



Cavan Walking Festival Evaluation

29th April – 2nd May 2011



Over 160 people descended upon the West of Cavan for Cavan's first Walking festival organised by Cavan Sports Partnership and the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark. With the sun shining all weekend, it allowed the numerous walkers to enjoy the natural and undiscovered beauty of West Cavan. All walks were being led by trained Irish Heart Foundation Walking Leaders and local guides were also there to talk about the area, which added a history and geography element to the walks.

Five walks in total took place between Friday and Sunday of the May Bank Holiday weekend. On Friday the festival kicked off with its first walk; the "Walk for all" Shannon Pot, an accessible 500m walk that took the walkers to the source of the mighty River Shannon, Ireland's longest river. The walkers got to take in views of some of West Cavan's



finest countryside with beautiful views of the Cuilcagh Mountains whilst enjoying the peace and tranquillity of the Shannon Pot itself.

The Saturday began with the family friendly *Ballyconnell Canal Walk*, in which the walkers were taken along the Woodford River Walk (part of Fáilte Ireland's Looped Walk Network) and into the Annagh Woods, a wildlife sanctuary that is home to red squirrels and grey deer. On Saturday afternoon, walkers were in for a treat with the *Sean Eamon Ruairi Trail*. This fascinating trail took participants through the homelands of Sean Eamon Ruairi, the



last native Irish speaker in Cavan. Not only did the walkers get to see spectacular views of the Cuilcagh Mountains, but the 7km trail took them past abandoned farmsteads, old field walls and through some of the most stunning scenery in West Cavan.

The Cuilcagh Summit Walk on the Sunday was a more difficult and strenuous challenge for the walkers as it was a distance of 14km over one of the most extensive areas of blanket bog in Ireland. But this test of endurance was certainly rewarded with breath taking views of County Cavan. Once the walkers reached the summit of the mountain, they were able to admire the Bronze Age summit cairn, and from there they descended into County Fermanagh on the eastern side of the Cuilcagh Mountain finishing off at the picturesque Gortalughany Viewpoint.



The festival ended on Monday with *the Killeshandra Lake and Forest Walk* and a family scavenger hunt. Families and walkers were out in their numbers to take part in the last walk



of the festival. The 6km walk took them past the Town Lake and through parts of the old Castle Hamilton Demesne. Now part of Fáiltes Looped Walk Network, this trail was full of fun and enjoyment for kids and grownups alike.

At the end of each of the walks, much needed refreshments were provided by the Community Development Associations in each of the areas.

Evaluation

After the festival, an online evaluation was carried out to gauge the success of the Walking Festival. 52% participants from the walking festival responded to the evaluation. Over a third (34%) of the respondents participated in the Killeshandra Lake and Forest walk and under a third (31%) in the Cuilcagh Mountain walk (see Appendix 1). The participants in the walks had travelled from various counties; The majority of respondents came from Cavan, followed by Monaghan and Fermanagh. Other counties that the respondents had travelled from were Dublin, Tyrone, Leitrim and Meath (see Appendix 2). The festival was advertised through various means including: website, ezine, flyers, posters, national and local newspaper and radio coverage. The age of the respondents of the evaluation varied with 38% from the 36 – 50 years age group and 35% from the 50 + years age group whilst there was 22% from 19 -35 years age group and only 5 % from the 1 -18 years age group (see Appendix 3).

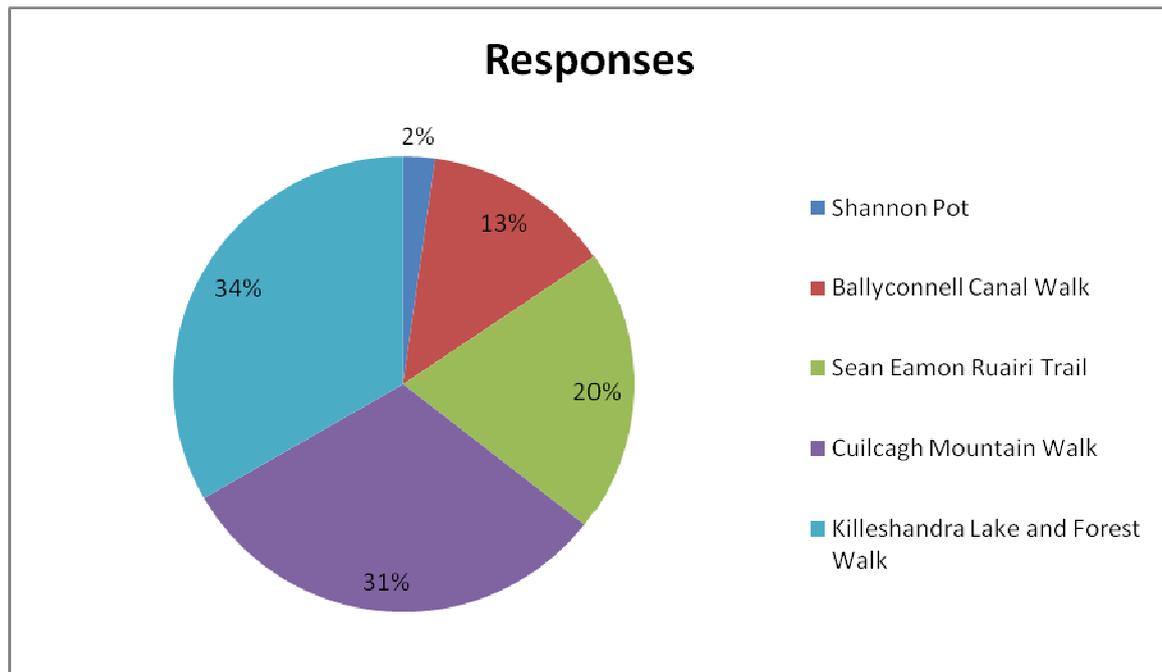
In the evaluation, the participants were asked to give their opinions on different aspects of the walking festival; over half of the respondents (51%) thought that the walking route was very good and 60% thought the organisation of the route was excellent. Half of the participants thought that the walking leader was excellent and the walking guide and information was excellent also. The location of the walks was also praised as over half (57%) of the participants thought the locations were excellent (Appendix 5). The participants were also invited to comment on the walking festival. Some comments that were made were: *“Really enjoyed the walk and the generous hospitality afforded by the hosts”, “It was a lovely walk. Great turn out and the refreshments at the end were welcomed. Thanks”* and *“Enjoyed it very much, will be back next year. Thank you for organising the weekend.”*

Recommendations from participants:

- Increase advertising and PR for future Walking Festivals;
- Increase number of leaders and guides on all walks so larger numbers can be accommodated;
- More details on the terrain of the walks and clothing to be worn by walkers;
- Expand Walking Festival to other areas in Cavan.

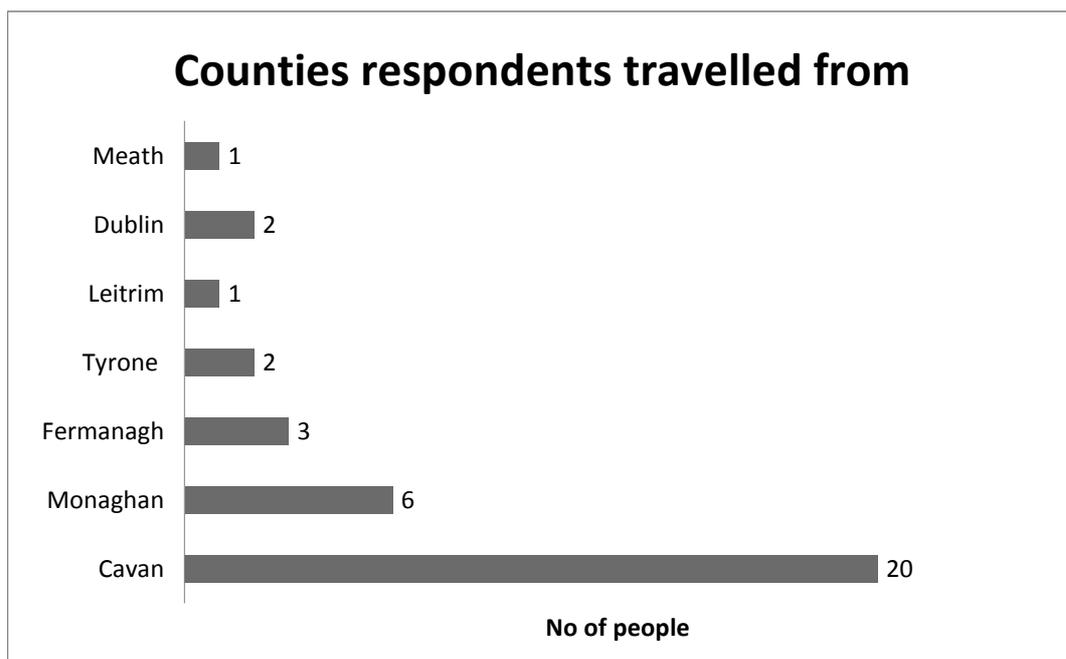
Appendix 1

Question: Which walk did you take part in?



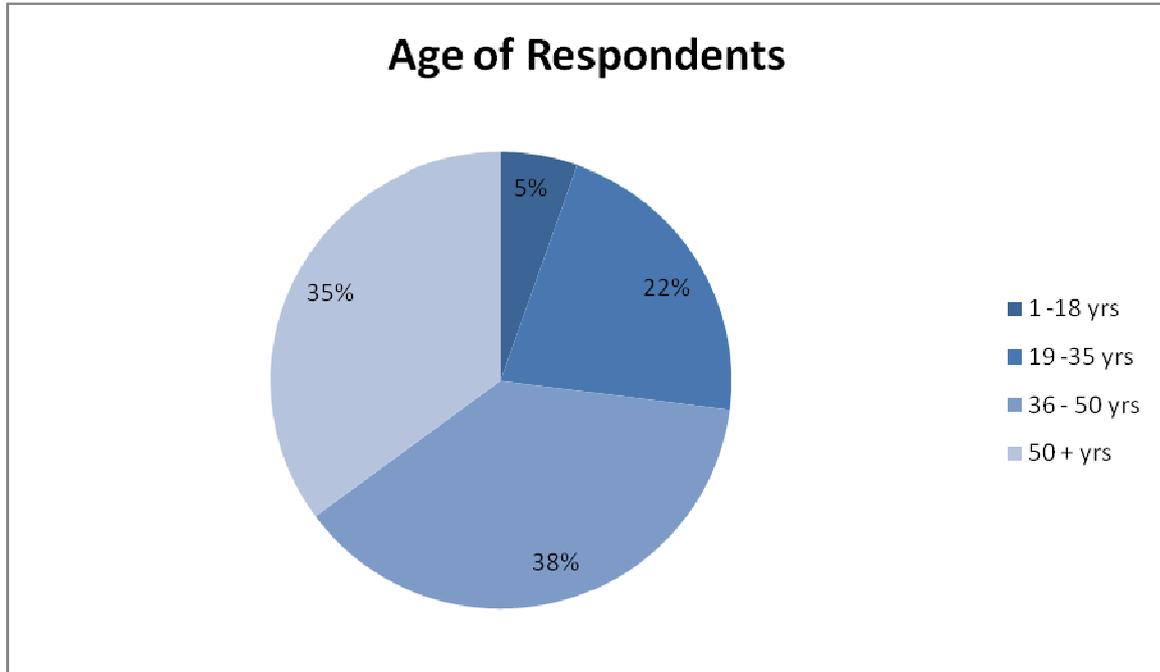
Appendix 2

Question: Where did you travel from?



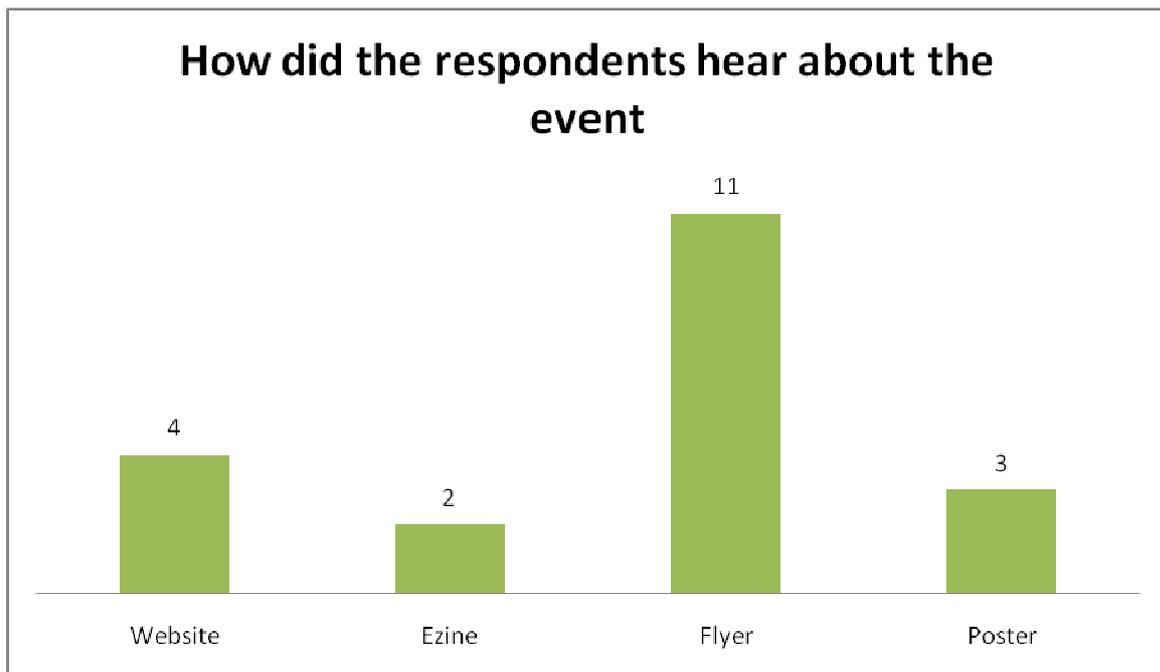
Appendix 3

Question 3: Age Category



Appendix 4

Question 4: How did you hear about the event?



Appendix 5

Question 5: Rate your walk

Ratings from different aspects of the Walking Festival

