

WICKLOW MOUNTAIN VIEWS



THE NEWSLETTER OF WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

SUMMER 2010

Wicklow Mountain Views –
The Newsletter of
Wicklow Uplands Council

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As I am writing this the countryside in the Wicklow uplands is springing to life after a long hard winter. The hills look breathtaking in the clear spring sunshine. Each one of us tends to believe that 'our place' is different and unique, but the Wicklow uplands' wonderful tapestry of farmland, settlements, woodland and open mountain, jointly woven by man and God over the ages, really is rather special.



But it is more than nature that is bursting with life, so too are our communities. The Tinahely walking initiative is a fabulous example of a community working together to create opportunities for everyone. Aughrim Tidy Towns has led the way in showing how local cooperation can really make a difference. There are many other examples of self-help in upland communities and we congratulate them all. Wicklow Uplands Council is privileged to be working in such a rich natural and human environment.

This is my first year in the chair of Wicklow Uplands Council and I wish to acknowledge the role my predecessor Dermot Hand has played over the last 10 years in leading the organisation to where it is today. Dermot, in his last newsletter, wrote powerfully about how Wicklow Uplands Council exists and operates around change. 2009 was indeed a year of change for the organisation on many levels; however our mission statement remains the same 'to work for the sustainable use and enjoyment of the local landscape in partnership with those who live work and recreate there'. It is also appropriate to pay tribute to two valued members of staff, Helen Lawless and Lenka Mulligan, both of whom have made valuable contributions to Wicklow Uplands Council. Helen has taken up a key position with Mountaineering Ireland, whilst Lenka has decided to spend more time with her new daughter Julianne. We wish them both and Dermot well and hope to keep in touch.

The recession has had an impact on our work in the past twelve months, as it has had on every organisation in the country, and we have to recognise that we live in a different economic climate and

adapt accordingly. However, we have been very lucky in that our core funders, The Heritage Council, Newstalk 106/108 and Wicklow County Council have continued to support us, which is specially welcome in these difficult times.

As is evident throughout this newsletter, Wicklow Uplands Council is involved in many areas of activities and influence in the uplands. One of my first duties as chair was to attend the presentation of the 'Young Observers' projects in the Glendalough Hotel one morning in early autumn. The depth of knowledge of their environment, the enthusiasm and the sense of place shown by the participating transition year students was an inspiration.

Almost immediately after the 2009 board of directors' election we decided to take part in the National Landscape Strategy debate. Our CEO Colin Murphy outlined our landscape management experience in a paper which he delivered to the Irish Landscape Conference in Tullamore last October. Since then, the board of directors has held a number of well attended, lively open meetings on the subject. Minister John Gormley announced his intention of setting up a National Landscape Strategy Steering Committee at the Tullamore conference. However we were very disappointed at the make up of that committee, which is dominated by the public sector, with no representative from community or farming organisations. We wrote to the Minister in February 2010, to inform him of our disappointment.

As I wrote earlier, the uplands area of Wicklow is one of nature's gems. We have countless natural advantages, and yet we are not reaching our potential on so many levels. Our challenge is to create and support actions which allows business, tourism, agricultural, environmental and recreational interests to thrive, and in which all views are respected. Wicklow Uplands Council is up to the challenge.

DECLAN O'NEILL
Chair, Wicklow Uplands Council

WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL ENDORSES LEAVE NO TRACE

"Promoting and inspiring responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships"



The seven principles of Leave No Trace:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Be considerate of others
3. Respect farm animals and wildlife
4. Travel and camp on durable ground
5. Leave what you find
6. Dispose of waste properly
7. Minimise the impacts of fire



WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016

A Wicklow Uplands Council sub-committee, chaired by Sean Eustace, made a detailed submission in December 2009 to the new County Development Plan public consultation process.

The issues raised in the submission are summaries as follows:

The centrality of agriculture is a fundamental element of any strategy to protect and enhance the economic, social, cultural, environmental and sustainable development of County Wicklow, given that:

- ◆ The decline of agricultural population and agricultural activity in the uplands poses a profound threat for the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the region;
- ◆ The life and landscape of the uplands is inextricably linked to the numbers of people living and working there. This is borne out by history. Strategy and policy revision of the Development Plan Population and Settlement Strategy is necessary in order that numbers can grow, including in remote areas;
- ◆ Sterilisation is not a conservation policy option in relation to landscape. At worst, it is a recipe for dereliction;
- ◆ Significantly increased levels of economic activity, especially in rural areas, are vital to overall sustainability. The 'road' is too often strewn with impediments and obstacles and a "thou shalt not" policy response;
- ◆ Firm commitment to farm-based alternative enterprise development (not exclusively agriculturally related) is required. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasised in terms of:
 - (i) job creation, generating and maintaining employment in rural areas under threat;
 - (ii) maintaining a level of agricultural activity for its own sake;
 - (iii) good environmental practice;
 - (iv) preserving skill levels in relation to land and environmental management which are under threat of being entirely lost.

The preparation of the 2010 – 2016 Development Plan must be benchmarked against the Plan's vision – *"the overarching aim of the Plan that the concept of sustainable development shall be promoted as its core principle and that its three pillars being economic, social/cultural and environmental are applied in a mutually complementary manner and addressed on an equal footing"*.

Copies of the full submission are available on request.

ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

NEGOTIATING AGREED ACCESS

The gentle art of establishing an Access Route to the higher Wicklow Hills.

The Wicklow Countryside Access Service is a joint initiative of the Wicklow Uplands Council and Wicklow Rural Partnership supported financially by the Comhairle Na Tuaithe, the LEADER+ programme and Wicklow County Council. In brief it's aim is to establish (generally short) access routes from public roads to open hill and mountainside over privately owned lands for the benefit of the increasing number of recreational walkers in the Wicklow Uplands. As well as this it seeks to ameliorate the real problems experienced by the indigenous population who frequently feel threatened by the influx of tourists who, unthinkingly, walk through their fields and yards (often close to their houses) in an effort to gain the open hillside. The Access Route project is a very clear example of the type of work undertaken by the Wicklow Uplands Council in order to promote, dialogue, understanding and mutually beneficial development amongst all those who "Live, Work and Recreate in the Wicklow Uplands".

An exemplary Draft Project Report on the work of the scheme dated March 2010 sets out the workings of the project in clear detail along with details of work undertaken so far, and the issues which have arisen when trying to establish an access route. This report, which is a valuable document, has not yet been published. It is to be hoped that it will eventually receive wide circulation. It is not my intention in this brief article to extract details of the report and regurgitate them here. Instead I will give a short account of the establishment of one such route in West Wicklow in which I was peripherally involved.

The Field Officer had identified access issues in this quiet glen near a popular tourist area. There was attractive and much frequented open mountainside walking ground above the glen but access was over private lands. A narrow cul-de-sac lane led to half dozen or so houses and terminated at the gates of a private lodge beyond which a green hill road wound its way up to the higher open mountainside. The land owner (we'll call him "the Count" for simplicity) and his lady lived in the Lodge and were plagued by walking people blocking the gate with cars and walking up the avenue, looking in his windows and

climbing over his fences in order to get to the Green Road to the higher hills. The Field Officer was aware both of the walkers desire to reach the mountains and the undesirable effects on the Count and his family. She identified a number of possible access routes which would by-pass the Lodge, but still crossed its private lands. The Field Officer then involved myself as a sort of go-between because I knew the Count personally but was also aware of the needs of the recreationalists. We looked at a number of possible ways to link the public lane with the Green Road without going near the Lodge. We then met the Count on a number of occasions. This type of meeting, no matter where the access route is, is vital to establish the confidence of the land owner, to explain the bona-fides of the Wicklow Uplands Council and to outline the benefits of the proposal both to the landowner as well as the walkers. It is necessary to explain in detail the nature of the agreement proposed, underlining the vital fact that the arrangement is temporary, that rights of way are not established, that the agreement can be ended at any time by the landowner and that there is the possibility of some economic benefit to him in the form of maintenance work on the eventually agreed route. These negotiations are time consuming and require skill – the Field Officer showed great patience in the discussions which eventually led to a successful outcome. One must be prepared to drink lots of cups of tea or coffee, to discuss matters which have nothing to do with hill walking routes, to make personal revelations, to visit the Count's solicitor (who poured cold water on the idea), and to begin again with more coffee and talk of motorbikes. Bringing clear illustrations in the form of maps and drawings of the proposed route is helpful; things like samples of the proposed signage, drafts of the Memorandum of the Understanding to be agreed all help to establish a trust and an appreciation of what is proposed.

There was a satisfactory result to the access route in the glen. The Field Officer's patience and skill reassured the Count and by clearing gorse from a short piece of track between high granite walls formerly used to bring sheep to the mountain pastures, a new link avoiding the Lodge and leading directly to the Green Road was made. The walkers got to the open hills and the Count felt less invaded.

Pat Ewen

UPLAND HILL FARMING: IS ITS IMPORTANCE APPRECIATED?

Hill farming is one of the most widespread activities undertaken in the Wicklow uplands. It has carried on for centuries and will continue to play an important role well into the future. It is an activity that has had most influence on the landscape but, nevertheless, its economic contribution has too often been overlooked. Hill farming has proved to be a resilient activity, it has survived many recessions and perhaps, more notably, has outlasted the boom years of the “Celtic Tiger”, during which agricultural commodity prices and incomes remained low relative to most other sectors of our economy. There is little doubt that in a downturn there is a renewed interest in Ireland’s indigenous industries. Agriculture is becoming popular again, evidence of this most notably in the significant rise of applications to agricultural colleges and training courses.

Wicklow hill farming is mostly a livestock enterprise of sheep and/or cattle (suckler cows) rearing. Like all other industries it has adapted over time, particularly in the areas of animal housing and farm machinery. These improvements have facilitated part-time farming, a trend identified on small/medium sized units in the uplands. The social dimension of farming is evolving too. Even on larger farms, modernisation has had the advantage of reducing labour costs, but has also resulted in many farmers working long days on their own. Despite this, hill farming still underpins the social fabric of uplands rural communities. Farmers and their families have a unique attachment to their home and their land. Many have lived there for many generations and have knowledge of the history and their own environment which is superior to any researcher. New rural development support initiatives are welcome in any area but it is important that farming itself is not overlooked.

Tourism, as we know, is inextricably linked with the Wicklow uplands and plays a substantial economic role. Farmers have effectively shaped the landscape over centuries, and now, that same landscape is enjoyed by many visitors to the area. Agri-environmental schemes, which reward farmers for undertaking traditional landscape improvements and other enhancements on their land, should always be available in scenic hill areas. The role of farmers’ in maintaining the landscape should never be under-estimated and government cuts in this area are therefore short-sighted and self-defeating.

It is important that farming is allowed to adapt and change. Alternative non-agri. on-farm enterprises should be encouraged and supported, most obviously in the area of tourism and leisure. Energy projects will also play an important role in upland hill farms. While there is an argument that says wind turbines are unsightly and not in character with the landscape, people need to consider that the overall environmental benefits of green electricity can outweigh any perceived visual impact. Many pressures exist to ‘fix’ landscape in the past which often prove to be counter-productive in the long-term. Farming must be allowed to adapt to economic trends.

It is always difficult for hill farming to compete with the productivity of lowland farms within the country. However, there is no doubt that agriculture in Wicklow has some competitive advantages and the farming community should use them wisely. With a large urban market right on the doorstep, hill farms can produce food non-intensively from an unspoilt and scenic landscape which portrays a green and natural image. As people are becoming interested in where their food comes from, the Wicklow hills have a great and sustainable advantage. Already some initiatives are underway in this area and further developments are awaited.

It is certain that in recent times, there is a renewed interest in farming and its contribution to the common good is becoming more appreciated. Who would have thought that the recent “Lambing Live” programme on BBC would be shown at prime-time and capture the attention of so many? The programme captured a snapshot of hill farming during lambing time (in Wales) and also highlighted the extent to which a farmer and his family have to go for the business to survive. Farming requires a unique understanding and commitment to nature and livestock that few people outside can relate to or appreciate.

Agriculture is part of the heritage of Wicklow hills. It is also part of our future. The time is right now for the full importance of farming to be realised and appreciated and for the industry is given the respect, attention and investment which is truly deserves.

Philip Maguire



WIND ENERGY – THE WAY FORWARD OR A BLIGHT ON THE LANDSCAPE?

There is a growing realisation of the urgent need to move away from current methods of generating electricity and to develop “clean” sources in order to safeguard the local and global environment. Wind energy produces no direct atmospheric pollutant emissions and it is seen as a way to help offset the cost of importing fossil fuel energy sources such as coal, crude oil and gas oil.

It is government policy to generate 40% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020 and that 10% of all cars be electric by the same date.

The Wicklow draft County Development Plan for 2010-2016 contains an excellent, well thought out and compelling element on the way forward for wind energy. It sets out a step-by-step approach to selecting the most favourable locations, taking care to preserve the unspoilt nature of the more sensitive areas.

Turbines produce very low noise levels which are generally masked by the sound of the wind itself. Shadow flicker occurs where the blades of a wind turbine cast a moving shadow over a window in a nearby house. This effect lasts only for a short period and happens only under very specific and rare conditions. Less than one in every five thousand avian deaths can be attributed to wind turbines.

In a recent Sustainable Energy Ireland survey, eight out of ten people viewed wind energy positively and residents near operational wind farms do not generally consider them to have an adverse impact.



In Wicklow there are two operational wind farms near Shillelagh, two more with full planning permission and a further two in the planning process. These are the only wind farms with ESB grid connection offers before 2020.

The advent of smart metering will likely see growth in the number of small scale wind turbines. Turbines less than 10m in height do not generally need planning permission. Careful consideration needs to be given to wind data information and economics before investing.

John Byrne

WEATHER EMERGENCY DECEMBER 2009/FEBRUARY 2010

Wicklow Uplands Council is aware of the difficulties that arose during the weather emergency and their effects on the uplands community. There is a sense that the specific effects on and consequences for the uplands differ from other parts of county Wicklow and that these need to be understood and be provided for in the future. The efforts of officials and elected members are acknowledged with thanks.

It is recognised that the unusual severity of the freeze-up caught everyone off-guard and that resources were stretched to the limit. In reflecting on what happened and on lessons learnt, Wicklow Uplands Council wants to avoid the blame game and to seek new solutions.

Wicklow Uplands Council decided to engage in a process around this issue across the uplands community. This was intended to:

- a. Collect information and suggestions at the open meeting on the effects of the emergency: what happened (and didn't happen), what could be done in the future etc. This was tackled under four main headings:
 - Community
 - Farming
 - General economic activity
 - Tourism
- b. Summarise the findings as a discussion document;
- c. Engage with local authority officials and elected representatives.

This process resulted in the following conclusions and recommendations;

- a. Notwithstanding the realisation that each emergency is unique, there is a need for specific uplands roads, water and other strategies for future severe weather events in the uplands;
- b. Learn from what happened in other areas;
- c. Compile a list of uplands black spots where salt/grit should be available;
- d. Make grit and salt available to community and local contractors;
- e. Review/amend legislation, insurance and safety codes from a common-sense perspective;
- f. Motivate the community to do its bit;
- g. Understand and estimate the consequential losses to farming, business and tourism caused by the emergency;
- h. Propose that one local authority manager should be designated for the uplands;
- i. Check the forestry sector's responsibilities for drainage and roads;
- j. Find ways to harness the capacity of the farming sector;
- k. Plan to make repairs before an emergency and save money;
- l. Amend bureaucratic and legalistic health and safety and other policies to allow common sense responses to emergency situations.

Wicklow Uplands Council is discussing these issues with the local authority and other partners.

WICKLOW OUTDOORS FESTIVAL

The inaugural Wicklow Outdoors Festival enjoyed tremendous success from 16th-18th April, as over 1,200+ people came to enjoy an impressive range free of outdoor activities. The Festival was organised by Wicklow County Tourism and Fáilte Ireland.

The Festival also included the two-day Tinahely Trail Walking Festival, which drew an additional crowd of approximately 600 people for its impressive schedule of walks and hikes. A further 700 people took part in the Wicklow Adventure Race on Saturday, 17th April, a challenging running, kayaking and cycling competition, which was held in Glendalough.

Activities over the weekend included walking, hiking, water sports, paintballing, horse riding, archery, zip-lines and orienteering, to name but a few.

In the week before the Festival, Wicklow County Tourism's website experienced a large surge in activity, with up to 1,500 visitors daily. The top ten searches for the week were related to the Outdoors Festival and accommodation in Wicklow.



Some of the 600 kayakers on Lough Dan



Hill walkers take a break – for a photoshoot

Wicklow County Tourism is delighted with the success of the Wicklow Outdoors Festival and is looking forward to working with Fáilte Ireland on next year's activities. Feedback from outdoor activity providers has been predominantly positive, with many events generating further interest from participating members of the public.

Commenting on the success of the Festival, Tourism Development Officer with Wicklow County Tourism Fred Verdier said, "The impressive number of people who came to Wicklow to enjoy the Wicklow Outdoors Festival is a testament to the fantastic range of activities to be enjoyed by people of all ages in the Garden County. Outdoor activities are becoming increasingly popular and have a huge economic potential for the County as a whole."

Celine Nic Oireachtaigh
Press and Marketing Officer
Wicklow County Tourism



I have found myself at odds more than once with my old friends at An Taisce, also with quite a few planners, about the question of landscape and building of new houses in the countryside. This is a subject of some delicacy to the farming community. The planners tend to see the uncontrolled spread of 'one-off' houses in the countryside as wasteful, contrary to good planning and not sustainable because of the supposed social and environmental costs of a dispersed pattern of development. The planners' version of the 'common good' suggests that people not engaged in agricultural activity should not be encouraged to live in the countryside.

However, the changes under way in the countryside throughout Europe and certainly in the uplands of Ireland are swift and seemingly inevitable. It is time to reassess urgently why we should be so reluctant to see more, and apparently be quite happy to see fewer, people living in the countryside.

Conor Skeehan of DIT, at the Dublin Civic Trust seminar on the 20th April 2010, reminded us in 'Defining the Landscape and Settlement' that when there was a population of nine million people in Ireland, there was much congestion in the countryside and particularly in the west, and that the populated countryside was the norm. Yet, now, the trend in the west and more remote areas towards abandonment of less productive areas of land is accelerating.

Sheehan's assertion, and mine, is that people who live, or would live, in the countryside should be encouraged and offered incentives to move in or stay. New emphasis on the use of

land for energy generating purposes, as well as changes in rural activity to further promote, for example rural tourism, need to be prioritised. Widespread designation of land (SACs and NHAs for example) may be a danger to its future if protection will imply prohibition of traditional uses or barriers to different productive use.

We have already prioritised these issues. This, in Wicklow Uplands Council, with a wish to make renewable energy policies central to the future of the area, and a broad concern that the agricultural community may benefit from the use of the countryside for recreational purposes.

One huge resource in Wicklow is its landscape. Where I live, down in the lowlands, we have our reinvented Old Milking Parlour, grant aided by County Wicklow Partnership (LEADER +), where we have adapted the stalls for cows to make self-catering accommodation for humans. I am continuously reminded by our visitors about how beautiful the varied landscapes of Wicklow are to them as visitors, and the sense of privilege they have to experience this. It follows that we must take great care not to destroy what is our major resource, yet we should be wary also of treating the landscape like something that is to be held unchanged for generations, when the continuing, evolving change of the landscape is the lifeblood and reason for people who live in and work the land.

The afforestation of Wicklow in the last sixty years has not been without critics yet it is an important productive use of otherwise abandoned lands; with care and sensitivity, and a positive idea of forestry as a source of recreation, we can live with it and enjoy it, and even appreciate its appearance. The same may be said about houses. Few people would wish to see the hill tops and uplands dominated by dormer bungalows. However, the continuing, evolving inhabited landscape can bring with it new skills and new uses, generally from people who already belong there but also from new uplands dwellers who settle because they love the place, have a commitment to belong and certainly don't wish to pollute the natural qualities of the area that attracted them to settle in the first place.

The Wicklow Uplands Council has already made a credible submission to the County Council about the future for the uplands, but the Development Plan has been slow to recognise the pace of change in the uplands countryside. At the same time it is the responsibility for the local community to guide and direct the future of the area, and the Wicklow Uplands Council should ensure that it will play a key role in that.

Philip Geoghegan

PROFILE OF A NEW MEMBER ORGANISATION

MACRA NA FEIRME, WICKLOW

For those who have not heard of Macra na Feirme before, Macra is a rural youth organisation which has 6 key areas. These are sport, travel, agriculture, public speaking, the performing arts and community involvement. The organisation has charity status and relies on the effort of members to organise activities. Wicklow Macra has over 150 members between the ages of 17 and 35 who enjoy living and recreating in the countryside and are delighted to be an organisation member of Wicklow Uplands Council. Both organisations share the same ethos when it comes to the love, respect and concern for the uplands countryside. Wicklow Macra joined the Community Panel last year, to represent the interest of young people in the uplands regions of Wicklow and to hopefully strengthen the Wicklow Uplands Council as a result.

Sustainable communities in the uplands region require local employment

opportunities, social amenities and fair planning regulation to allow young people to settle in the areas they were reared. In turn, they can rear their children in this beautiful, healthy environment. Depopulation of rural areas is a major problem which suffers a negative feedback effect whereby the fewer people that live in a community, the fewer amenities can be budgeted for and the less appealing the area is for people to live in. By providing a social outlet for young people in rural areas, Macra is nurturing future custodians of the countryside, providing the debating skills to future leaders so we can ensure that the voice of rural Ireland won't go unheard or unheeded.

All this is done in a fun way. After all, you have to enjoy yourself. On the sports front are indoor soccer, basketball, volleyball and 7 aside Gaelic football. From time to time there is clay pigeon shooting, archery and go-karting. Every year trips abroad are organised. For members who take up

a leadership role, the opportunity to represent Macra abroad may also arise. Agriculture was one of the activities that Macra was founded around and still has an importance today. For those interested, there are sheep, beef and dairy stock judging, farm skills and discussion groups organised. Public speaking and debating is a great way to develop confidence speaking in public. Performing arts is a great way to become a team player and get to know your fellow members. Lastly, and possibly most importantly, community involvement gives Macra members the opportunity to do something positive like help tidy towns committees, raising money for local charities or causes and getting to know their neighbours and strengthen the bond that holds a community together. For more information, check out the county website: www.wicklowmacra.org or the national website: www.macra.ie.

Eamonn Grant

POULAPHUCA DAM 70th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

Wicklow Uplands Council in association with the Blessington & District Forum organised an unprecedented event, on Saturday 20th March 2010, to mark the seventieth anniversary of the creation of the Poulaphuca Reservoir in Blessington, Co. Wicklow, on 3rd March 1940.

In the morning, archaeologist and author Dr Chris Corlett and two local historians, Séamus Balfe and Aidan Cruise, delivered presentations to one hundred and twenty people in the Poulaphuca House Hotel, covering themes including the extreme geographical impact on the landscape of the region and the devastating social impact of the dam on the residents of the area. The presentations were brought to life by the inclusion of historical accounts, personal stories and poetry.

Following refreshments, the attendees were then treated to the first ever visit permitted to the public, of the Poulaphuca Dam, which was facilitated by the ESB: Tom Moran, Plant Manager, Peadear Moran and Majella Henchion. A mini-bus ferried eight people at a time from the hotel to the dam, where on arrival they received an in-depth explanation on the operational details of the facility and reservoir by Majella – who ensured that no-one left without their queries being answered. The ESB further surprised everyone by redirecting a large flow of water through the dam, so that not only was there a dramatic spectacle at the dam but also a short distance downstream, the famous Poulaphuca Waterfall – located a short walk behind the Poulaphuca House Hotel – temporarily came back to its former glory.

The inspiration for this event came from a conversation between Chris Corlett and Gerry and Daire Gilvary at last year's 'Walk & Talk' Heritage Week Event in Ballyknockan. It was Gerry who then, in January, set about planning the event with much appreciated support from Wicklow Uplands Council, the Blessington & District Forum, the Lakeside Heritage Group, the owners of the Poulaphuca House Hotel and Chris. A sincere thank you is also extended to the ESB who were not only supportive at the planning stages but exceeded all expectations on the day with their enthusiasm, expertise and desire to make the day informative and enjoyable for everyone.

Chris Corlett is the author of the book, 'Beneath the Poulaphuca Reservoir', an in-depth study of the landscape and the people before the flooding of the valley. Aidan Cruise has recently published a book, 'The Dublin and Blessington Steam Tram'. Séamus Balfe, chairperson of the Lakeside Heritage Group, is actively involved in walking tours of the area. The Blessington & District Forum is an umbrella group that represents the social, political and cultural interests of the area through lobbying, organising cultural events and the running of a Community Theatre.

Also, for those who have an interest in the reservoir/lake, a new interactive website www.poulaphuca.com has been created which allows you to click on an area of the lake and see how it would have been before the flooding. This website was researched, designed and brought to fruition by Tom Bowen, Ballyknockan.

Daire Gilvary



Daire and Gerry Gilvary with Aidan Cruise and Seamus Balfe at the Poulaphuca Dam Commemoration

TINAHELY WALKERS' WELCOME

About a year ago as a result of intensive lobbying on behalf of the Tinahely Area Development (TAD), Tinahely was selected by Fáilte Ireland as one of a number of pilot areas around the country to be developed as a hub for the promotion of walking tourism.

Tinahely Walkers' Welcome (a sub-committee of TAD) was given the task of looking at what could be done to maximise the potential of Tinahely as a walking tourism destination and immediately set to work on the identification of new walking routes in the area and increasing the awareness of the potential of the area as a destination for walking tourism. Local businesses and people involved in the tourism and accommodation sector took part in a number of training initiatives in the areas of marketing and customer care and signed the Walkers Welcome Charter whereby they agreed to provide facilities and information to walking tourists who come to visit the area.

Three new looped walks totaling 43km were identified and approved by Fáilte Ireland for development. The new loops offer some of the most spectacular scenery to be seen anywhere in Ireland including splendid views of Lugnaquilla and the Wicklow Mountains, the Croghan Valley, Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains and much of counties Carlow and Kildare. Over the winter months in conjunction with the Rural Social Scheme, stiles, directional signs and walkovers supplied by Fáilte Ireland were erected and the Mangans, Ballycumber and Kyle Loops were inspected and approved in time for Tinahely's first ever Trailwalking Festival on April 16th-18th 2010.

Glorious sunshine created picture postcard scenes over the rolling hills as over six hundred walkers made their way from early on Saturday morning along the Mangans, Ballycumber and Kyle loops while on Sunday, walkers were transferred by bus from Tinahely to begin their walk from The Dying Cow pub back to Tinahely while others enjoyed a family walk which included a Treasure Trail along the Railway Walk and through Tomnafinnoge Woods. The Festival began on Friday evening with the official launch of the three new looped walks by the



Committee happy with Tinahely Walking Festival

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Mary Hanafin. Addressing a packed Tinahely Courthouse, the minister commended the local community for the obvious pride they have in their village and for the work that has been put into the Walkers' Welcome initiative over the past year. She stressed that it was important to ensure that people who come to Ireland for walking holidays get value for money and that we provide adequate facilities to ensure that they have an enjoyable experience. Committee members Martin Hansard and Mary O'Connor had the minister's toes tapping as she enjoyed a song written specially for the festival by Martin. The Minister then unveiled the new Trailhead Board on the Market Square following an ecumenical blessing by the local clergy. TAD Chairman Eddie McGlynn then presented Minister Hanafin with a bowl crafted locally as a token of her visit.

The festival was the culmination of the efforts of the local community, landowners, business interests and local accommodation providers in partnership with agencies such as Fáilte Ireland, County Wicklow Partnership, the Rural Social Scheme and FÁS and demonstrated how much can be achieved in a short time by such an approach.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This table details Wicklow Uplands Council 2009/2010 activity

	Activity	Partners
1. WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016	Planning sub-group formed, detailed submission made to public consultation process Dec. 2009.	–
2. BALLYKNOCKAN GRANITE PARK COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP	LEADER funding application for feasibility study (in preparation).	Wicklow Heritage Office, Blessington Forum, Wicklow County Tourism
3. PURE PROJECT Protecting Upland & Rural Environments	a. Ongoing participation in Project Management committee. b. Ongoing support services.	Dept of the Environment, Local Authorities, Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service
4. VILLAGE INTERPRETIVE PANELS a. Complete pilot project (6 panels) b. Develop new scheme (including smaller panels)	Dunlavin, Roundwood, Laragh, Aughrim, Rathdrum and Blessington panels completed. €15,000 confirmed by DOE Environment Fund for follow-on scheme.	The Heritage Council, Communities, Wicklow Co Co, LEADER, Wicklow County Tourism.
5. WICKLOW COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS PROJECT Complete six agreed access routes by 2010 and investigate further possibilities.	Lough Dan, Little Sugar Loaf, Glenmalure and SW Wicklow routes completed and maintenance arrangements in place. Preliminary work carried out to establish three further routes. One completed March 2010.	Private Landowners, LEADER, Comhairle na Tuaithe, Wicklow Co Co.
6. WICKLOW PRIVATE WOODLAND OWNERS GROUP	Ongoing backup and admin. services.	Private Woodland Owners, LEADER, Wicklow Co Co, Forest Service, Teagasc
7. WICKLOW OUTDOOR RECREATION STRATEGY a. Publish strategy document b. Blessington Lakes feasibility study	Strategy published May 2009, available from WUC office and on www.wicklowleader.ie Project managed by WUC, consultation completed, study to be finalised April 2010.	Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee, LEADER, Fáilte Ireland, Blessington Forum, ESB, Wicklow Co Co, Wicklow County Tourism.
8. YOUNG OBSERVERS' AWARDS 'Discovering Wicklow's Landscape'	32 Transition Year students recruited from seven schools. 3-day residential workshop Sep. 2009. Presentation of Action Projects and Certificates Nov. 2009.	Schools. Baltinglass Outdoor Education Centre, LEADER, Irish Uplands Forum
9. ORIGINS OF RECREATIONAL USERS' SURVEY	Data gathered Oct. 2009, report at completion stage.	WUC (lead), CWP, DIT.
10. THREE YEAR PLAN 2011-2013	In preparation	The Heritage Council
11. PR a. Mountain Views Newsletters (Summer 2009/2010) b. Walk and Talk Events - Heritage Week at Ballyknockan Granite Village (August 2009) - National Trails Day at Lough Dan agreed Access Route (September 2009) - Poulaphuca Dam (April 2010) c. Website		
12. NETWORKING (On-going) a. The Heritage Council b. Wicklow Heritage Forum c. Europarc Federation/Atlantic Isles		d. Wicklow Local Sports Partnership e. Leave No Trace Ireland f. Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee
13. NETWORKING (One-off events) a. Institute of Geographer's Conference (May 2009)		b. Heritage Council Landscape Conference (October 2009)

PLACENAMES OF THE WICKLOW UPLANDS

Placenames are an important part of the cultural fabric of any area – they are the labels that we give to features and areas on the landscape about us. Placenames often relate to some physical aspect of the landscape (Monroe from Móin Ruadh – the bog with a reddish/brown tinge) but they also commonly relate to land ownership (Ballydonnell from Baile Dhónaill) and manmade structures (Donard from Dún Ard – the high fort). There are also placenames that derive from hill farming (The Green Hollows – a spot where there might be better grazing etc). These names are of everyday practical use to those that live and work on the hills but are also of great interest to the many others who visit the hills for various activities.

As some readers may be aware, I have been working on new mapping of the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains over the past couple of years. I was aware that there were a good number of names missing from the Ordnance Survey Ireland publications and set about gathering up such names and attempting to place them on mapping in their correct locations. Liam Price did a lot of work collecting names in the 1920-1940 period which are published in various volumes and notebooks. However it is difficult to locate many of the names from the notes he left. I have set about trying to establish the location of such names from Price and other sources. In the course of these enquiries, I found it very worthwhile to talk to hill farmers and others

who have grown up in the Wicklow valleys and I wish to thank all these people for their generous assistance. The Wicklow Uplands Council assisted me greatly by helping to put me in touch with those that might have placenames. I am pleased to report that we managed to identify a fair proportion of Liam Price's names and in addition, identified perhaps 160 'new' names that I haven't come across before.

Sadly, hill farming practices have been changing in Wicklow for many years and the need to know an extensive network of names for the many brooks, rocks and other parts where sheep might graze and shelter has declined. I have recorded these names and features on two new maps of Wicklow for 2010: Wicklow Mountains West and Lugnaquilla & Glendalough. I hope that we have managed to record and place a good number of these names lest they be lost to future generations. I have no doubt that there are many names that we have missed and/or perhaps misplaced and I would be very grateful to receive information from anybody that is aware of errors and omissions. Please also keep an eye out for any old documents and maps that may contain hand written notes of placenames.

Barry Dalby, EastWest Mapping, Clonegal, Enniscorthy, Co.Wexford. 053-9377835.

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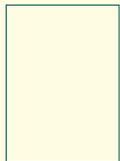


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WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

Wicklow Uplands Council is an independent, voluntary organisation with charitable status. The Council provides a forum where interested non-statutory organisations and individuals can have their say in the decision making process affecting the sustainable development of the local environment in the spirit of Local Agenda 21. The Council was formally established in January 1997 and has since endeavoured to implement its core mission:

MISSION STATEMENT

'To promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of the Wicklow Uplands in partnership with the people who live, work and recreate there'.

WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL SEEKS TO

- Build consensus and trust
- Foster a partnership approach to sustainable development
- Manage/transform conflict
- Protect and enhance the uplands environment
- Undertake initiatives with support from the local people
- Engage in initiatives that make economic sense

Opinions and views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wicklow Uplands Council Ltd.

Wicklow Uplands Council focuses on issues affecting the Wicklow Uplands



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