An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe
agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta
Department of Rural and Community
Development and the Gaeltacht

Mr Neil Foulkes
Neilfoulkes62@gmail.com

25 August 2025

Re: AIE request DRCD-AIE-2025-001

Dear Mr Foulkes,

I refer to the request you made under the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2018 (S.I. No. 133 of 2007, S.I. No. 662 of 2011, S.I. 615 of 2014 and S.I. No. 309 of 2018) (hereafter referred to as the AIE Regulations) for access to information held by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG) relating to funding provided to Coillte for Trail Upgrade and related works at the Devil's Glen in County Wicklow.

Summary of Decision

I made a decision on your request on 22 August 2025. Following identification of a number of records and extracts of records which I believe are within the scope of your request and have enclosed a schedule with this letter listing these records.

As no specific timeframe was stipulated in the request, I have based the examination of records on projects supported through the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is in place between DRCDG and Coillte and which covers the period 2022 to 2026. The application and approval process for projects funded under the MOU is different from the application process for funding under other DRCDG schemes such as Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) or CLAR etc. where individual project application forms are received. For the MoU with Coillte, a list of areas for proposed works is provided and agreed each year, rather than individual project applications.

The objective of the MOU is to advance the shared aim of developing and maintaining recreational infrastructure and facilities for the public good, including but not limited to, walks, trails, amenities, signage, information and ancillary facilities which are made available for public use for recreational purposes. Under the MOU the Department has agreed to provide €15m in funding to Coillte over the 5 year period to support the development and maintenance of recreational facilities on Coillte lands. Each year €2m in maintenance funding and €1m in maintenance funding is to be provided to Coillte to support proposed works.

As part of the MOU approval process, an annual capital and maintenance work programme is submitted by Coillte to the Department for consideration. This work programme is an excel file containing brief details and indicative estimated costs for the proposed works. If approved by the Department these works are then co-funded by DRCDG and Coillte. Following clarifications and discussion, the allocation of funding against each of the

proposed work projects may change from the time of initial submission to the time the level of funding is approved.

Details of the projects supported in the Devil's Glen as part of the MOU are listed below:

Year	Funding programme	County	Site/trail name	Project details	DRCDG Contribution
2023	MOU between Coillte & DRCDG	Wicklow	Devils Glen	Solar-powered access gate to car-park	€7,728
2023	MOU between Coillte & DRCDG	Wicklow	Devils Glen	Erect new benches and install safety barriers	€12,229
2024	MOU between Coillte & DRCDG	Wicklow	Devils Glen	River walk maintenance	€7,801
2025	MOU between Coillte & DRCDG	Wicklow	Devils Glen	Storm damage repairs and on going trail repairs	€43,200

Your email included a list of requested documents. Not all these documents exist with DRCDG's records, however, where relative information is available this has been provided.

Please see below.

Requested:

a) **A copy of the application:** As mentioned above, the application process for works to be funded under the MOU differs from that of other DRCDG funded schemes. As part of the process a proposed annual work programme, in the form of an excel sheet containing a list of capital and maintenance works with indicative estimated costings, is submitted by Coillte to DRCDG. Following discussions with Coillte a list of works that will be supported under the MOU is approved in principle. As the work programmes submitted contains details of all projects, I have extracted for your convenience the entries from 2023, 2024 and 2025 which specifically relate to Devil's Glen and have included these extracts in the list of records provided, along with the initial email submission from Coillte. These are records 2, 10 and 16. In addition, where the level of funding to be provided to works at Devil's Glen changed from the initial application, I have included the revised email request and associated extract. (These are records 4, 12 and 18).

b) **A copy of the approval:** Copies of the approval by the Minister for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 work programme are attached, see records 5, 13 & 20. I have also attached emails which issued to Coillte confirming that the 2023 and 2025 work

programmes had been agreed (records 6 & 21). A verbal confirmation was given to Coillte in 2024.

a) **Evidence that Appropriate Assessment Screening was conducted for the works**: Coillte are requested to indicate in the works programme to DRCDG whether all necessary planning consents are in place in respect of each line item. The details in respect of these consents are not held on file by DRCDG and are managed by Coillte directly.

b) **Relevant correspondence**: A search of records was undertaken and there is no additional relevant correspondence specifically relating to Devil's Glen projects being supported under the MOU. The only references to the Devil's Glen are where it is included in the list of works provided by Coillte, as referenced above.

c) **Breakdown of the funds provided:** At year end, in advance of the grant funding being released to Coillte, details of project expenditure is provided to DRCDG. Details of Devil's Glen projects funded in 2023 and 2024 are provided. This contains the email request from Coillte (Records 7 & 14) and an extract from the attached excel file that relates specifically to the Devil's Glen (Records 8 & 15). Details of expenditure on the 2025 project will not be available until year end following completion of the proposed works.

d) **Relevant reporting**: Coillte provide an annual report for DRCDG on the projects supported under the MOU that year. These reports are made available on gov.ie and a link to the 2023 and the 2024 Annual Report has been provided below.

https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/policy-information/schemes-to-support-outdoor-recreation-facilities/#outdoor-recreation-funding-to-coillte

Details of all projects approved for funding under the Memorandum of Understanding between DRCDG and Coillte are available at the following link:

https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/collections/coillte-funding-2022-2026/#2023

Right of review

Under Article 11 of the AIE Regulations you have a right to request an internal review of this decision. An internal review involves a complete reconsideration of the matter by a member of the staff of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the

Gaeltacht, unconnected with the original decision, of the same or higher rank than the original decision-maker, who may affirm, vary or annul the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, you can do so by writing to Michelle Casserly, AIE Officer in the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, referring to this decision, quoting the AIE reference number. This request must be made within one month of the date of receipt of this decision. The decision of an internal review will be communicated to you within one month of receipt of your request for an internal review.

Please contact me at 01 7736939 or Niamh.walsh@drcdg.gov.ie if I can assist you in any matter relating to your request.

Once again I apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh Walsh

Niamh Walsh
Assistant Principal
Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht

No of attachments: 21 plus Schedule of records