

# The Environment & Our Policy:

Our environment is our home and we care for it with respect and thought. It is extremely important to us that our gardens, forests and fields are a safe, pleasant place for humans and animals. A visitor to Slieve Aughty will find a natural, peaceful, rich surrounding functioning in harmony. Actions we have already taken to minimize our impact on the environment:

## Energy:

- Buildings are designed with large windows or skylights to allow natural daylight, reducing the need for artificial lighting during the day.
- No lights are left on during the night. Most light bulbs are energy efficient models. As older ones are replaced new energy efficient lighting will be installed.
- Windows are double glazed glass and are cleaned regularly.
- In new construction, thick insulation reduces heat use.
- Supplemental heating in the eco-lodge is supplied by a wood burning stove. Timber is harvested on the property.
- Wind generated electricity is provided by Airtricity.
- Washing is air dried 95% of the time.
- Appliances are turned off when not in use.

## Water:

- Low flow shower heads, sink taps and toilets are installed in the common areas.
- Rainwater is collected for use in the stables and garden.
- Wastewater is treated with a natural puraflo peat moss treatment system.
- Hot discharge water from the dishwasher is sometimes used to clean floors or outside decking.

## Food:

- More than 1 acre of vegetables and fruits are sourced on the property, grown without pesticide or herbicide
- Additional fruits and vegetables are locally sourced and organic
- Meat is provided by cows and sheep raised on site or deer harvested on the centre's property
- We have 18 hens laying fresh eggs.
- Cheese and additional free-range eggs are provided by local farms
- Mushrooms are harvested from the forest when available
- More than 50% of purchased products are certified organic
- Pizzas and bread are made in the clay oven weekly during high season
- Coffee and tea purchased displays the fair trade logo

## Waste:

- Food waste is composted or fed to chickens
- Packaging waste is minimised by growing our own food, buying locally produced foods and buying in bulk.

- The centre uses only 24 wheelie bins per year and plans to decrease waste generation annually.
- Paper waste is composted or used as kindling
- All plastic, glass and tin is recycled
- Building materials are recycled and used in art projects or new construction
- Two chalets, built in 2007, were constructed with old timber, roof and brick from our old guest house. Dining room furniture was made with timber from the old guest house as well. In 2010, 2 sheds were renovated completely with materials from the original guest house.
- Old tiles are used for mosaics. Old tires are used to make cross country jumps, and old horse shoes are sanded, painted and decorated for sale to guests and visitors as souvenirs.
- Manure is composted and used as fertiliser in the garden and land

### **Travel:**

- We encourage all our guests to travel by land and sea to Ireland and to use public transportation once in the country. Guests who choose non-air travel receive a 5% discount on their holiday.
- During their holiday, guests walk, horse ride or cycle. If they want to go sightseeing, we encourage visits to local areas to minimise travel distance.
- Transports are arranged by bus or taxi with as many people as possible
- Guests are encouraged to walk or cycle to their accommodation if it is off site
- Farm bikes are provided free for guests to visit the immediate area
- For guests travelling on to other accommodation providers, we have formed partnerships with like minded people who will continue to uphold sustainable practices when guests stay with them.

### **Detergents and Cleaning:**

- Eco-friendly cleaners are used for all cleaning and clothes washing.
- No fertilisers or pesticides are used in the garden or on the land
- Cloths are used instead of paper towels.
- Paper towelling from the toilet room is reused to clean windows

### **Staff and Guest Awareness:**

- All staff members are provided with Leave No Trace booklets and a staff training manual and sign something stating that they have read them.
- Notices are posted in all buildings to remind guests and staff to practice Leave No Trace and low impact habits.
- Ample information about our eco-friendly practices and current environmental issues is available on our web site.
- Guests are encouraged to walk the self-guided nature walk and visit the nature hut at the centre.

### **Conservation:**

- Some of our land is designated as a Special Protection Area for the hen harrier, a threatened bird of prey. Rare bog plants and hedgerows are preserved as hen harriers habitat.

- The centre supports the [Irish Peatlands Conservation Council](#) through a yearly membership fee and promotes their products in the nature hut.
- Bird houses have been placed around the centre.
- Native tree species are planted each year.

### **Community Involvement:**

- We have created the Kylebrack Walkers Group to organise community concerns and interests in the forest. This includes organising a yearly forest clean up.
- At the Centre we promote environmental awareness with a nature trail and eco-logic programme. The centre offers free classroom visits to schools to educate students about rubbish and recycling.
- Organic gardening workshops are available
- The centre has spent its own money and resources to develop a nature walk that is open to the public and free.

### **Our Community:**

Our community is our home. We are an integral part of it and have been for more than 25 years now. The Centre takes an active role and interest in the people and natural resources associated with our community and supports many of the residents within it directly and indirectly.

An ecotourism holiday at Slieve Aughty Centre involves the entire community. We employ local guides and accommodation providers and buy local products as often as possible. We support local crafters, soccer clubs, and tourist attractions, as well as hold events throughout the year that are open to the community, such as Friday evening pizza parties in summer, Easter and Halloween festivals, and Saturday riding lessons for children and adults. Guests are encouraged to interact with the community, visit it's hidden gems, and spend an evening at the local pub.

In early 2012, Slieve Aughty Centre took the lead in forming a community organisation called the Kylebrack Walkers Group, formed to protect and enhance the forest resource of the community. This group is holding regular meetings and is actively participating to tackle important issues of access and litter.

Communities often have a shared culture, and we have provided written materials for our guests to learn about the rich history of this area. Our guides are also born and raised in the area and know a lot about the people and myths, and they are happy to share their knowledge for those interested. It is an area rich in history, not to be missed. We hope our guests will take the time to explore the wonders around them as there is much to be learned and experienced within a few miles of the centre.