

**MINUTES OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
Glendalough, Wednesday 16 October 2008**

Present: Stephen Arthur, John Byrne, Sean Byrne, Pearse Connolly, Pat Dunne, Sean Eustace, Pat Ewen, Pearse Foley, Dermot Hand – Chair, Edmond Kenny, Philip Maguire, Richard More-O’Ferrall, John Power, Mervyn Sunderland, Joe Walker.

In attendance: Colin Murphy, Lenka Mulligan, Helen Lawless.

Apologies: Claire Chambers, Michael Cogan, John Flynn, Tony Flynn, Philip Geoghegan, Daire Gilvary, Michael Keegan, Brian Kehoe, Tim Kyne, Sean Malone.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September were approved.

John Byrne noted that Sean Malone’s comments on voting process at September meeting were not included. Chair responded that he and other Directors had rejected Sean’s comments and that in his judgement it was best not to put that detail in writing.

Adoption proposed by Sean Byrne, seconded by Pat Ewen.

2. MATTERS ARISING

a. Walks Scheme:

Pat Mellon has been invited to brief the board at the November meeting.

b. ECOAM

Colin reported that a response from the INTERREG governing body is expected end November/early December, subsequent to which Wicklow Uplands Council directors will be asked to approve the signing of a contract

Stephen Arthur requested that full information be made available to directors in advance of the decision process.

c. Erosion at Zig-zags path in Glenmalure

Helen Lawless and Pat Dunne reported that traffic on the new trail had been lighter in recent weeks and that the erosion issue is being kept under review. It was planned to alert walkers to the problem in Irish Mountain Log and through signs on site. Closure would be seen as a last option.

d. Joint Policing Committee.

Richard More-O’Ferrall reported on a lively meeting in Blessington. Blessington and District Forum representatives were well-prepared, forceful about undesirable activity in area and the need for something to be done.

3. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS & FUNDING

Joe Walker reported on management accounts to 30 June and on preparation for the next quarter. Expenditure is on-target and a further €35k income is required to balance the books at year end. Colin accepted responsibility to achieve that objective. He noted that the investment in PURE by Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown and South Dublin County

Council has made it more difficult to raise core funds for Wicklow Uplands Council. He is expecting €10k from Dublin City Council, and a balance from Wicklow County Council. Follow up to RitzCarlton event is pending

4. MONTHLY PROJECT UPDATE

a. Forestry Project – Support of Forest Service & Teagasc in getting project up and running was acknowledged by Sean Eustace. The four objectives (Establish Owners' Group and Forestry Forum, complete desk study and business plan) will be completed in the coming weeks. The inaugural Forum meeting was well attended with keynote presentation on the benefits of private owners' groups by Henry Philips. The Private Owners Group's next event is a Wood Energy Workshop in Brooklodge Hotel on 12 November, all welcome. Stephen Arthur asked for information on funding of the group. Sean Eustace explained that a Forest Service grant for the project has allowed Wicklow Uplands Council to support establishment of the group and that members are now making their own contributions. Sean stressed the need for the Group as producers' crops are reaching 20 year stage and needing management. In answer to query from Richard More-O'Ferrall, Sean said that 150 private owners had so far expressed interest from an estimated total of 500 and that 50-plus had formally joined and paid a membership subscription. Wicklow Uplands Council is acting as background support in the context that management of the private estate has been shown in surveys to be seriously deficient.

b) Interpretive Panels – Lenka reported that the Dunlavin panel is in production and that Roundwood have joined the scheme.

c) Young Observers – 40 transition year students from 8 Wicklow schools participated in a very successful Leave No Trace Awareness Day in conjunction with WMNP. There was good feedback from students and coverage in Wicklow People.

b) Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy

Helen Lawless suggested that a small group of directors could meet to consider the draft strategy document and report back to November meeting. Pat Ewen, Richard More O'Ferrall, Sean Byrne, Pearse Connolly and Peter Galvin agreed to do this. Eoin Browne is to be invited to participate.

In reply to a query from John Power, Helen explained the background to the strategy process; the consultative phase; IFA involvement etc. It was stressed that the strategy will be based on partnership, trust and mutual respect. John Byrne noted that interest groups have previously responded to surveys and that the views of ordinary people need to be reflected in the document. It was suggested that as Wicklow Rural Partnership is the lead partner in this project that Brian Kehoe be invited to present an update on the project to the next directors' meeting.

d) ECOAM

Colin circulated an outline project budget and undertook to supply outlines of each of the seven actions in time for the next meeting. The overall ECOAM themes are biodiversity and climate change and that the partners in France, Spain, Portugal, England and Ireland are each working on projects to bring social, economic and environmental benefit to local people. The Wicklow project budget makes provision for a part-time co-ordinator and admin. support.

In answer to Mervyn Sunderland's query Colin confirmed that the project covers the uplands area whilst Pat Dunne said that Wicklow Deer Study Group covers the entire County;

Summaries of discussion:

Action 1, Invasive Fauna

John Byrne	Stressed the need for a market for venison and confirmed to Richard that census surveys are already underway in two areas of the county. This is a small project that adds to other actions – not every issue can be covered. The good news is that it does provide a part-time person for the first time.
John Power	Observed that world food demands could result in less land being available for recreational purposes in, say, 2020 and that funding should be devoted to the marketing of Wicklow venison. The project money could best be spent in deer eradication, which the Deer Society always objects to. 10,000 deer are shot each year in Wicklow with no effect. Will NPWS allow shooting on their land?
Par Ewen	The deer control issues is very sensitive and the 'Bambi' syndrome must be avoided by conducting a sensitive public awareness programme.

Action 2 – Heathland management

John Power	Pilot areas will be chosen in consultation with NPWS and can include SACs if necessary. He is aware of a patch that has been burned for 20 years and has more grouse on 400 acres than in the whole of the national park.
Joe Walker	Three years is a short time in respect to vegetation management, the project will include areas that have previously been burned.
Sean Eustace	Given health and safety issues, it could be wise to concentrate on areas that have been burnt before.
Pat Dunne	Project should pick a wide variety of sites around the county. He is aware of a farmer who called our the fire service to a fire on his land and was presented with the bill!

Colin gave briefing on Action 3: Kippure Forest, Action 4: Ballyknockan Quarry/Poulaphouca Reservoir, Action 5: Eco-Tourism Strategy/School Exchange, Action 6: Eco-labelling (Lamb and venison), Action 7: Green Roads. His next task is to secure match funding from each partner.

Colin and Sean Byrne attended an INTERREG briefing meeting in Tullamore on 14 October.

5. HERITAGE COUNCIL GRANTS SCHEME

Colin reported that Helen, Lenka and he are working on submissions, including a man-made water course of interest at Lough Dan.

6. DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS

Held over.

7. AOB

a) PR

Richard circulated a discussion paper and requested responses.

b) Media coverage of IFA/UFU meeting

Chair mentioned wholly inaccurate reports on East Coast Radio and article in Wicklow Times stating that Wicklow Uplands Council has a policy which supports expansion of Wicklow Mountains National Park onto private land. He was concerned that Wicklow Uplands Council was being misquoted and asked if anyone had information on the source of this inaccurate information. Such a policy has never been debated by board although we are aware of the concerns and worries of farmers as discussed on many occasions.

After a long discussion it was agreed to adopt Sean Eustace's suggestion that our PRO should write to Gerry Gunning (shown in accompanying photograph in Wicklow Times article), Executive Secretary of the IFA Rural Development Committee and seek an explanation and his advice on how the record should be put straight.

The consensus view of the meeting was that a public response would not be appropriate.

c) Dublin Mountains Partnership

Launch planned for Friday 24th October. Interested directors were asked to contact Helen.

d) Panel Meetings

Colin referred to current staff work-load and will action on planned autumn panel meetings.

d) Renewable Energy

John Byrne reported on sub-group meeting and confirmed that they are working on making report to directors in January 2009.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 19 November 2008

Glendalough Hotel

8.00pm