

The Levying of fees on Commercial Outdoor Activity Providers

While the commercial outdoor sector in Ireland is developing, it is still very small. In 2014, a survey (unpublished) conducted for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, indicated that there were somewhere less than 600 people employed in the outdoor activity sector in the Republic of Ireland. In 2014, Sport Northern Ireland conducted a survey that found there are 170 commercial outdoor operators in Northern Ireland. The sector is characterised by seasonal and part-time employment and low pay levels. The majority of people working in the sector do so out of passion for the outdoors.

Those who work commercially in the provision of outdoor recreation have a significant responsibility to those whose land they conduct their business on to ensure that a positive relationship exists and to avoid any burden or nuisance on the landowner. Only through such positive relationships can everyone (landowners, B&Bs and other accommodation providers, local shops, restaurants and pubs, local bus and taxi providers, local employment, etc) benefit. It is worth noting that an upland area without appropriately skilled outdoor activity providers would have a significantly diminished offering for tourists. Commercial outdoor activity providers are obliged to pay taxes on their profits, employers PRSI etc. and, under plans currently being progressing through the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to regulate the outdoor activity sector, they are likely to be required to register once they meet legal requirements and pay whatever fee is required by the State.

In this regard, Mountaineering Ireland does not support any additional rates on outdoor activity providers other than those that the State demands in taxation and by way of any national regulation of activity providers.