



## Briefing Document for Artists

**OPW Per Cent for Art Commission**  
in collaboration with National Parks & Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Mayo County Council Arts Office



**OPW**

Oifig na  
nOibreacha Poiblí  
Office of Public Works



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht



Mayo Arts  
Service



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<sup>1</sup> Photo by Ros Kavanagh

# Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park Visitor Centre

Per Cent for Art Commission

## Introduction

Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park, located on the Western seaboard in northwest Mayo, is one of Ireland's six National Parks. It comprises 15,000 hectares that is dominated by Atlantic blanket bog and mountainous terrain, covering a vast uninhabited wild landscape dominated by the Nephin Beg mountain range. The Visitor Centre is the main information point for Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park. It opened in 2009 and has welcomed visitors to the National Park from different parts of Ireland and from all over the world. Guides at the centre introduce visitors to the flora and fauna of the park and promote the conservation work being carried out to protect species and ecosystems in Ireland. This is achieved through education programmes and public engagement.

[See Appendix A for further information about the Park and Visitor Centre]

In 2019, the Visitor Centre celebrates its tenth anniversary and will mark the occasion by announcing a unique public art opportunity. Under the Per Cent for Art Scheme, the OPW will commission a new work in collaboration with National Parks & Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Mayo County Council Arts Office. This project will be commissioned in line with the National Guidelines on Public Art using the open competition process and managed in two stages. The total budget available for this commission is €30,000.

## Stage One

### Expression of Interest

Seeking expressions of interest from artists working in the medium of sculpture and community-engagement in their practice. It is envisaged that the selected artist(s) will work on site with communities. The Panel is open to a broad range of methods for engagement with communities and arising from this process, the artist will create a permanent sculpture for the National Park Visitor Centre in Ballycroy. The timescale for this project is estimated to begin in April 2020, for completion in October 2020.

A preferred location for the sculpture on the grounds of the Visitor Centre has been identified. A site visit has been arranged for artists on **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 2pm**. This visit will offer an opportunity to meet with the Client, attendance is strongly advised. Further locations may be discussed during the site visit.

Images can be provided for those who cannot attend. The contact person for such is Margaret Flaherty who can be reached by email: [Margaret.Flaherty@chg.gov.ie](mailto:Margaret.Flaherty@chg.gov.ie) or by phone: 098-49872 / 085-8009232 at Wild Nephin National Park Visitor Centre.

## **Sculpture**

Owing to the natural beauty of the site, its scenic views and strong features, the placing of a sculpture within the area and the materials used by artists will require careful consideration and sensitivity. Artists are invited to respond to issues of sustainability and biodiversity in their proposals, tying in with the core values upheld by the team responsible for the management of the park and Visitor Centre.

## **Community Engagement**

It is intended that local people and communities will be involved in the process of creating the sculpture. This does not necessarily have to be through traditional workshop methods: creative consultation, interviews, collaboration on research etc., will all be considered suitable forms of engagement. The artist will receive support in identifying, contacting and working with suitable local groups / communities. Applications should include an outline of how the community would be involved and which types of community the artist would hope to engage with throughout the process.

## **Finance**

Artists are invited to submit budget proposals up to a maximum of €30,000. Budgets should include all costs; fees to the artist/arts group, insurance, any necessary research, materials, production, realisation, installation, contingencies, documentation and VAT, not exceeding €30,000.

## **Competition Process**

This is a two-stage open competition, managed in line with the National Guidelines on Public Art.

## **Submissions – Stage One**

Stage one is a call for expressions of interest. Proposals will be assessed and shortlisted by a panel of art specialists.

Expressions of interest at stage one must contain:

- Textual description outlining the concept for the project (max 400 words)
- Draft costings and timescale for the proposal.
- Artist statement, CV and three examples of previous projects.

Expressions of interest can be emailed to Aoife O'Toole, Mayo Arts Service: [aotoole@mayococo.ie](mailto:aotoole@mayococo.ie) by Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

## **Shortlisting Criteria – Stage One**

- Artistic integrity of concept proposed.
- Feasibility of proposal in terms of initial costings and timescale.
- Level of community engagement.
- Suitability of sculptural materials in response to the brief.
- Artistic merit and track record.

## **Submissions – Stage Two**

Shortlisted artists will be issued with a letter of invitation to submit more fully realised proposals at stage two.

Submission requirements at stage two must contain:

- Artist Statement, not exceeding 400 words.
- Textual description of concept (max 400 words) accompanied by drawings, maquettes, photographs, digital representations and sample materials, as necessary.
- Budget breakdown to include all costs in relation to the creation of the work (materials, transportation, installation, insurances, consultancy fees, VAT and contingencies).
- Specifications and timescale to ensure that the budget and deadline will be met.
- Proposed maintenance plans for the long-term care of the artwork.
- Artist's CV and documentation of other relevant artworks completed.

Short-listed artists will be paid an honorarium fee of €550 after the Selection Panel is satisfied that the submission meets the requirements as set out above. The submission

is to be delivered to Aoife O'Toole, Mayo Arts Service: [aotoole@mayococo.ie](mailto:aotoole@mayococo.ie) | 094 9064376 by 5pm on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

### **Shortlisting Criteria – Stage Two**

Shortlisted proposals will be assessed by the Selection Panel using the following criteria:

- Concept and relevance to the brief. Client suitability.
- Quality and originality of artistic ideas.
- Process and feasibility of the proposal.
- Capacity of the artist (or team) to develop, manage and deliver the project on time and within budget.
- Track record of the individual or team.

### **Estimated Timescale**

Stage One:

- Brief issued: Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019
- Site visit: Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 2pm
- Submission of proposals at stage one (expressions of interest): Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January
- Meeting of Selection Panel: Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January
- Letters of invitation to a shortlist of artists: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February

Stage Two:

- Submission of realised proposals: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March
- Meeting of Selection Panel: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March
- Submission fee paid: Week of 16<sup>th</sup> March
- Commission Awarded: Week of 16<sup>th</sup> March
- Contract issued to selected artist: Week of 23<sup>rd</sup> March
- Project realisation commences: Early April 2020
- Installation of sculpture: October 2020

### **Selection Panel**

The final selection will be undertaken by a Panel including a Professional Practicing Artist, representatives of Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park Visitor Centre, Mayo County Council Arts Office and the OPW Art Management Office. Artists may be invited to present their proposal to the Panel before the final selection is made.

Where the Selection Panel considers that no submission has met with the criteria set out in the briefing document they may decide to consider other commissioning options.

## **12. General Conditions**

- Applicants are responsible for the cost of submissions.
- Late submissions will not be accepted.
- All materials submitted should be clearly labelled with the applicant's name and contact details.
- The Selection Panel, whose decision is final, has the right to clarify any issue which may arise in the course of selection.
- Artists or teams may be asked to supply the names and contact details of referees as part of the selection process.
- The OPW reserves the right not to award commissions and in this instance reserves the right to pursue other selection processes.
- All reasonable care will be taken with each submission. The OPW does not accept responsibility for any loss or damage which may occur.
- Artists are responsible for collection of their submissions. Collections must be arranged within six weeks of the announcement of the results of the competition.

## **13. Terms and Conditions**

- The successful artist/team will be issued with a contract.
- The appointed artist/team will be required to have the following insurances prior to a contract being placed:
  - a. Public Liability Insurance cover of €6.5 million with an indemnity to principal extension.
  - b. Employers Liability Cover of €13 million with an indemnity to principal extension (where employees are engaged to work on the Commission).
- The Commissioners will not insure equipment belonging to the artist or their associates.
- The artwork must comply with Health and Safety standards. The successful submission will be subject to Health and Safety checks.
- The appointed artist/team will have to supply an up to date Tax Clearance Access Number prior to signing of contract and for the duration of the commission.

- Applicants should note that all commissions awarded are VAT inclusive.
- The OPW is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. If you consider that any of the information supplied by you is either commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, this should be highlighted and the reasons for the sensitivity specified. However, OPW retain sole discretion in determining the disclosure required under the terms of the FOI Act.

## **Appendix A:**

Info about Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park and relevant projects etc –

- Groups that might be interested in engaging with the project – Astronomy groups / CE Scheme participants / Schools / Interest groups
- Resources within the Centre / Park and wider community that may be available to artists – community centre / workshop space, etc

**Key themes for artists:** Biodiversity, sustainability, conservation, environment, bogs, mountains, rivers, landscape, fauna, flora and dark skies.

### **Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park**

Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park was first established in 1998, it is the youngest of the six National Parks in Ireland. The National Park is managed by the National Parks & Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Located on the western seaboard in northwest Mayo, it is comprised of 15,000 hectares and is dominated by Atlantic blanket bog and mountainous terrain. National Park lands encompass vast, uninhabited wild landscapes where the Nephin Beg Mountain Range overlooks one of the last intact active blanket bog systems in Ireland and Western Europe. This ecosystem is significant for its scientific and scenic features and the National Park lands are part of the Natura 2000 Network that protects rare and important habitats and species under the EU Habitats and Birds Directive. National Parks in Ireland are recognised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures that are needed to safeguard it. National Parks in Ireland are Category II, which means that their primary objectives are to protect natural biodiversity along with the underlying ecological structures and supporting environmental processes, as well as to promote education and recreation.

The wealth of biodiversity in these relatively untouched lands are important both nationally and internationally. Rare plants are found on the bog and on the banks of the

Tarsaghuan and Owenduff Rivers. These habitats in turn support a vast array of animal life including Irish mountain hare, otter, pipistrelle bats, Atlantic salmon, trout, eels, dragonflies, damselflies, and various birds including red grouse, dippers, ravens, merlin, golden plover, Greenland white-fronted geese and peregrine falcons – to name but a few. The spectacular Nephin Beg Mountain Range forms the backbone of this stunning landscape and in turns provides habitats for rare species of plants associated with alpine heath.

In 2009 the National Park Visitor Centre opened and is located in the village of Ballycroy. The site on which the Visitor Centre stands, a 40 hectare site, is located 3kms from the main body of the National Park. The Visitor Centre plays an important role in interpreting the landscape and biodiversity of the National Park. This is in part fulfilment of the objectives of National Parks in Ireland, and education and public awareness is an integral part of the day to day operations at the National Park Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre has a free exhibition focussing on the biodiversity of the National Park and surroundings landscapes and seascapes, with some information on historical land uses.

On the site, visitors can also enjoy a short walk (1.8km). The trail consists of hard surfaces and wooden boardwalk with a spur bringing walkers on a gentle incline to the viewing point at the top of Cleary's Hill. Here visitors can enjoy 360° views of the surrounding landscape and seascapes.

A second accessible National Park trail is 10 minute drive to the south of Ballycroy village at Claggan Mountain. This coastal trail is a 2km loop where walkers take the accessible boardwalk out and stroll back along the shore. Many of our visitors to the coastal trail are surprised to see the bog coming right down to the sea. The area is known locally as *Ros na Finne* or Wood of the Waves. This is testament of the woodlands that once covered this area, where now only ancient tree stumps remain. The coastal trail is a great location for wildlife watching, with otters, ringed plovers, and various wading and diving birds spotted regularly.

The third access point is located on the eastern side of the National Park, north of Newport, at an area known as Letterkeen. This area was only recently added to the National Park lands when 4,000 hectare of previously Coillte owned and managed commercial forestry was given over to the National Park. This area is now part of a rewilding project where extensive planting of native trees will be undertaken on suitable soils and restoration of bog habitat where appropriate. Here there are three looped walkways as well as access onto the Bangor Trail, a centuries old drover's trail that pass through the Park along the foothills of the Nephin Beg mountains.

In 2016, the lands of the National Park were designated as a gold-tier Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association. This means that the National Park or Mayo Dark Sky Park is one of the best places in the world to see the night sky, where up to 4,500 twinkling stars can be seen; our pristine skies are a result of the absence of light



pollution. The Visitor Centre, Claggan Mountain and Letterkeen are recommended viewing points for the Dark Sky Park. We keep the lights off in our car park at the Visitor Centre to reduce any light trespassing into the night sky. Special shields have also been placed on these light fixtures, so all light gets directed downwards should we need to turn on the car park lights.

In 2018 the Visitor Centre was awarded the Green Flag from the Green Flag for Parks Scheme and this flag was maintained for 2019. This is a mark of a quality park or green space and is recognised throughout the world. This award is not given lightly and is in recognition of exceeding tough environmental standards for green space management, and for delivering excellent visitor facilities. Judged by a peer jury of green space experts, visits are conducted to applicant sites and the jury assess sites against eight criteria, including horticultural standards, cleanliness, sustainability, and community involvement. As a recipient of the prestigious award, the National Park Visitor Centre will strive to maintain this Green Flag annually through demonstrating best practise when it comes to sustainability and promoting conservation of biodiversity, as well as the continued provision of a valuable outdoor amenity for the local community and visitors from further afield.

There is pollinator friendly management of the grasslands around the Visitor Centre. This management includes less frequent mowing of the grass and the front of the Visitor Centre is managed as a meadow, with paths cut through to allow visitors to enjoy the many wildflowers that are let grow. Rhododendron ponticum is present on the site and the National Park staff has been trying to manage and control this non-native invasive species as it's a major threat to our biodiversity. Along the trail at the Visitor Centre, visitors will find a man-made pond. This feature is to imitate the important role that bog pools provide for both vegetation and animal life. The pond is home to some aquatic plant species including pond lilies and bog bean. Animals include dragonfly and damselfly larva, frogs, newts, various beetles and pond skaters. Several hundred trees have been planted around the grounds also, some by the children from the two local primary schools Scoil Bhríde & Drumgallagh National School.

Various special events are also organised throughout the season to celebrate our natural and cultural heritage. The Visitor Centre is open daily from mid-March until the first weekend in November. The season culminates with the annual Dark Sky Festival. For more information on the National Park, Dark Sky Park and the Dark Sky Festival see the following websites <https://www.ballycroynationalpark.ie/> <http://mayodarkskypark.ie/> and <https://www.mayodarkskyfestival.ie/>

**Additional Contact Info:**

For queries about Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park Visitor Centre, please contact Margaret Flaherty who can be reached by email: [Margaret.Flaherty@chg.gov.ie](mailto:Margaret.Flaherty@chg.gov.ie) or by phone: 098-49872 / 085-8009232 at Wild Nephin National Park Visitor Centre.

For queries about submissions, please contact Aoife O'Toole by email: [aotoole@mayococo.ie](mailto:aotoole@mayococo.ie) or by phone: 094 9064376 at Mayo County Council Arts Office.

For other queries about commissioning procedures, please contact Louise Ward by email: [louise.ward@opw.ie](mailto:louise.ward@opw.ie) or by phone: 01 647 6077 at the Art Management Office, Office of Public Works.