food whilst conserving the environment on which it depends? What are the impacts of improved systems?
- How can farming deliver wider benefits such as habitats, water-retaining soils and places for people to relax and to learn? Are there alternatives to existing products, such as bio fuels? How will these change the landscape?
- How can wildlife be conserved and enhanced whilst also providing a living for people?
- Can woodlands be managed to provide sustainable yields of timber whilst encouraging people to enjoy them and protecting wildlife?
- How can tourism be managed so as not to damage the very things that people come to enjoy? What kind of recreation is most appropriate?
- Are there enough houses in the area? How can the number be increased without putting pressure on land, water and energy use?
- If development is a good idea, how much should there be, what sort should it be, and what will be the social, economic and environmental costs and

benefits?

- What can the area offer to its young people to encourage them to stay?

It's not for outsiders such as us to offer solutions – it's up to those who live in the area and have an interest in its future to agree the way forward.

Some of you wanted the area to remain the same, but that's not, and never has been, an option – it's been changing for thousands of years, and will continue to do so. But the pace is increasing, and unless change is managed, this valued landscape could suffer long-term and irreversible damage.

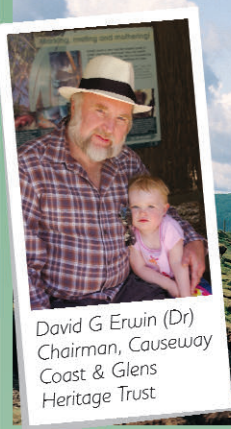
You expressed a number of concerns about the future, including lack of funding, lack of integrated working between groups, and poor planning. Some of you recognised the lack of real support for AONBs at official levels, and a general complacency.

On March 11th, at Magilligan Field Centre, the first of a series of public meetings was organised to look at some of the issues arising from the questionnaires. The plan was firstly to have a 'fun but important' meeting. More of these meetings will be organised in the near future as we will try to talk to as many people as possible. Please check CCGHT website regularly to keep updated on dates for these meetings.

Thanks again to all of you who responded – your replies will be posted up on the CCGHT website. If you still want to respond, it's not too late – and the prize draw has yet to be made!

NOTE: If you want to read more about the Cambrian Mountains, go to: www.cambrian-mountains.co.uk/documents/cambrian-mountains-sustainable-future.pdf

Are Protected Areas Worth Saving?



David G Erwin (Dr)
Chairman, Causeway
Coast & Glens
Heritage Trust



Binevenagh

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is simply what it says on the tin. By its name and definition any AONB has to be one of those very exceptional places which have been specially selected as having scenery of the highest order and also a sufficiently high degree of distinctiveness which makes them the unique place that they are and different from other places. What could better describe the Binevenagh AONB? We all are aware of its beauty and we all know that there is nowhere like it anywhere else.

AONBs are not fossilised landscapes which are wrapped in cotton wool and preserved for all time, either as they are either today or as some fear – as they were yesterday. Instead they are places where people go about the practice and development of their daily business as they have done for hundreds of years and will continue to do in the future. No one and certainly no business can just stand still. If this was the case we would still be bringing turf down on the backs of donkeys with a standard of living far below what it is today. People must be able to change and develop what they do, how they do it and how they use land to maintain or increase their prosperity. This is a feature which is enshrined in AONB structure and management.

At the same time, within the AONB management structure, those same people need to come together to decide how their area should be looked after and how it should be managed for the benefit of all. We would all want to be able to continue to enjoy the wonderful area in which we live or work. We would all like its resources to be available to visitors to the area and to enable sustainable tourism to grow and flourish, bringing further rewards to the inhabitants of the area. I believe that we would all also want what we enjoy to be available to our children and their children. Clearly it is a balancing act – allowing development while at the same time keeping in repair the resource that it all depends on.

This means we need to find a way to work together to ensure what we care about most is looked after. We don't have

National Parks yet in Northern Ireland so AONBs are our main way of looking after our unique landscapes. They provide tools and structures to enable us to come together and to bring our ideas and skills to the table. We have set up a Binevenagh AONB Management Committee under the umbrella of the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust to guide the way forward. We will soon be getting involved in drawing up a management plan for the AONB in the same way that we recently did for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. This will entail going out into the communities and interest groups of the area and getting their ideas on what they consider important and what they want of the area in the future. On the back of this guidance, in conjunction with local people, we will then be trying to put together management guidelines on how to reach the goals that have been set. The recommendations will appear eventually as a draft plan and finally as the full Management Plan for the AONB.

We want, no – need, your input to achieve the best and perhaps most innovative gains in the management of the area. We will also be looking to you to help resolve the obvious dilemmas in the process. Please help us. Please get involved in the process and bring to it your wisdom, knowledge and experience. When the plan is complete it will be a number of years before it can be reviewed. There is no point in waiting to this time to criticise the plan - when the opportunity to contribute to it is past.

Get involved now!

Can you HACK it?

The Northern Ireland
Can you HACK it?

2009 Challenge Walk will take place on Saturday 5th September 2009 in the Binevenagh AONB.



We're walking step by step towards our aim – to end cruelty to children.

The route begins at Benone Beach overlooked from the dramatic cliff tops by Bishop Hervey's Mussenden Temple.

The walk will take you along the outstanding expanse of Magilligan Strand, through dense and stunning woodland and up the steep ascent to the beautiful lake at the summit of Binevenagh. Here you will be greeted with panoramic views over Lough Foyle, the Roe Valley, Inishowen and the west coast of Scotland. The 25-mile circular challenge walk is open to walkers of all fitness levels and stewards will be around the route to help. If you can't take part in the actual walk, but would like to get involved, volunteer to help on the day. We'd love your support.

To get involved, or to register for one of the limited places, simply contact us:
Tel: HACK appeals office 028 9035 7970
northernirelandappeals@nspcc.org.uk
www.nspcc.org.uk/hack

Walkers must be 18 or over. No pets allowed.

**World Ocean Day
8th June 2009**

World Ocean Day is an opportunity each year to celebrate our world ocean and our personal connection to the sea.

Have-a-Go at Portstewart Strand

Be active – be healthy!



If you fancy a challenge and something different, come along to Portstewart Strand on Sunday 17 May for the opportunity to try an exhilarating mix of outdoor activities. The National Trust 'Have-a-Go' Day will be a fun packed family day out with the emphasis on fun, fun, fun! Whether you want to warm up, cool off, or chill out, the National Trust 'Have-a-go' Day will have something for you.

The event is an opportunity for families of all ages to try canoeing, orienteering, surfing, archery, sea kayaking and lots more! You can also take a leisurely walk around the sand dunes with one of the National Trust's knowledgeable guides and discover some of the rare species of flora and fauna, or have a go at sculpting sea creatures in the sand. All activities will be supervised by friendly, trained instructors. Key recreational exhibitors will be on hand to give advice, including the Countryside, Access & Activities Network (CAAN), Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI), British Horse Society Ireland

and Northern Ireland Orienteering. There will also be time to browse around the National Trust shop or stop in for a hot drink and a tasty tray bake.

The Strand is one of Ireland's finest and most popular beaches. The management of this site involves a sustainable approach of conservation measures to protect the beach and dune system, as well as allowing sustainable access and the pursuit of varied leisure and recreational activities. In fact, 16 different recreational activities have been recorded at Portstewart Strand and many of these will be available to visitors on Sunday 17 May.



So why not come and have a go, you never where it will lead you!

Come and enjoy a day for all the family from **11:00am to 5pm on Sunday 17 May 2009.**

For further information please contact Jill Montgomery on 028 9751 2345 or Sarah Field on 028 7083 6396.



Medieval Meddlings

at Downhill Demesne

It is a fayre day at Downhill Demesne on Sunday 31st of May and there's something for the whole family! Enjoy horseback jousting, swordplay demonstrations and all manner of medieval meddlings.

Come to the Lion's Gate at the National Trust's stunning Downhill and stroll around the Medieval Village with a selection of wares from the Basket Maker, the Scriptor Monk, the Shoe Maker and many others. Watch in awe as the Falconer's birds of prey hunt and fly at his command and see the lighter side of history as the juggler, jester, stilt walker and fire eater show off their incredible skills. This is a day for the whole family to try a variety of outdoor activities including archery, for kids get their faces painted, enjoy the bouncy castle and a selection of games.

So why not step back in time and come along to the fayre from 12pm- 5pm on Sunday 31st May 2009.

*For further information please contact:
Lisa-Jayne McCook on 028 2073 1582*

Downhill Hostel



The Downhill Hostel was recently featured in the Guardian Newspaper due to being voted the best hostel in Northern Ireland and Runner-up in the UK at the Hostelworld industry awards in January.

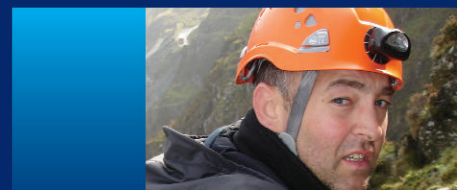
Downhill Hostel expanded and improved facilities in 2004 with support from International Fund for Ireland and Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. The hostel worked with eco-architect John Lee of Povall Worthington to strive for energy efficiency and sustainability in the project.

Downhill Hostel has also engaged with a strong web-marketing campaign through their site www.downhillhostel.com and an integrated online booking system. The hostel provides self-catering accommodation in the Binevenagh AONB to individuals, families, couples and groups of all ages.

Who's who?

Binevenagh Management Forum

Meet some of the forum.



Richard Gillen, Countryside Recreation Officer, Culture Arts Tourism, Limavady Borough Council

Richard is interested in the range of outdoor recreation allowing people to enjoy the Binevenagh AONB and beaches in an active way throughout the entire year.



**Mark Strong
Countryside Development Officer
Coleraine Borough Council**

Mark is interested in creating, managing and promoting opportunities for countryside access and countryside recreation within the AONB and the Coleraine Borough as a whole.



**Liz Wallace
Assistant Advisory Officer
WELB Curriculum Advisory Support Service**

Based at Magilligan Field Centre specializing in Field Studies and Sustainable Development. Visiting students are empowered by specialist Advisory Teachers to make informed and responsible decisions through practical first hand experiences of the many diverse habitats



around the Binevenagh AONB.

**Caroline Marshall
Lower Bann Advisory Committee**

Caroline works for the Lower Bann Advisory Committee which is charged with providing strategic advice on the navigation, drainage, recreation and heritage of the River and Estuary. Caroline was reared within the AONB.

Eco-Warrior Entrepreneurs

at St.Aidan's



In November 2008 children in P6 and P7 at St.Aidan's Primary School, Magilligan were invited to become Eco-Warrior Entrepreneurs. Following much work and investigation into ways in which they could improve the local environment the children at St.Aidan's Primary School decided to combine their passion for local environmental issues together with fundraising potential ideas for the school. The children were put into teams and asked to devise a business plan in order to make a profit. Each team was given £10. This money was used to buy materials that they needed to set up their business.

The children were very creative. Some of their designs included: table decorations for Christmas made from recycled wood; jewellery made from beads; table favours for Christmas Parties made from recycled material with a selection of sweets inside. One team approached the local Farm Shop and together they packed locally grown fruit and vegetables to sell for profit. Another team took photographs of landmarks surrounding the local area and produced calendars made from recycled paper.



NAAONB conference

The eleventh annual conference of the National Association of AONBs will be held, for the first time in N. Ireland, at the University of Ulster in Coleraine from the 7th to the 9th of July 2009. For more information on the conference or on the National Association of AONBs check out the website www.aonb.org.uk or contact Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust staff on 02820752100 info@ccght.org



Competition

If you can identify this Church in the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) you could win a framed copy of one of our very popular Binevenagh AONB posters. Competition entries must be submitted by post or by email to info@ccght.org to reach Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust office before 31 July 2009.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Marguerite Campbell from Maghera who correctly identified the flower in the photograph as Grass of Parnassus in issue 2 of the newsletter. Marguerite has won a framed poster of Binevenagh AONB.

Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust

For more information on the Binevenagh AONB check the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust website: www.ccght.org

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www.ccght.org

Binevenagh AONB Fact File

Designated: 2006
(Formerly North Derry AONB designated in 1966)

Area: 14100 ha

Population: 5706
(Estimate based on 2001 census)

Photographic credits:

NSPCC
National Trust
St Aidan's PS
Downhill Hostel

Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust provides a secretariat service for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. The Trust is grateful for support from the following organisations:



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