Pauric McAnespy WebDesign

Case Study: WalkNI

A re-design & migration to a WordPress CMS for the online guide to walking in NI

www.walkni.com

![Pauric McAnespy WebDesign logo]
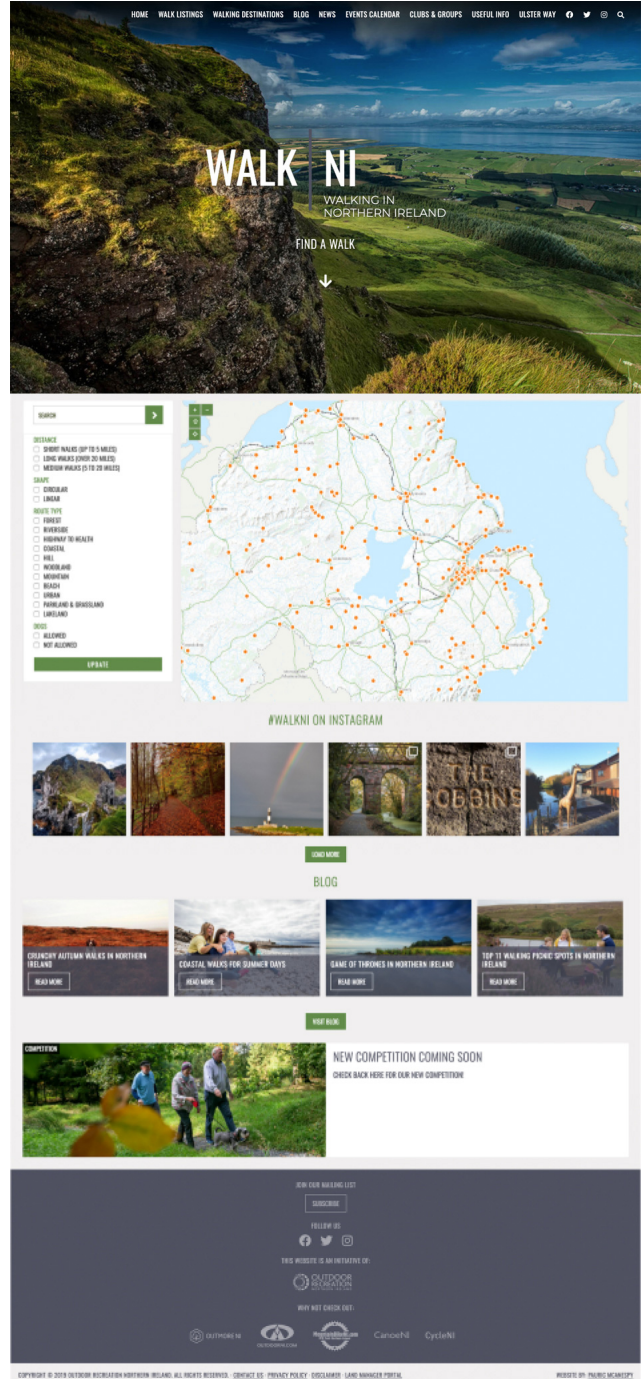
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Overview

WalkNI is a huge resource of information on 500 walking routes in Northern Ireland with over 500,000 visits a year.

The site was originally built 15 years ago and was due a refresh to make it mobile friendly as an increasing percentage of users were on mobile.

They required a user friendly way to find walks and route information with emphasis on mobile.

Website Requirements

- An modern design with intuitive layout and navigation which would look great on desktop and mobile
- Integrating interactive mapping from a third party source
- An advanced Search and Filter functionality matching the map filters
- An events section with interactive calendar and form allowing users to upload new events
- Encourage user generated content through comments section and report a problem form
- Maintaining high SEO ratings from old website
- Training in all aspects of website management

WalkNI home page

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Migration

The website was originally built on an asp.net CMS and the client required migration to a WordPress CMS.

The only way to guarantee a clean migration was to do it manually – for each of the 500 walks there was text content, image and pdf downloads and a map to source.


Website migration

Web Design

Branding and website colours were supplied by the client.

The initial design concept was to use full width images for each walk. Unfortunately, the majority of images from the old site weren't of sufficient size so a 2 column layout was used for desktop, switching to 1 column on mobile.

Some walks were very text heavy while others had less text. The solution was to show/hide content behind tabs. This also worked well on mobile by avoiding lots of scrolling.
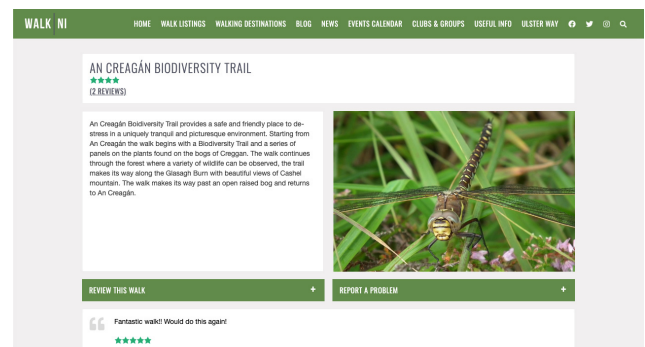
Walk page 2 column layout
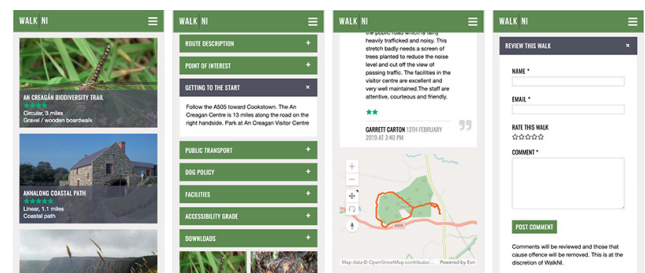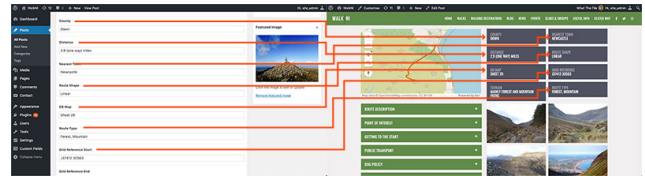

Mobile views

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Web Development

A lightweight custom theme was developed and page templates designed.

Using the Advanced Custom Fields plugin I was able to create custom admin pages allowing control over how content appears on screen.

Other plugins used to add functionality.

- Contact Forms
- Search and Filter
- Events Calendar
- 301 Redirects

Advance Custom Fields

Interactive Maps

The maps to be added to the website were originally developed for WalkNI's sister organisation Outmore-NI. In order to display them on the new website the IP addresses of the development and live servers had to be whitelisted. The maps were then embedded as iframes.
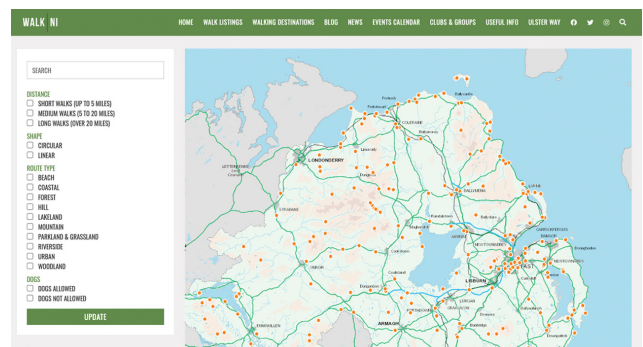
There were 2 types of maps:

The main map
This was to be displayed prominently on the homepage and acted as a filtered navigation. It had to be heavily modified with CSS to match the website guidelines.

Walk maps
Each walk had a unique map with a walk trail which had to be downloaded from OutmoreNI.


Main map with filters

Walk map

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Search & Filter

An index showing all walks with identical filters to the main map was required. For this I matched the WordPress categories to the map and used a Search & Filter plugin to add interactivity.

As approximately 500 walks are displayed on this page, I used JavaScript lazyload to load only the images that appear in the browser window.
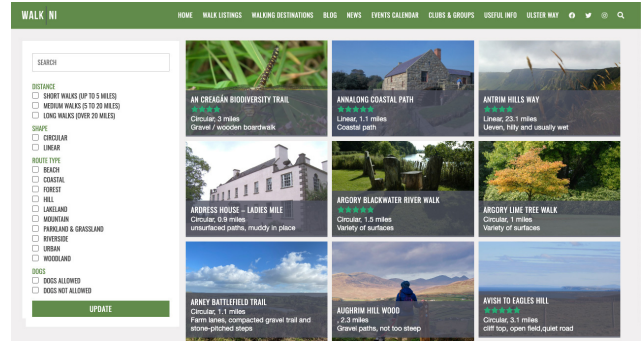

Search & Filter page

Events Section

An Events Section was required to promote upcoming events and allow users to submit their own event.

An Events calendar plugin was customised to match the website design guidelines. The functionality allowed admin users to add/remove events and schedule when the event could appear.

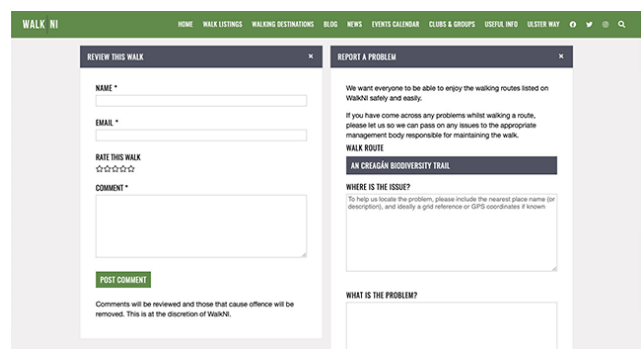A detailed contact form was used to allow user to upload their own event.
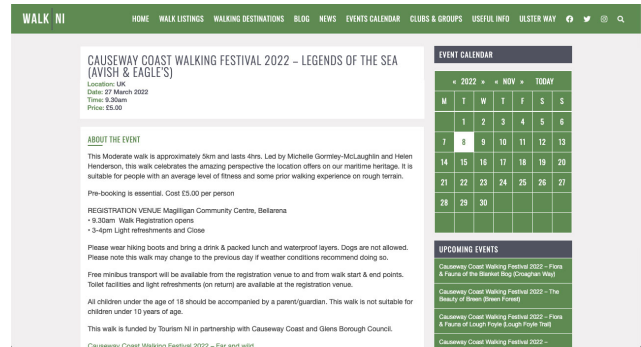
Events section

User Generated Content

User content was important as it provides up-to-date information on any issues with a walk.

Users were encouraged to review walks and provide a rating. They could also provide content by using the Report a Problem and Suggest an Event form.

*User comment and report a problem forms*

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SEO

The old website performed well in search engines and it was important to maintain those high ratings for all pages.

However the page urls from the old site were SEO unfriendly
e.g. walkni.com/walks/344/slieve-donard-via-glen-river/ so I recreated the pages as SEO friendly: walkni.com/walks/slieve-donard-via-glen-river/.

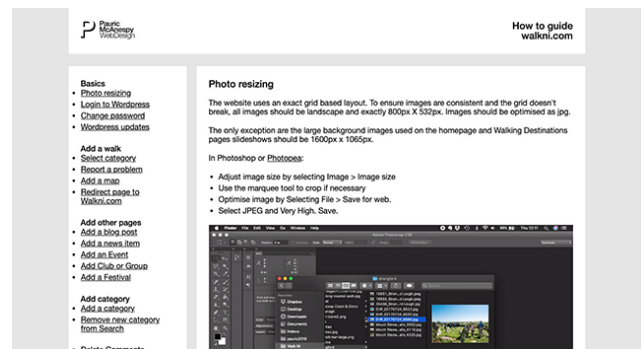I then used a 301 Redirects plugin to point to the new url resulting in no loss to SEO and new, SEO friendly urls.
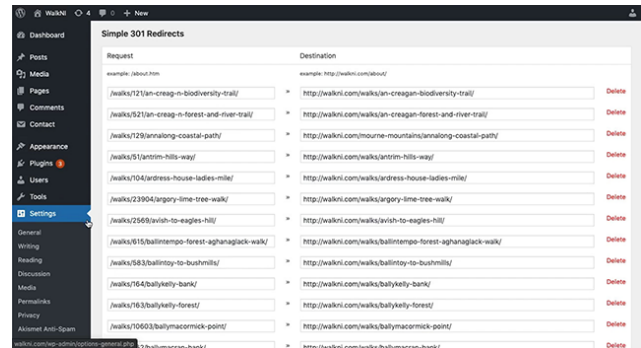
301 Redirects page

Training

Training was required in all aspects of managing the website post launch.

I created a "How to Guide" mini-site consisting of 18 step-by-step text instructions and video guides on how to update all aspects of the website.

WalkNI tutorial mini-site

Result

The website was launched in October 2019 and feedback has been positive from users, who have been contributing to the content by giving ratings and leaving comments.

WalkNI admin have been updating the site frequently with new walks, blog posts and news items as part of a successful online marketing strategy to attract users to the website.