

# WICKLOW MOUNTAIN VIEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL



AUTUMN 2007

Wicklow Mountain Views  
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Welcome to



**Local Involvement in  
Countryside Management  
Workshop**

**23-24 October 2007**

**What is Working?**

**The objectives of this  
workshop**

- Examine the advantages and reasons for local participation in countryside management.
- Review models for local involvement, including statutory/non-statutory partnerships.
- Provide an opportunity to share experiences of local involvement in environmental management and recreation.

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Our 2007 Annual General Meeting was a lively and well-attended event. It also marked the departure from the Board of David Rowe and Richard More-O'Ferrall, both of whom decided that it was time to make room for some 'new blood'. I am grateful to both of them for their outstanding contribution to our Executive and to the Board of Wicklow Uplands Council.



David is a founding father and our first honorary member. His balanced and wise counsel informed our early days and continued unabated over the years. His patience, forbearance and attention to detail are legendary and his skill as a draftsman led us to the conclusion that he embodied what was possibly a unique combination of accountant and artist. Happily, David is not lost to us altogether – I am delighted that he will continue to serve on Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board.

Richard also made a distinctive contribution as board member, honorary PRO and convenor of our economic and tourism panel. His sense of fun and exactitude constantly challenged us to pull up our socks and 'do it right'. Richard was instrumental in developing the [www.wicklowway.com](http://www.wicklowway.com) website, which puts the oldest long distance walking route in Ireland - and its accommodation providers - literally 'on the map'.

Happily, the newly expanded complement of Uplands Council board members that was made possible by a resolution at an extraordinary general meeting on the same date as the AGM enabled the following new directors to come on board: - Eoin Browne, John Byrne, Michael Cogan, Mark Fenton, Tony Flynn, Pearse Foley and Edmond Kenny. We welcome these new colleagues and know that their particular experience and skills will enrich the work of the Council.

Difficult though it is for some of us to comprehend, 2007 marks the 10th anniversary of our foundation. When one recalls how things were before we formed our network of those who live in, work in and use the Wicklow/Dublin landscape for recreation, we get some sense of what the Council has achieved. Today, for example, we are in a strong position to reflect on Minister John Gormley's recent call for consultation around the development of a national landscape strategy. Our diverse membership will enable us to respond to this issue with some sort of rational debate. Of course, given the widely divergent views that are 'out there', it will not be easy to achieve consensus.

Nevertheless, open discussion and a fair hearing for all points of view are very important and can only help to facilitate mutual understanding and respect. Indeed, our experience shows that we can achieve consensus amongst diverse stakeholders with useful outcomes for the common good. I am thinking, for instance, of our research into vegetation management, our work on rural security etc. On-going debates of this nature comprise at least 50 per cent of our activity. The balance of our energy goes into advocacy, networking and project development.

These past 10 years have, I believe, delivered at least some of the vision of our founders – and funders. For this reason therefore, I suggest that we can give ourselves a modest pat on the back and renew our thanks to all who contribute ideas, criticism, voluntary and professional effort and, of course money. I have no doubt that the next 10 years will be at least as bumpy and every bit as rewarding.

Yours truly

**DERMOT J. HAND**  
Chair, Wicklow Uplands Council



## 10 YEARS OF WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

Recollections of Wicklow Uplands Council's establishment - Saive Coffey

The idea of this organisation came largely from a group organised by the late Adrian Phillips of the Irish Uplands Forum and others. It was started (in 1995) at a time when there had been a long period of difficulties between farmers and other voluntary and statutory organisations. The latter had drawn up proposals for the future of the uplands areas of Wicklow which avoided largely or entirely any discussion or consultation with the principal owners of the land or the recreational users. Likewise, the original proposals for a National Park in the Wicklow Mountains had increased this mistrust and misunderstanding. So it was a brave decision to call a meeting in Roundwood to discuss the formation of a new organisation to represent the views of the diverse non-statutory interests. This meeting was very well attended, and from it the formation of the Wicklow Uplands Council arose. Thence, the members resolved to unite in forming an organisation which could solve problems by compromise rather than through conflict. This has led to good friendships amongst people who would never have believed it possible. I remember a few clashes but these were always resolved peacefully.

Support for this co-operative culture grew and sufficient financial backing was reached to fund an office and staff. Wicklow Uplands Council has started and promoted many good things and is now widely recognised not only in the County but by others including the Heritage Council, Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Rural Partnership, which have become principal funders.

Amongst our important achievements has been the promotion of welcoming signage and route marking on agreed trails, now continuing in the Wicklow Sustainable Trails project. We have promoted various projects for youth in the county including a national school environmental garden scheme. We have participated in a number of exchange visits with Northern Ireland and with the Lake District. Council members have attended various meetings of the EUROPARC Federation, which focuses on sustainable development and eco-tourism. We have also made various research submissions on forestry, vegetation management etc. that focus on the special needs of uplands areas.

Most of our projects have been very successful, but we have had disappointments. We started a voluntary ranger scheme, which we called Wicklow Countryside Wardens to avoid clashing with the Wicklow Mountains National Parks Rangers, but this ran into problems. We nevertheless hope to revisit this project in the context of our continually developing relationship with the Park administration.

## VIEW FROM THE SIDELINES - Profile of Murtagh J. O'Keeffe



Murt O'Keeffe's farm lies in the land south of Keadeen Mountain and Lybagh – a place of quiet, satisfying loveliness, close to the Wicklow-Carlow border, little known to the tourist. His family, four boys and a girl, all live and work within a radius of nine miles – a family close-knit and deeply involved in community. Murt himself has contributed to nearly every positive initiative in the little village of Knockananna. Flick through the pages of Knockananna, The Hill of the Marsh (incidentally, a very fine production), and you will

encounter Murt over and over again – on the village Development Committee, Macra na Feirme, the School Board, and so on. In a wider field he was chairperson, and remains a committee member of the Cheviot Sheep Owners Association.

Murt is Vice-Chairman of Wicklow Uplands Council, Chairperson of Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board, and a member of the National Park Advisory Committee. Unsure at the start as to the relevance of a body such as Wicklow Uplands Council, he is now deeply committed and certain that it fulfils a need. He regards as highlights its involvement in initiating the PURE campaign for the elimination of litter and dumping, and in the efforts to secure co-ordinated action against crime and vandalism. Of Minister O'Cuiv's promoting nationally the concept of access to walking routes by consent and agreement, Murt is totally supportive, but says "But sure we've been doing that for ten years – haven't we led the way?" He has no doubt that there is a dynamism in Wicklow Uplands Council, but if he has a concern at all it is that we are perhaps trying too much too quickly. Murt would say "Consolidate. Be sure that what you are doing is secure and thorough before going on to new things".

Of the National Park Advisory Committee, Murt is generally supportive. But he would prefer to see the Park funded as an independent body, and free of the stifling bureaucracy of a Government department.

David Rowe

## UPGRADING OF WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL WEBSITE

Wicklow Uplands Council has upgraded its website. The new layout enables access to all current projects and activities directly from the home page. Please visit <http://www.wicklowuplands.ie> for more details.

## MEMBER ORGANISATION PROFILE

### FARMERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION (WICKLOW UPLANDS) LIMITED - Alan Campbell

In the 1980s some farmers and property owners in the Wicklow uplands were concerned about their property rights being infringed on by members of the public trespassing on their lands and causing damage to their fencing and their stock and premises. It was deemed necessary to do something to protect and preserve these rights, the interests of the farmers and property owners, their families and their lands in the uplands from unacceptable regulations and development (either local or government or others). Meetings were held by a number of farmers and property owners including Sean Byrne, Garech Brown, Edmond Kenny, Ronnie Petrie and others and it was decided to form an association for this purpose. A company was finally formed and registered in June 1996 under the Chairmanship of Edmond Kenny. The members of the Association have lands mainly in the Wicklow uplands of some 30,000 acres.

In dealing with property rights we responded to the RPS Cairns report. The Draft County Wicklow Development Plan 2004-2010 was dealt with and amendments discussed and objections recorded with Wicklow County Council representatives with regard to private lands and rights of way included in error in the plan. The Association dealt with and defended the right to private property as enshrined in the Constitution and attended at the Oireachtas Committee hearings on this matter.

We were pleased to be able to assist with other associations in the formation of the Wicklow Uplands Council and to promote the theory of consensus and consultation in place of confrontation and have been congratulated by the Minister, Dick Roche TD, on our success. The Association has been active in the protection of wildlife on Wicklow uplands and the control of non-native species which endanger the existence of native species and the protection of wild Wicklow from unnecessary developments which may damage the landscape. A study of the Lough Dan/Lough Tay catchments area was carried out by the late Dr. Adrian Phillips in cooperation with members of the Association. We are pleased to have been able to work through our representatives on the Wicklow Uplands Council in the excellent work they have been doing since its formation.

Edmond Kenny retired from the position of Chairman in November 2006 and was replaced by Alan Campbell of Carrigeenshinnagh.

## FIRST ACCESS ROUTES COMPLETED



Mountain Meitheal volunteers on the new footbridge in Glenmalure

Wicklow Countryside Access Service (WCAS) is a joint Wicklow Uplands Council and Wicklow Rural Partnership project, which is supported financially by LEADER, Comhairle na Tuaithe and Wicklow County Council.

Over a period of three years this pilot project aims to establish a network of access routes across private land through landowner goodwill and co-operation. Most of the routes will be short, providing hillwalkers with a clear link between the public road and the open hillside. Participating landowners sign a seven-year access agreement which confirms that these are permissive routes; not public rights of way. The overall objective is to provide a sustainable mechanism for management of existing access at busy points in the Wicklow uplands. Participating landowners are offered the opportunity to be paid to carry out any upgrade work necessary on their route. As part of the arrangement Wicklow County Council will undertake insurance of the route, once it is approved by the National Trails Office.

Within the last couple of months work has been completed on the first two routes developed under the project, an access route to Kanturk mountain near Lough Dan and a route on the Little Sugar Loaf from Bohilla Lane. A wooden finger post and a wood-framed information sign are being put in place at the start of each route. On both these routes, participating landowners (Sean Byrne and John Jobson respectively) have carried out the development work on the route to an agreed specification and for a fixed fee. On both these routes most of the work was in step-building and drainage.



Signage on the Little Sugar Loaf Access Route

The third route being worked on at present is on Pat and Margaret Dunne's land in Glenmalure. Through erection of a wooden footbridge, hillwalkers will be channelled around the back of a cottage owned by the Dunes, thus preserving privacy and providing walkers with a clearly defined route. The bridge leads to the popular zig-zags route, constructed by Avondale Estate in the 1800's as a hunting path. Mountain Meitheal, the voluntary footpath repair team, constructed the bridge using materials purchased through the WCAS project. Mountain Meitheal's work in Glenmalure also includes a considerable amount of drainage and

## OPENING OF TINAHELY RAILWAY WALK

On a sunny Saturday at the beginning of September, crowds gathered at Kilcommon Bridge for the official opening of the Tinahely Railway Walk. Amidst the music and guest speakers, a group of people in 1940's costume arrived by pony and trap to meet a train. The festival atmosphere culminated in the cutting of the ribbon by children of the landowners who gave permission for the route to be developed.

Chairperson Eddie McGlynn reminded the audience of the years of work that went into developing the trail, the combination of voluntary effort, funding from Wicklow Rural Partnership and the Wicklow Sustainable Trails (WSTN) Project, and the vital support of the landowners along the route. Encouraged by the success and popularity of the Railway Walk, Tinahely Area Development Association are now thinking about how to enhance the route and develop other trails in the area.

In conjunction with the opening Murtagh O'Keeffe, Vice Chair of Wicklow Uplands Council, formally launched the WSTN step-by-step guide for community groups interested in developing a new trail or upgrading an existing walk. The idea for this guide came from the many lessons learnt through the development of the Tinahely Railway Walk. The booklet gives advice on planning a trail, agreeing access with landowners, promotion of the walk and sources of funding. Copies are available from the Wicklow Uplands Council; the booklet can also be downloaded from [www.wicklowuplands.ie](http://www.wicklowuplands.ie).



Children of the landowners cutting the ribbon at Tinahely Railway Walk

restoration work on the former hunting path. The work involved is so extensive that without this voluntary input it could not have been undertaken within the WCAS project. As the zig-zags route leads towards Lugnaquilla, Wicklow's highest mountain, it is a cornerstone within the overall project, as well as a powerful example of how co-operation between land-owners, recreational users and other upland stakeholders can deliver benefits for all.

Initial planning has been done for routes at Bray Head and Shinna Lane near Lough Dan. Wicklow Uplands Council is identifying other priority areas for access routes and working with Wicklow Rural Partnership to arrange for maintenance of the routes under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme.



Signage on the Little Sugar Loaf Access Route

# Young Observers 2007

Transition Year (TY) students from five secondary schools, who took part in the Young Observers 2007 Project presented their action projects on countryside recreation in Wicklow uplands in Avondale House, Rathdrum on 10th May 2007. The audience consisted of 60 people including teachers, Wicklow Uplands Council board members, community representatives, statutory and non-statutory organisations.



Avondale CC students Darrell McDonnell and Keith Byrne presenting in Avondale

Students from **Avondale Community College** in Rathdrum decided to promote available recreational activities in their home area of Glendalough. The students said: "You would be amazed to see how many people, in particular the locals, do not know about some of the activities available to them. The activities include bathing and paddling, BBQs, camping and caravans, canoeing and boating, climbing, cycling, dog trials, hunting, off-road

motoring, power boating, shopping, scuba diving, walking, horse riding and fishing. Students were concerned about the high number of cars coming to Glendalough and felt that there is a need to provide better public transport.

TY students from **East Glendalough School** talked about potential sports in the Wicklow uplands. They circulated a leaflet which expressed their views on available recreational activities. They said: "Imagine the feeling when you reach the top of a hill, you stop and look around 360°, out of breath, full of the joys of life and health taking in the view. Why do



East Glendalough School students with Frank Nugent in Avondale

it?....because you can! There are many sports activities that do not require large outlay such as hill walking, canoeing, kayaking, orienteering, swimming, bird watching, mountain biking, rock climbing." They continued: "Hill walking is a great way to get fit and stay healthy. Even if you do not like walking there are many other reasons to visit the Wicklow uplands like the beautiful woodlands where you get to experience not only fabulous views but also nature at its best, trees that have been growing for hundreds of years and animals in their own habitat." Their message to public was: "Always remember, leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but photos."

The **St Kilian's Community School**, Bray team talked about their action project which involved a talk about outdoor recreation to a group of 1st year students and a guided walk around Bray Head with feedback on what the group thought about the walk. They presented five important aspects of hill walking:



St. Kilian's CS students on their Bray Head walk

1) **Enjoyment of the local area:** Exercise, exploring flora and fauna, beauty of nature, "It is free and right on your doorstep."

2) **Weather:** "Listen to the Weather Forecast. If it's cold, wear hat and gloves. If hot, wear light clothing and sunscreen. Always bring spare clothing, i.e. a rain jacket; it is always windy on top of a hill or mountain!"

3) **Food and drink:** "Always bring something to eat – if you get hungry, you get tired. Always bring water – you lose energy when you are thirsty. The hotter it is, the more you need to drink. Always keep a little something spare in case of emergency".

4) **Safety:** "Always listen to the leader. No messing about, it can be dangerous. Always have a rain jacket. If you get wet, you get miserable and can have an accident. Always have a first aid kit. Make sure you can read maps so you know where you are and where you're going. Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back".

5) **Leave No Trace:** "Always bring your rubbish home. Stick to the paths that are already there if possible. Use gates rather than climbing fences, it causes less damage.



St. Thomas' CC students with Frank Nugent

The students from **St. Thomas' Community College** talked about avoiding conflict between countryside users and landowners. This action project involved raising awareness in the school and local community. The students organised a workshop for 1st and 2nd year students with Ian

Davis, PURE project manager followed with an art competition and exhibition in the school corridors. Through the exhibition families of students and the whole school community including people who use the school facilities had opportunity to view the display of their art work. They presented videoed interviews with talented young artists and concluded: "Countryside offers many opportunities for recreation including hiking, kayaking, camping and looking at the stars. Countryside is also home and work place for many people. The challenge is to educate countryside users so that we avoid abusing the area."

Young students from **Pearse College, Dublin** presented a guide on how to walk the Wicklow Way, what people need, where to start and rules developed by the school when walking in a large group called Geatabán formation. They presented seven stages of the walk and said in regard to stage five Glenmalure to Moyné: "The area is spoiled by endless forest



Pearse College student Robert Deegan answering questions with Colin Murphy

cover. We would welcome if a handful of trees were removed at a number of strategic points along the route to gain great views over spectacular countryside. There are over 90 private landowners along the route together with Coillte, National Park and County Council. Please respect them and keep to the way-marked route and leave no trace!"



St. Kilian's CS students with Lenka Mulligan at Wicklow Uplands Council AGM

The presentations were followed by an award ceremony, where every TY student received the Adrian Phillips certificate from Frank Nugent, the famous mountaineer. Wicklow Uplands Council and Irish Uplands Forum would like to thank the Young Observers for their valuable contributions and their teachers for their cooperation. We plan to evaluate the successful pilot of this project over the next few months and prepare another programme for 2008.

# YOUTH CONNECTIONS FOR PEACE IN THE WICKLOW UPLANDS

- Dr Susan Hood and Lucinda Packham



It was a wonderful sight to see sixteen Palestinian teenagers led by Fr. Fadi Diab arriving at Dublin airport on Friday 27 July. In spite of their arduous trip and delays at Allenby Bridge and in Istanbul, all were well and in good spirits and excited to be in Ireland.

The students were here to take part in a Leargas Youth Exchange programme - Youth Connections for Peace hosted by the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. The programme was paired with students from the School Completion Programme in first and



Enjoying visit to the Maguire family farm

second year in Ballinteer Community School. Part of their programme was to explore the Wicklow uplands and to record and reflect on their experience through the creation of a Scrapbook. The Irish and Palestinian students paired off and they set off together on a big adventure which took in a fascinating visit to the Maguire Family farm in Glencullen, lunch in Blessington Parish Hall with wonderful entertainment laid on, kayaking on the lakes and a tour of the Monastic site at Glendalough.

Back in Glenree that evening each student pairing created a Scrapbook page about their experience of the day together. Many of the students picked out the trip to the Maguire Family farm as the highlight of their day. Our hope is to visit the Palestinian students in Jerusalem next July and exhibit the Scrapbook of Wicklow and photographs of the day. We also hope to visit the students' hometown of Zebabdah, a small rural Christian town in the North of the West Bank.

Many thanks from the students and leaders to the Maguire Family and Wicklow Uplands Council for their help in organising and for being with us on the day to make it very special.



Home baked scones and cakes taste the best

## WICKLOW COUNTY FORESTRY FORUM

We are delighted to report that Wicklow Uplands Council has been awarded grant aid of €40,000 by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The purpose of this very welcome vote of confidence in our work is the establishment of a Wicklow County Forestry Forum, incorporating a Private Forest Owner's Association. The next steps are to establish a project management committee, appoint a consultant and proceed to deliver the project on time and to budget. Frances McHugh of Teagasc, Tinahely has been very helpful in the preparation of our submission and we especially wish to thank Diarmuid McAree, Chief Forestry Inspector and Pat Farrington, Landscape Architect at the Forest Service for their constant support and encouragement.

## IN MEMORIAM

We regret to record the death of Mrs. Ruth Vigne Kenny, wife of Edmond Kenny in April 2007. Ruth was a very active sportswoman. A sense of Ruth's resourcefulness and good-neighbourliness can be gleaned from a letter of the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána which congratulates and thanks her for apprehending a would-be housebreaker and facilitating his arrest. Ruth was a devoted member of Saint John's Parish in Laragh, where she served on the Select Vestry and as a diocesan synodsperson. Ruth was also a long-standing and active member of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland. She is greatly missed by her husband, children, grandchildren and many friends, to whom our deepest sympathy is extended.



### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

All meetings will be held at the Glendalough Hotel at 8.00pm

Monday, 22nd October 2007	Farming and Landowning Panel Meeting
Monday, 5th November 2007	Environmental and Recreational Panel Meeting
Monday, 26th November 2007	Economic and Tourism Panel Meeting
Monday, 3rd December 2007	Community Panel Meeting

### MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to our friends in the Mourne Heritage Trust who celebrate their 10th birthday this year.

# WICKLOW DUBLIN MOUNTAINS BOARD

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I am happy to take this space on our newsletter to reflect on the usefulness of the Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board experiment which started in 2001. This project is aimed at developing a forum where statutory and non-statutory representatives can discuss landscape management issues of common interest. We learnt early on that state and semi-state authorities see their stewardship of policy issues as sacrosanct and that the involvement of local people at that level is therefore problematic. Whilst we are unclear how this approach fits with Local Agenda 21 principles which hold that local people should be involved in sustainable development policy issues, we can nevertheless see that there are many areas and issues that still remain open for discussion and joint action. The Wicklow Uplands Council conference in October 2007 which further opens up the issue of how local involvement in countryside management is working and should make a useful contribution to this debate.

Meantime, I pay tribute to and acknowledge the generous contributions to our partnership work by our statutory colleagues. I commend the work detailed on this page and especially thank management colleagues in An Garda Síochána who are working with us on the rural security issue.

**MURTAGH O'KEEFFE**  
Chair, Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board

## WEBSITE ON WICKLOW RURAL HOMES

This new initiative aims to develop a website that offers step by step practical guidance to people who wish to build homes in the uplands. The website would also initiate or assist in projects to maintain, repair, restore, alter or extend traditional buildings taking into account heritage issues.

## Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board 2007/2008

NON-STATUTORY	
<b>Farmers and Property Owners</b>	
Saive Coffey	Wicklow County IFA
Frank Maguire	South County Dublin Rural Preservation Group
Sean Malone	Wicklow County IFA
John Murphy	Cheviot Sheep Owners
Murtagh O'Keefe (CHAIR)	Cheviot Sheep Owners
Roderic O'Connor	Irish Land Owners' Organisation
<b>Community</b>	
Eileen Cullen	Wicklow Pro-planning Committee
Stephen Bray	Blessington & District Community Council
<b>Environmental &amp; Recreational</b>	
Pat Ewen	Mountaineering Council of Ireland
Joss Lynam (VICE-CHAIR)	National Trails Office
David Rowe	An Taisce
<b>Economic and Tourism</b>	
Richard More-O'Ferrall	Jigsaw Cottage Guest House
Tim Kyne	Kippure Lodge
STATUTORY	
John O'Sullivan	Coillte
Tom Lyng (District Manager)	Coillte
Milo Kane (Architects' department)	Dublin City Council
Mary Mallon (Dir. of Community & Enterprise)	Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council
Eamonn Murray (Manager, Turlough Hill)	ESB
Pat Farrington	Forest Service
Cara Murray (Heritage Office)	Wicklow County Council
Wesley Atkinson	National Parks & Wildlife Service
John Hannon, Cll.	South Dublin County Council
John Keating (County Agriculture Officer)	Teagasc
Pat Byrne (County Councillor)	Wicklow County Council
James O'Shaughnessy (County Councillor)	Wicklow County Council
Christopher Fox (County Councillor)	Wicklow County Council
Vacant	An Garda Síochána
<b>Facilitators</b>	
Wicklow Uplands Council	Colin Murphy and Lenka Mulligan

## UPLAND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Over the last few years, a change in the appearance of the Wicklow uplands landscape has become noticeable to the experienced eye in that many areas have been overgrown by heather and other vegetation, including purple moor grass. This has led to an increase in accidental fires and loss of wildlife and grazing habitats and to questions about the sustainability of current upland landscape management.

Since summer 2006 Wicklow Uplands Council has been researching the issue and has developed a proposal which was submitted to the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government under the title 'Initiative to increase bio-diversity by reintroducing best vegetation management practice in the Wicklow Uplands'. The research confirmed that the vegetation management regime has changed on the Wicklow uplands over the last decade. The main factors contributing to this change are under-grazing of the hills by mountain sheep and the decline of traditional controlled burning in spring time. The research also identified that the legislation governing the burning season was shortened under the Wildlife Act 2000, probably without consideration of differing uplands and lowlands conditions. Hence, the new burning season, which runs from 1 September to the end of February, is out of line with traditional burning practice which for centuries took place in March and April. It was also identified that the new Irish legislation differs with that in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland where burning can take place at different times, depending on elevation etc. These critical findings encourage Wicklow Uplands Council to lobby the Minister for an immediate consideration of our recommendation that the burning season for upland regions should revert to the dates valid for decades, i.e. 1st September to 15th April.

In the meantime we would like to initiate joint actions to prevent accidental fires that present health and safety and environmental risks. This could involve, for instance, cutting of firebreaks around upland forest plantations, farms and sensitive habitats. There is also a possibility to link with upland regions in North Wales through an EU INTERREG project that would aim to re-introduce good vegetation management practice to the uplands. Thus we believe that stakeholders could manage the uplands co-operatively and in a manner that preserves landscape characteristics and habitats and minimises risk to private property and local residents.

## RURAL SECURITY

Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board has begun a debate with senior Garda officers in the context of the County Wicklow Joint Policing Committee (JPC). The discussion is based on the following principles: We are seeking partnership and co-operation, not confrontation with the JPC; we realise that there are no quick and easy answers to law and order issues as policing in to-day's world is a complex and changing science.

Our Garda colleagues, and the JPC, are saying to us that: there is an absolute need to involve local people in co-operating with the police service; the current divisional structure is under review; there are possibilities to improve police coverage in the uplands by rationalising the Garda station network; there are increasing crime occurrences in the West Wicklow area that require fast responses from stations in Blessington, Baltinglass and Tallaght; fly tipping and dumping, death riding, breaking and entering, robbery, abandoned cars etc. are widespread. The sense of vulnerability of rural dwellers was acknowledged and we have agreed to put more emphasis on CCTV in remote areas and to revisit the Community Watch Scheme.

Responses by Garda management and Wicklow JPC have encouraged us to develop this partnership as we believe that it has the potential to improve policing in the interests of all uplands residents and recreational users.



The PURE (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) truck is now a regular sight in the Wicklow Mountains as it traverses the countryside responding to incidents of fly-tipping/illegal dumping.



The environmental project was officially launched by minister Dick Roche, TD, in September 2006 to combat the increase of small scale illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands and since its establishment has been extremely busy. It is the first project of its kind in Ireland, where it brings together a number of statutory and non-statutory organisations, and is operating as a three year pilot project.

Demonstration of the project's success is evident when you consider that from January to September 2007 PURE collected over 280 tonnes of illegally dumped rubbish from the environment. This excludes material removed from the Hollywood Glen, which was over 20 tonnes. Due to the extent of illegal dumping that had occurred on the site a private contractor had to be brought in to remove the rubbish, which ranged from domestic waste to animal carcasses. Statistics, figures and tonnages can be sometimes baffling and difficult to comprehend. To fully understand the amount of material which has been dumped and collected from our upland landscape, imagine if you filled over 280 standard household skips, then drove up into the mountains, and emptied them one by one on the landscape.

The PURE office is now fully operational and since January this year has received a steady flow of illegal dumping complaints with over 600 phone calls varying from a black bag on the side of a road, to a truck load of illegally dumped material by a mountain stream. A recent single act of indiscriminate illegal dumping resulted in the PURE truck removing over 4 tonnes of material from one of the most scenic areas in Ireland, the Sally Gap. This is just one of the truck's 500 collections this year.

Although recent national figures for our recycling trends demonstrate an increase, some of the items being illegal dumped are unbelievable. Ian Davis, PURE project manager stated that, "In one incident of dumping eleven items, ranging from fridges, washing machines, cookers, etc., had been dumped by the road side. This was a blatant act of disrespect for the Wicklow landscape. All electrical equipment can now be disposed of free of charge at any of the five regional recycling centres. There is no need for this dumping." The dumping of fridges, TV's, cookers, etc., is still a regular occurrence and the project has removed over 350 illegally dumped electrical items from the landscape.

PURE collaborates with Wicklow County Council in relation to the investigation of illegal dumping sites and is determined to bring offenders before the courts. People will be happy to learn that a considerable number of the 2007 reported incidents of illegal dumping will result in court appearance next year. Already this year Wicklow County Council secured 18 convictions with fines amounting to a figure of €13,900 and costs to €12,447.89. Ian Davis acknowledged that the handing over of waste to unauthorised waste collectors is still a serious problem for PURE. "A considerable number of the large illegal dumping incidents that we respond to are the direct results of a householder or business handing over their waste to unauthorised waste collectors. These people have no respect for our county's environment and all of this waste ends up in the Wicklow mountains." Another method of identifying offenders involved in illegal dumping/fly-tipping has been the introduction of covert CCTV cameras. "Certain people who may think they are getting away with this type of activity should really think again. You never know who is watching, or where."

The lo-call-phone-line, **1850-365-121**, which allows for the reporting of dumpers and dumping, has proven a great success, and PURE urges the Wicklow public to avail of this number.

## EUROPARC 2007



Junior Rangers from Austria presented their visions on international co-operation

Representatives of Wicklow Uplands Council attended the EUROPARC 2007 conference, which was held in Cesky Krumlov in Czech Republic 26-29 September.

The main theme of the Conference was Trans-European Co-operation in

nature and landscape protection, which was expressed by the Conference motto "Nature – bridging borders". Key-speeches and topical workshops were focused on problematic areas such as perceptions of borders and bridges in nature, landscapes and in the human mind; co-operation in the management of NATURA 2000 sites; ecological and nature protection aspects of European bio-corridors; principles of a common strategy for sustainable tourism activities and the "bridging" EUROPARC Junior Ranger programme. Through networking with other delegates we learnt about nature conservation in other European countries. We would encourage other NGOs and National Parks to participate in the next EUROPARC conference, which is a perfect example of international cooperation through an exchange of knowledge and experiences.

## AUSTRIAN VISIT TO WICKLOW

At the beginning of September County Wicklow played host to a delegation from the Association of Austrian Nature Parks arranged through the Heritage Council. The group of 20 stayed at Lawless's Hotel, visited Glendalough and walked the White Route in the company of Wesley Atkinson from the National Parks & Wildlife Service. The visitors travelled to Lough Dan House where Sean and Theresa Byrne provided refreshments and a space for discussion with representatives from Wicklow Uplands Council. Afterwards the party walked the recently developed agreed access route leading towards Kanturk Mountain and enjoyed exceptional views over Lough Dan and the surrounding countryside.

The visitors explained that Austrian Nature Parks are protected landscapes in which local residents play a vital role. All land within the parks is privately owned and the central



Wicklow Uplands Council's board member Sean Byrne talking to the Austrian delegation

idea is that the parks are living, cultural landscapes, not 'museum' landscapes. Nature Park activities encompass education initiatives, nature protection, provision of recreation facilities and sustainable economic development of the region. The 45 Nature Parks in Austria range in size from 17ha to over 58,000 ha.

Wicklow Uplands Council extends thanks to the Heritage Council for facilitating the visit, to the board members who met with the group and particularly to Sean and Theresa Byrne for their hospitality.

# BOARD MEMBERS 2007-2008

## FARMING AND LANDOWNING PANEL



**Sean Byrne (PRO)**  
Farmers & Property Owners  
Association (Wicklow Uplands) Ltd.



**Pat Dunne**  
Wicklow County IFA



**Philip Maguire**  
South County Dublin  
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**Sean Malone**  
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**John Power**  
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Farmers & Property Owners Assoc.  
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**Donal Anderson  
(Hon. Secretary)**



**Joe Walker  
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Wicklow County IFA



**Philip Geoghegan**  
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**Eoin Browne**  
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**Pearse Foley**  
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## STAFF



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**Lenka Mulligan**  
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**Margaret Murphy**  
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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

Wicklow Uplands Council focuses on issues affecting the Wicklow Uplands



Wicklow Uplands Council would like to thank the following for providing photographs for the newsletter:

County Wicklow Film Commission ([www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie)), Jim Schofield Photography ([www.jimschofield.com](http://www.jimschofield.com)), Michael O'Brien, Karl Burke and John Griffin ([www.johngriffiphotography.ie](http://www.johngriffiphotography.ie))