



Irish Sport HQ
National Sports Campus
Blanchardstown
Dublin 15, Ireland

Tel +353(0)1 625 1115
Email: info@mountaineering.ie

25th July 2018

Minister Josepha Madigan
Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht
23 Kildare St
Dublin2, D02 TD30

Re: Luggala Estate, Co. Wicklow

Dear Minister,

Mountaineering Ireland, the national representative body for hillwalkers and climbers which has 12,500 members across the island, asks that you act without delay to avert the potential loss to the public of recreational access to the lands of the Luggala Estate in Co. Wicklow. The estate, which is privately owned, was offered for sale in early 2017.

The exceptional scenic quality of the landscape around Luggala has for many decades attracted walkers of all levels of ability, especially from the greater Dublin area, including no doubt very many from your own constituency. The imposing granite cliffs on Luggala provide some of the best rockclimbing in Wicklow and frame an iconic view of Lough Tay that has made this a much sought-after film location, and in turn a must-have photograph for tourists visiting Co. Wicklow. It is undisputedly a great jewel in the crown of the Wicklow Mountains.

It is our understanding that sustained and detailed discussions took place last year between officials of your Department and representatives of the Guinness family trust which owns the estate, with a view to the property being acquired by the State as part of Wicklow Mountains National Park. As the estate is surrounded on three sides by the National Park it would considerably enhance the coherence of the Park which is currently quite fragmented. These discussions appear to have been inconclusive, for reasons that are not clear and have not been communicated to stakeholders or the public.

The untimely death of Garech Browne, the custodian of Luggala in March 2018, and the appearance of new 'Private Property' signage along the roadside at Luggala within the last couple of weeks imply that change may be imminent, or a new situation may be developing which could threaten the future public enjoyment of this magnificent mountain landscape.

It has been reported in the press that the National Parks & Wildlife Service has recommended the purchase of 4,000 acres of the estate (excluding Luggala Lodge and its surroundings) for its significant and strategic importance, not just to Wicklow Mountains National Park but to the public and tourism interests. This is an approach which Mountaineering Ireland is supportive of as the public has enjoyed unrestricted access to the mountains, cliffs and valley of Luggala Estate for generations, while at the same time respecting the privacy of the main house and its surrounding grounds. It is also likely that the mountain lands would have a much lower market value than the entire estate.

Directors: P. Barron; I. Buckley; H. Donoghue; T. Kane; P. Kellagher; M. Maunsell; C. Mahon; G. McLoughlin
C. O'Connor; I. Sorohan; D. Stelfox; G. Thomas; S. Walsh.

Mountaineering Ireland is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in Dublin, Ireland, number 199053.

Registered Office: Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.



Luggala is of great importance to Mountaineering Ireland members and the wider public; if the estate is sold to private interests, the previously accepting regime in relation to public access could easily be ended. While we believe this can be prevented, if it does come to pass, Mountaineering Ireland will be calling on Government, and yourself as Minister, to explain to the public how the State allowed this to happen.

Mountaineering Ireland urges you, as the Minister responsible, to re-engage with the representatives of the Guinness family trust with the aim of securing these much-cherished mountain lands in public ownership for the benefit of current and future generations.

Mountaineering Ireland also seeks the opportunity to meet with you at the earliest opportunity to discuss this matter. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Murrough McDonagh
Chief Executive Officer