



MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
Glencree, Wednesday 16 APRIL 2008

Present: Dermot Hand – Chair, Eoin Browne, Sean Byrne, Claire Chambers, Michael Cogan, Pearse Connolly, Pearse Foley, Tony Flynn, Peter Galvin, Eileen Kennedy, Edmond Kenny, Tim Kyne, Joe Walker.

In attendance: Helen Lawless, Lenka Mulligan, Colin Murphy

Apologies: Donal Anderson, Saive Coffey, Pat Ewen, Brian Kehoe, Philip Maguire

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March were approved subject to addition of attendance for the WDMB meeting. Adoption of the minutes was proposed by Sean Byrne and seconded by Pearse Connolly.

2. CASHFLOW AND FUNDING

Joe Walker apologised for the delay in finalising 2007 accounts, these should be going to the auditor soon. €15,000 was received 15 April from Wicklow County Council.

3. CORPORATE FUNDRAISING EVENT

Scheduled for 28 April 2008 in Ritz Carlton, this is an invitation-only event aimed at senior managers. Tony Flynn is briefing Denis O'Brien. An attendance of 40 is hoped for. Colin Murphy appealed to board members to suggest names of people who might be able to attend and contribute financially to the Forum.

4. WICKLOW COUNTY IFA CONCERNS

Dermot Hand briefed the board on developments since the March meeting. An e-mail was received on 25 March confirming Wicklow IFA's decision to suspend participation, pending final decision at April meeting on 14 April. Dermot's response, dated 27 March was circulated to the board and confirmed our wish to resolve the present difficulties. Following phone conversations and a further email from Declan O'Neill on 7 April, Dermot wrote back on 9 April (again circulated to the board). This stated that WUC would welcome another meeting in an attempt to resolve the difficulties and suggested that it would be helpful if IFA first put their view in writing on the matters at issue. There is no indication as yet of a decision being taken regarding WUC membership at Wicklow IFA's meeting on 14 April.

Sean Byrne reported discussion at the WMNP Liaison Committee meeting (15 April) regarding Minister Gormley's recommendation to Wicklow County Council that a Special Amenity Area Order be applied to the Great and Little Sugarloafs. As yet there is no confirmation available on this.

Colin Murphy conveyed Saive Coffey's concerns regarding the latest letter to the IFA and the proposed INTERREG project.

4.1 Landscape

Colin Murphy reported that Michael Starrett (Heritage Council) is due to attend a meeting being arranged by Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for late April to discuss the proposed National Landscape Strategy. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in 2004 and places certain obligations on our country; the Heritage Council has been

pushing Government to fulfil these responsibilities. Dermot Hand stated that in his view the Board should be better briefed on the landscape issue.

Tim Kyne suggested that WUC prepare a position paper on the topic, while Michael Cogan suggested research on how ELC and landscape management is being dealt with in other countries.

Pearse Connolly highlighted the wider issues influencing Wicklow's future, for example the projected increase in Bray's population from 40,000 in 2006 to 80,000 in 2030.

Sean Byrne pointed out that much land is non-agricultural and that landscape management needed to go beyond agricultural models such as REPS.

It was agreed that WUC representatives (Sean Byrne, Joe Walker and Colin Murphy or Helen Lawless) should meet with Michael Starrett on 21 April to make clear the depth of landowners' concerns regarding designation, the need for broad consultation and the need for sensitivity regarding the language used in dealing with this subject.

It was suggested that WUC write to Dept. of Agriculture and the Dept of Environment, Heritage & Local Government on this issue, however it was agreed that a decision on this should be taken following the meeting on 21 April.

Dermot Hand suggested the board devote the bulk of its next meeting to the landscape issue and asked that the staff team prepare a briefing document.

5. PROJECTS

5.1 Forestry

Joe Walker reported a huge response to the owners' survey (c30%). The Steering Group will continue for the time being but will hand over to some extent to the owners' study group being formed 17 April 2008. This group will exist till end-June and its brief is to set out priorities and arrange a meeting of all survey respondents to form an ongoing owner's group.

5.2 ECOAM

Colin Murphy reported that Marie Claude Esculier, the co-ordinator for the overall INTERREG application is contracted to assist with writing the WUC bid, at a cost less than what was allocated at the previous meeting. Colin confirmed that WUC is not committed to anything at this point, if going further this will require full detailed discussion with the board.

6. SPRING NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next issue was extended to 28 April. Lenka Mulligan is aiming to have the newsletter ready for beginning of June, additional short articles are welcome.

7. AOB

The board discussed a request from Ned Deering for WUC to sponsor a gate exiting from Coillte forestry onto the open hillside near Carrawaystick to facilitate access for a modified quad bike and trailer to bring disabled young people to the summit of Lugnaquilla. While sympathetic to those involved, the board decided that it could not support this request as it involves bringing machinery onto soft ground. Helen Lawless to reply suggesting Ned try other routes with a durable surface. Afterwards Helen mentioned the damage being caused to the uplands through recreational use of quad and scrambler bikes and asked the board to consider what action could be taken.

Information was circulated regarding a memorial service for Frank Winder in Trinity College on Monday 21st April; board members to contact Helen Lawless if planning to attend.

Dermot queried the status of the sustainable energy project. There is no current activity due to the IFA's suspension of membership.

Best wishes were extended to both Michael Doyle and Margaret Murphy for speedy recovery from their respective hip problems.

Thanks were expressed to Eileen Kennedy and the staff of the Glencree Visitor Centre for providing venue and refreshments.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

New date - Wednesday 28th May 2008, 8.00pm, venue to be confirmed.