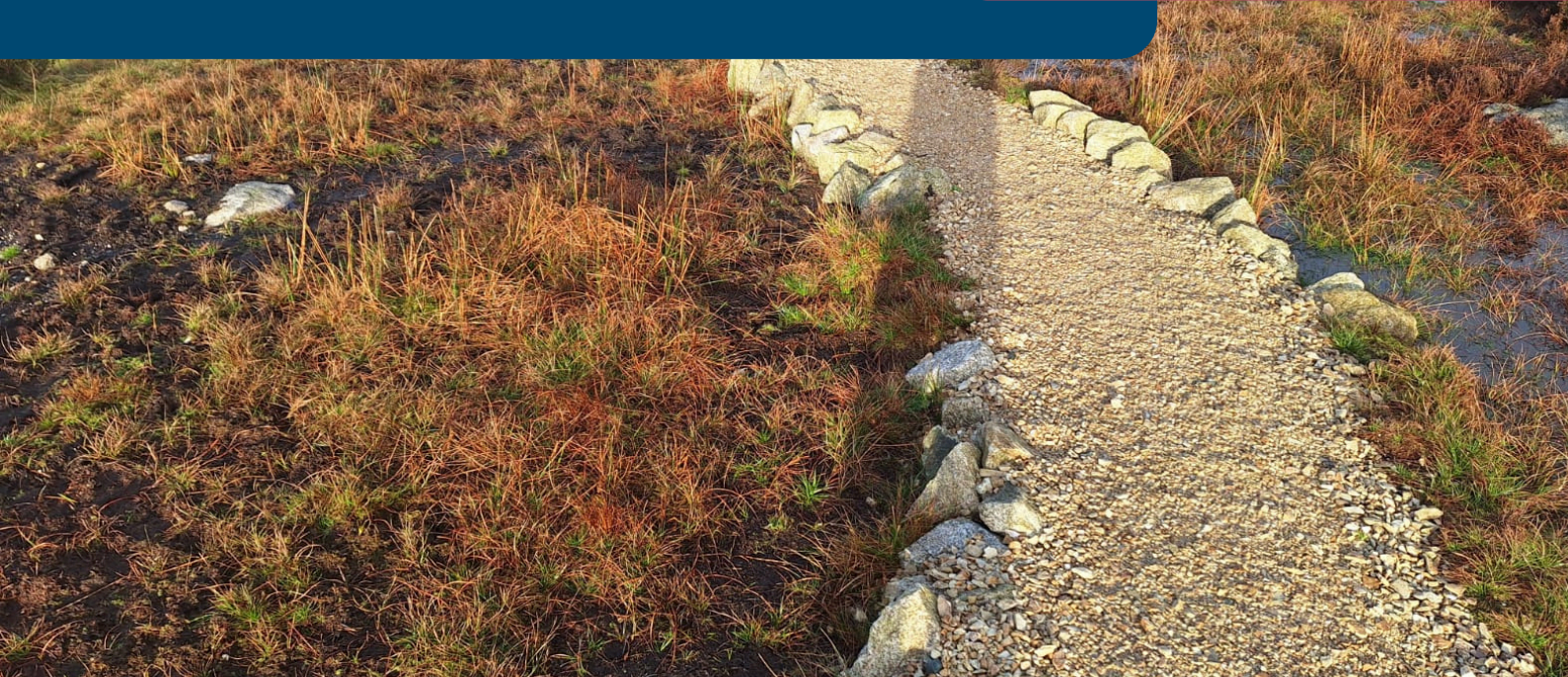


# Sheep Fleece for Trail Design

Expertise



## Overview

Wicklow Mountains National Park has trialed the use of sheep fleece in place of polypropylene membrane in the 'floating path' technique. This technique using sheep fleece has been installed at two locations, both short sections of national way marked ways with high footfall on deep peat (>50cm). The materials, ease of installation and result with regard to effectiveness and sustainability are being monitored..

## Opportunity

There is potential to develop a local enterprise focused on producing suitable fleece for trail construction, as well as for applications in habitat restoration. There are also opportunities to involve local landowners in trail building and habitat restoration projects, enabling them to receive financial support and become more invested in the overall process.

In addition, there is an opportunity to promote the use of sustainable, locally sourced materials in both trail development and habitat restoration, while highlighting the associated environmental and biodiversity benefits.



**Location:**  
Wicklow



**Project Lead:**  
National Parks and  
Wildlife (NPWS)



**Cost:**  
€20,000

Tags: Infrastructure, Walking  
Trails, Hiking/Hillwalking,  
Sustainability, Collaboration

## Feedback

*"This project is a very valuable opportunity for local farmers to engage and collaborate with sustainable solutions to recreational pressures. Farmers and local landowners in Co Wicklow often feel overwhelmed by the amount of people accessing the mountains and this project is a great chance for them to be a part of the solution and to see their sheep's fleece become a valuable material again and to be part of the solution."*

**Wicklow Uplands Council**



## Objective

The objectives of this project were:

- To demonstrate the use of sheep fleece as a trail building material.
- To assess the effectiveness of fleece as a replacement for plastic membrane.
- To broaden the skills of trail-builders in the use of alternative materials and techniques.

## Challenges

The three main challenges were:

- Finding the technical skills and specifications to ensure quality/best practice.
- Sourcing material due to administrative issues.
- Getting materials to the site due to the remoteness of the location.



## Solutions

To respond effectively to the challenges identified, several targeting solutions were implemented

- Collaboration with trail builders with previous experience in this technique.
- Working with local farmers to seek solutions to administrative hurdles.
- Sourcing funding to assist in the transfer of materials to remote site.

## Actions to support environmental sustainability

The project itself is aimed at reducing the use of imported manufactured materials with much higher embedded energy and carbon footprint than the locally sourced fleece. The trail being built/repared includes the rehabilitation of the adjacent habitat using landscaping techniques. This will support local biodiversity and allow legally protected, but damaged, dry heath/blanket bog habitat to flourish again.

## More information

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