



Wicklow Coastal Way

2008 Consultation Survey Report
by John Monaghan

Introduction

A Consultation Survey of the Wicklow Coastal Way and Broadlough Loop Walk was carried out on the 28th of October 2008 by John Monaghan, Trails Advisor, accompanied by Malcolm Spencer, Judy Osborne and Fintan Clarke, Friends of the Murrough, Wicklow.

General Comments:

It is important that all landowners along both walks be consulted and access permission requested before any further development work (waymarking, signage etc.) be carried out. All recommendations and comments below are contingent on this.

If access permission (as in "permissive path" rather than right-of-way) is granted, it is recommended that a maintenance plan be drawn up for the medium and long term upkeep (waymarking, mapboards and interpretative panels, vegetation control, trail surface work) of the walks. An example of necessary vegetation control at present can be found on the cliff walk approaching the lighthouse on Wicklow Head where gorse and ferns encroach on the path. On other sections such as along Broadlough and on 'The Avenue' some vegetation control and minor trail surface work may be needed. It is important that this step (maintenance plan; who will carry out the work and when) is agreed and in place before investing in trail furniture (markers etc.).

Thought should be given to the colour (bar yellow, reserved for long distance waymarked ways e.g. Wicklow Way) and type of marking used to waymark the walks, whether standard black markers or arrow disks attached to rocks, pillars or posts. Contact addresses of trail furniture suppliers accompany this report.

Thought should also be given as to whether to mark the walks in one or both directions.

Wicklow Coastal Way

Description:

The proposed walk is a linear coastal trail starting at Kilcoole Train Station and following the coastal rail line to Wicklow Town, through the picturesque harbour to the Black Castle and along the cliff walk to Wicklow Head with a short stretch of road approximately 1 km linking the path from the harbour along the quays up to the Black Castle. Coastal path 15kms, Cliff walk 5kms.

Comments:

Mapboards / interpretative panels could be erected at the following locations, Kilcoole Railway Station, Six Mile Point, Five Mile Point, end of Killoughter Lane, at car park on the Murrough or opposite Garda Station, and at Wicklow Head to advertise this walk to both locals and visitors. Interpretative panel could include the lengths of different sections of the walk for people who may not want to walk its entire length, type of footwear needed (the cliff path to Wicklow Head is rough coastal path), geography (the names of the coves, headlands and other natural or man-made features), history, geology, flora and fauna.

A short fold-out brochure with sketch map could also give seasonal bus or train timetables so that it may be possible, for example, to travel from Dublin to Wicklow Town by train, or start from Wicklow Town, walk the Coastal Way, and catch a return train from Kilcoole. If timetables permit, a brochure is the ideal medium to present this information, available at the tourist office.

Waymarking (markers or arrow disks) would be needed at the mapboard locations above, also at the road junctions through Wicklow Town connecting the coastal path to the cliff walk, and along the cliff walk itself at intervals. Minimum, but adequate, waymarking is recommended.

At Five Mile Point, rough boulders laid as sea defences have had fences recently erected alongside, blocking the route. A way through will have to be negotiated here.

Metal, timber or rope handrails would be required at five locations along the cliff walk (one at the north end of Glen Strand; the others to the south of it) where the path narrows at the cliff-edge for a short distance, a few steps in each case. Warning signs at these locations are also recommended. If there is an alternative inland path at any of these locations it should be waymarked.

Assessment:

The Murrough area, which seems to have suffered considerably from inappropriate development having many derelict and unsightly buildings, still has great potential as an amenity area suitable for local townspeople and also for attracting visitors. It is an enjoyable, scenic coastal walk suitable for local townspeople and visitors, having few navigational difficulties. It could be extended (waymarked) in time northwards towards Bray, a welcome addition to Ireland's marked walks. There may be an option to extend it southwards from Wicklow Head in the future. These coastal walks seem to form the only parkland that the expanding town of Wicklow has to offer. People, young and old, need these facilities in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Broadlough Loop Walk

Description:

The proposed Broadlough Walk is a loop walk from the town following the east bank of the Leitrim River, then along the east shore of Broadlough, turning right and following 'The Avenue' to the coast and back along the coastal path, approximately 4 kms in length.

Comments:

As pointed out in the General Comments above, all landowners will have to be consulted and access permission granted before any development work for this walk is undertaken. All recommendations and comments below are contingent on this.

Along the Leitrim River the way is blocked by the railway bridge. A way will have to be found under the arch by building a hand-railed boardwalk or permission sought from Iarnród Eireann to cross the railway line. In the latter case, steps up to and down from the line and suitable warning signs would have to be erected.

The next obstacle is the new road, under construction at the time of this survey. No recommendation is possible at this time as to what furniture or marking will be needed or where to cross.

The first half of the route along the shore of Broadlough is not accessible at the moment with a wire fence in place along the water's edge. Permission might be gotten from the landowner to move the fence inland, an agreed "permissive path", not a right-of-way.

The second half of the route along the shore of Broadlough follows a rough track which is periodically covered by high water. Warning of this should be placed on the mapboard / interpretative panel at the start of the walk so that walkers can make up their minds whether to proceed. High water level is another reason why walking on the inland side of the fence in the previous comment seems a better option.

On the narrow channel about 400m short of the Vartry River the walk turns right and follows 'The Avenue' to the coast and returns to the start along the coastal path.

Assessment:

A worthwhile project to provide a local loop walk for townspeople who may not have the time, energy or transport to tackle the longer Coastal Way.