

# Wicklow Mountain Views



The Newsletter of Wicklow Uplands Council

Autumn/Winter 2016

## A Letter from the Chair



Dear members and supporters.

As winter approaches and the season of goodwill is imminent, I would like to wish you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

This past year has seen a number of changes within the Wicklow Uplands Council. For those who have not heard, Cara Heraty has decided that she will not return to her position following her maternity leave and will spend more time with her young family. We are very sad to see Cara go and we send her and her family our very best wishes.

Cara worked on a range of different projects for Wicklow Uplands Council for a number of years before taking over the role of co-ordinator in June 2011. In her time as co-ordinator and Executive Manager, Cara worked tirelessly with kindness and determination in managing all our activities and projects. While it is difficult to single out individual achievements, Cara's work on the Vegetation Management Project was invaluable and will be essential in Wicklow's bid for a 'Locally Led Agri-Environment Scheme'. She also played a key role in the establishment of the new Avonmore Way along with numerous other projects over the years. We have a lot to thank Cara for and on behalf of the Board I wish to extend our sincere gratitude and best wishes to her in all her future endeavours.

Brian Dunne, who has been acting co-ordinator in Cara's absence, has agreed to continue in the role. Brian is a native of Glenmalure with an academic background in environmental sciences. Brian's combination of local understanding and scientific backing has made him an excellent fit in the role of co-ordinator and we are very happy to have him on board.

The role of co-ordinator of Wicklow Uplands Council is a position as diverse as the uplands itself. Project management, compliance with the governance code, preparation of funding applications etc. are just some of the day to day activities of the job, while also representing the Uplands Council on a number of committees and local forums. Charlotte Rosemond is another new face on our staff, who has expertly filled the role of Communications Officer while Lenka is on maternity leave.

It has been a busy period for the Uplands Council. During the summer Brian and Charlotte set out stalls at the Roundwood and Hollywood Fairs in a bid to promote the work of Wicklow Uplands Council, attract new members and to answer queries from the general public. I am very happy to say that we did gain new members at these events and it is very important that we continue to communicate the work we do to the community in

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Different Nation - Different Station

as many ways as possible.

In October a small delegation from the Uplands Council travelled to Switzerland to attend the annual EUROPARC conference. We were invited to present a workshop at the conference titled 'We are Sustainable Farmers'. You will find more details on the conference and workshop within this newsletter which I hope you will find interesting. It was an achievement in itself to be invited to host this workshop and I want to take the opportunity to thank those who travelled to the conference for representing us so well.

In other news the vision of a long distance off-road trail is getting closer than ever with the establishment of the Sugar Loaf Way and plans are already in place to extend the route in all directions to connect with new and existing trails.

The year was not without sad news and on behalf of the Board I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to the families of the late Murtagh O'Keeffe and Pearse Connolly who sadly passed away this year. Murt and Pearse were longstanding supporters of Wicklow Uplands Council and were very well respected Board members always having well informed, balanced contributions, may they rest in peace.

Finally I would again like to thank our Board, members, staff, funders, supporters and those who have contributed in anyway. It is you who enable us to continue our work.

*Sean Byrne, Chairman, Wicklow Uplands Council*



## LEADER / Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020

Since its launch in 1992, LEADER has provided rural communities, across the EU, with the resources to enable Local Action Groups together with Local Partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their area, through a community-led local development. LEADER has three Rural Development Programmes and eight sub-themes:

**Theme 1:** Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation.

*Sub-themes: Rural Tourism, Enterprise Development, Rural Town.*

**Theme 2:** Social Inclusion

*Sub-themes: Basic services targeted at hard to reach communities and Rural Youth.*

**Theme 3:** Rural Environment

*Sub-themes: Protection and sustainable use of water resources, Protection and improvement of local biodiversity and Development of renewable energy.*

A guide to LEADER in Wicklow is available to download from [www.wicklowpartnership.ie](http://www.wicklowpartnership.ie)

Calls for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will be sought across the various LEADER themes and subthemes at different times throughout 2016 to 2020. Should you wish to submit an Expression of Interest under a time specific / targeted call you must do so by the date specified. Only EOIs deemed eligible will then be invited to submit a full application. These calls will be

advertised in local media and on the County Wicklow Partnership website [www.wicklowpartnership.ie](http://www.wicklowpartnership.ie).

County Wicklow Partnership is now seeking Expressions of Interest from those seeking support under the LEADER / Rural Development Programme. The LEADER Programme is now operating time limited / targeted calls for applications. This is a two stage process. Stage 1 is the Call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) and Stage 2 is the Application Stage.

The first call for Expressions of Interest is now open and details as follows:

**Theme 1:** Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

<i>Subtheme</i>	<i>Budget Allocated</i>	<i>Maximum Grant</i>
Rural Tourism	€620,000	€100,000
Enterprise Development	€484,000	€100,000
Rural Towns	€220,000	€35,000

**Completed Expression of Interest (EOI) form must be submitted to County Wicklow Partnership, 3rd Floor, Avoca River House, Bridgewater Centre, Arklow, Co. Wicklow by close of business on Friday the 16th December 2016.**

**EOI forms are available to download on [www.wicklowpartnership.ie](http://www.wicklowpartnership.ie) or by email from [info@wicklowpartnership.ie](mailto:info@wicklowpartnership.ie) or by contacting 0402 20955.**



*Charlotte Rosemond, Acting Communications Officer, WUC.*

## The Pure Mile Awards 2016

The PURE mile competition is an initiative of the PURE Project which involves keeping a mile stretch of road (approx. 1.6 km), and the immediate environment litter/rubbish free, while simultaneously considering the preservation and careful maintenance of the flora and fauna, ditches, hedge-rows, and any other natural or man-made features of the area.

2016 was the seventh year of the PURE Mile competition, with the largest number of entries for the PURE mile since it began 7 years ago with over 60 miles of road from all over Wicklow and South Dublin involved - from Ballymana in South Dublin to Ballinabarney in Glenmalure, from the Kiltipper Uplands to Kiltegan.

The PURE Mile Awards 2016 got underway on 4th October at The Brooklodge Hotel, Macreddin, Aughrim. Awards and certificates were presented by T. D., Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and Natural Resources, Seán Kyne with several other public representatives and department officials in attendance. There were 13 awards presented on the night with cash prizes totalling over €5,000.

PURE Project Manager, Ian Davis kicked off the ceremony by showing a 10 minute film looking back on the 10 years of PURE and its achievements to date. He complemented all those involved in PURE mile projects for their hard work, dedication and commitment to keeping their local area litter and rubbish free. Being on the doorstep of the largest urban area in the country leaves Wicklow open to



illegal dumping and the vigilance and dedication of the local communities is vital to ensuring the fly tippers and dumpers are caught and prosecuted.

Glenmalure PURE Mile spokesperson Pat Dunne, who won the overall best PURE Mile 2016, stated that 'with all the combined efforts of the 60 miles of road, Wicklow was the real winner on the night'.

It was a tremendous achievement from all involved. Congratulations must go to Ian his ongoing dedication to engaging with local communities and his encouragement to take ownership of our rural roadscape

*Charlotte Rosemond, Acting Communications Officer, WUC.*

# Wicklow Uplands Council presents to EUROPARC Conference



Over 300 delegates from across Europe attended the recent EUROPARC Federation Conference in the Vallée de Joux located in the Parc Jura Vaudois, Switzerland. Regarded as the birthplace of Swiss horology, the Vallée de Joux is still the home to a number of famous Swiss mechanical watch manufacturers while remaining very much a rural area. The EUROPARC Federation serves as a network for Europe's natural and cultural heritage and aims to improve the management of Protected Areas across Europe through international cooperation, the exchange of ideas and experience and by influencing policy.

The annual conference, comprising a series of talks, workshops and fieldtrips, is the largest gathering of park professionals in Europe. This year's conference theme 'We are the Parks' focused on the role that people play in the creation and management of protected areas and aimed to highlight how local communities can participate in the governance of parks. Governance of protected areas was the key theme of the conference with keynote speakers discussing the Swiss democratic model of parks and their 'bottom-up' model of park management, an approach that Wicklow Uplands Council takes in all their work.

A small delegation from Wicklow Uplands Council attended the conference and had the very exciting opportunity of hosting a workshop titled 'We are Sustainable Farmers'. The four hour workshop was attended by a number of important delegates including the Project Manager for Biodiversity and Ecosystems in the European Environment Agency, members of the EUROPARC Council and representatives from protected areas across Europe. The workshop presented by Brian Dunne and discussed the needs of farmers, local communities and recreational users in relation to their protected areas. The importance of cooperation and communication between all stakeholder groups was

discussed at length and the partnership model undertaken by Wicklow Uplands Council was seen as a model template by those present. It was agreed by all that farmers have an important role to play in the best management of protected areas and that farmers need to have more involvement in the decision-making processes related to them.

The decline in traditional hill farming coupled with the ongoing restrictions to effective habitat management of upland areas has resulted in an overall decline in upland biodiversity. The need for a Locally Led Agri-Environment Scheme to support our upland farmers was presented as a case study and was welcomed as 'a very exciting development' by the participants. It was also agreed that more awareness was needed in relation to the wide range of ecosystem services provided by upland farming. A second case study was presented at the workshop by Sirje Kuusik from Estonia representing the sustainable tourism network, 'Genuine Experiences in Lahemaa'. This group of seventeen family based tourism farms has successfully added value to their products by branding them to their national park and are now running very successful farm-based tourism businesses.

Wicklow Upland Council's membership of the Federation represents something of a hybrid within the organisation which has almost 400 members, most of whom own or manage Protected Areas across Europe and therefore it was very significant that we were invited to host a workshop this year. It is very important that we network with our European counterparts, share experiences and continue to learn from each other. Full details on the conference can be found at [www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org).

*Brian Dunne Acting Co-ordinator Wicklow Uplands Council*



# The Sugarloaf Way



The ambitious vision to develop and map a series of walks on designated trails that will take visitors and locals from Bray DART / Bus Station to Rathdrum train station is a step closer with the recent development of The Sugar Loaf Way. A series of structured trails that link the towns and villages from Bray to Arklow is the ultimate plan. Taking in Kilmacanogue, Roundwood, Annamoe, Laragh and Rathdrum, the Sugarloaf Way will one day form part of an extensive trail through some of the most beautiful scenery in Ireland.

The Sugar Loaf Way starts at Kilmacanogue at the 1916 Commemorative Garden close to Kilmacanogue village. Crossing the R755 this trail winds its way through charming little country roads and greenways along the foothills of the Great Sugar Loaf Mountain. In times past this was the original coach road from Kilmacanogue to Roundwood.

Known locally as the "Car Road" the trail follows a route roughly parallel to the R755 but as it climbs, wonderful views over the Little Sugar Loaf, Bray and Carrigoona open up. Travelling through little narrow lanes bordered with old stone walls, the trail turns south and begins to climb upwards through open-mountain grazing where views over Djouce, Powerscourt, Deerpark and Maulin can be enjoyed. The trail eventually joins the well-used path from the Sugar Loaf car park – a trail head either for starting or completing the Sugar Loaf way.

The Way is very well marked with familiar yellow walking man and arrows on a black background. Two gates, and two pedestrian barriers have been erected. A section of new track has been cleared, and gravel laid on one section. Culverts, cross and side drains have been installed and bridges across gullies erected – all in all a major undertaking. There is a large car park at the start/end of the Way at Red Lane and facilities at Kilmacanogue include Pluck's Bar and two petrol stations with shops. The bus stop in Kilmacanogue is served by three routes.

The well-used track from Red Lane to the Sugar Loaf summit is already very familiar and popular with visitors and local people alike and the Sugar Loaf Way enhances the experience.

The development of the trail was a huge team effort. Following initial consultations with Wicklow Uplands Council, all of the commonage holders on the Sugar Loaf gave the trail their full support. Funds were secured from Wicklow County Council tourism development and managed by Roundwood & District Community Council. Volunteers from Wicklow Uplands Council project managed the development working closely with Wicklow Rural Partnership and the main contractor. Without the cooperation of these groups the establishment of the trail would not have been possible.

While the trail itself is currently established there are still some improvements in the offing. Map boards for the Way are to be erected at both trailheads. Car parking at the Kilmacanogue end of the trail beside the new 1916 Commemorative Garden is being considered. There are also plans to include a picnic area with seating overlooking Powerscourt and the mountains

The Sugar Loaf Way complies with the National Trails standard and is listed on the National Trails Register. It is a beautiful trail and a welcome addition to the list of Wicklow walks.

*Charlotte Rosemond, Acting Communications Officer, WUC.*



## Trail Details

Length 4.3k • Climb 206m • Duration 1-2 hours

Trail Head Kilmacanogue village (1916 memorial)

Finishes at Red Lane Carpark (off R755)

Graded Class 4 Strenuous

Further information [visitwicklow.ie/wicklow-walks/sugar-loaf-way](http://visitwicklow.ie/wicklow-walks/sugar-loaf-way)

# The Burning Issue

When the issue of 'Control of Vegetation' by burning is mentioned the perception is of destruction, uncontrolled fires and prescribed burning dates. Complex regulations have to be cleared to get permission to burn the heather and frequently by the time the red tape is completed, the correct weather conditions have passed.

Farmers are sensible people. They have no desire to ruin their land and vegetation. Over- regulation causes aggravation and

frequently, through no fault of their own, they are penalised even when the fire may have spread on to their land or been caused accidentally by ramblers.

What type of burn is required to control heather? The word 'burn' is highly emotive and maybe not the correct one to use... however, if one compares heather burning with human burns, these could be similarly categorised.

## Effect on Skin

Burn degree	Layers	Healing	Prognosis
1st	Superficial Epidermis	5–10 days	Heals well.
2nd	Superficial burn extending into papillary dermis	less than 2–3 weeks	Local infection but no scarring typically
2nd +	Deeper burn extending into reticular dermis	3–8 weeks	Scarring (may require skin grafting)
3rd	Burn extending through full epidermis and entire dermis	Prolonged (months) and incomplete	Scarring, (may require amputation / skin grafting)
4th	Extends through entire skin, and into underlying fat, muscle and bone	Requires excision	Amputation, significant functional impairment and, in some cases, death.

## Effect on Heather

Layers	Appears	Recovery	Prognosis
Superficial Surface	Singed	Rapid regrowth from lateral buds, rare species in undergrowth	Good ground cover increased biodiversity
Slight surface burn	Singed ash fertilizer	6+ months	Good
Extends to depth 4 cm	Blackened	9+ months	Slow regeneration
Extends into deep layers 6-7cm		2 - 3 years	Some regeneration from surviving root.
Complete root layer destroyed	Black, charred root structure prone to weather damage	4-5 years	Very slow regeneration. Possible susceptibility to undesirable invasive species

Unfortunately, examples of the fourth degree burns have been seen throughout the country. In Wicklow, the fires at Sally Gap some years ago were so severe that the heather is only now just recovering.

The first degree burn is ideal. As a child in Donegal, I accompanied an old farmer up the hills when he was checking his herd. He appeared to be a pyromaniac. He would chuck lighted matches as he walked along. The result I remember was small pockets of singed vegetation. Thinking about this now, this regime produced a mosaic of vegetation with various stages of maturity. Only the portions that were becoming woody burnt. The burns to the woody portions were the equivalent of a rough pruning. It encouraged regeneration of the heather but did minimal damage to the other vegetation and wild life. It probably enhanced the environment, there were skylarks and insects in abundance combined with a rich flora.

The areas burnt were small, the largest would have been no more than a football pitch and some in fact were very small pockets. The surrounding fresh vegetation had sufficient moisture content to stop the spread and was a safe refuge for the fauna during the burning. This was feasible with a well-managed hillside. Sadly it may take at least 10 years to restore our uplands to this stage.

This type of first degree burn would require very few controls other than to inform County Council and fire authorities that it was happening. This works well in in the Boleybrack grouse project in Co. Leitrim.

Problems could arise in areas of proximity to forestry and whine/gorse or with a sudden wind just blowing burning Molina, but if adopted on commonage and where all users were on hand uncontrolled burning would be minimised.

by Claire Chambers – WUC Board Member



## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

# Joint Policing Committee

Roundwood Parish Hall played host to the latest public Joint Policing Committee (JPC) meeting. The purpose of the JPC is to provide a forum where the local authority and Senior Garda officers, responsible for the policing of that area, can consult with elected local representatives and make recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the area. This structure is key to reviewing the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour occurring in the area and the factors underlying and contributing to it.

Membership of the committees consists, the Chief Superintendent, Senior Members of the Gardaí, Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Elected Members and representatives from the voluntary and community sector. Wicklow Uplands Council Board member Sean Malone, serves as an elected representative on the JPC.

The meeting gave the local community the opportunity to make their views known and direct questions to the members of the committee. Superintendent Paul Hogan reported that overall crime levels are down across the county compared with last year which is to be welcomed. The main issues arose by members of the public were; tackling illegal dumping, irresponsible dog ownership and subsequent damage to livestock, issues with cyclists causing long delays from Kilmacanogue to Laragh and the need for more awareness of the vulnerable people in the community.

Superintendent Paul Hogan advised that the Gardaí will be working closely with the PURE Project to install CCTV to tackle illegal dumping in problematic areas and hopefully prosecute the culprits. In relation to dog ownership Chief Superintendent John P. Quirke advised that Gardaí are not receiving a large volume of reports in relation to sheep worrying and attacks on livestock. The JPC urged that all incidents need to be reported in order for more resources to be put in place to tackle the issue more efficiently. All incidents should be reported to the local Garda station and also Wicklow County Council

Conor O'Leary from Muintir na Tíre addressed the meeting and asked that we all be more aware of the vulnerable or isolated people in the community and make an effort to drop in on them. He stressed the benefits of these people having a personal alarm in case of a fall or accident. These alarms can be sought through the Roundwood and District Community Council.

The very well attended meeting was very positive and Gardaí advised that people should always be vigilant in not leaving valuables in plain sight and locking cars and doors at night. The Chief Superintendent asked that we all 'reduce the opportunity for crime and report all suspicious activity'. The Committee also formally launched the new Joint Policing Committee 6 Year Strategic Plan on the evening which will act as guide for their activity for the period.

*Brian Dunne Acting Co-ordinator Wicklow Uplands Council*

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY WORKSHOP

In August, Wicklow Uplands Council hosted an extremely engaging and lively workshop on Sustainable Energy. 20 international DIT post graduate students and their leaders joined with representatives from a number of organisations to debate and discuss renewable energy sources in Wicklow. As it has become such a contentious issue the main topic of the day was wind energy.

The students spent the morning visiting the new Raheenleagh Wind Farm and arrived in Roundwood for the afternoon workshop.

The workshop was opened with a presentation on the work of Wicklow Uplands Council by Brian Dunne and Vice Chairman Tom Byrne. Enda Mullen, NPWS, gave an excellent overview on Wicklow Mountains National Park and the implications of SAC and SPA designations on the siting of wind turbines and their potential impacts on wildlife. Richard More-O'Ferrell from SWWAG (South Wicklow Wind Action Group) presented on the some of the potential negative impacts of wind turbines on adjacent residents. As Ireland needs to move to more sustainable energy sources there was plenty of debate on the merits and negative aspects of wind energy.

It was very valuable to have a number of members of Wicklow Uplands Council in attendance sharing their views and local experience with wind and other sustainable energy sources with the participants. We would like to thank all those who participated for their time and contributions.

*Charlotte Rosemond, Acting Communications Officer, WUC.*



## TOURISM IN WICKLOW KEY TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND JOBS!

Tourism in Wicklow employs well over 10,000 local people, from summer jobs to career professionals. Tourism businesses are generally small and locally owned and they contribute greatly to the economy working with local suppliers for goods and services.

Overall, 2016 has been a good tourism year in Wicklow, but further progress is needed to fulfil the tourism potential and attract greater numbers of visitors next year. The challenges facing us include:

- **The high cost of doing business in Ireland.**
- **The risks associated with Brexit.**
- **The low levels of marketing funds available to businesses.**

In 2016, Wicklow Tourism successfully promoted a variety of activities using the [visitwicklow.ie](http://visitwicklow.ie) website and other social media. Over 60K tourism maps were distributed in Wicklow, Ireland and abroad. A delegation from Wicklow Tourism attended various trade shows and fairs to develop and foster strong connections with overseas partners in places like Canada and China while showcasing Wicklow as a holiday destination on the doorstep of the vibrant city of Dublin. Offering a huge variety for everyone, from stunning mountain scenery and treks to vast seascapes and the experience of quiet rural life offering great places to eat and stay.

The extensive PR campaign developed around the tagline #WakeUpInWicklow has been a tremendous success.



*Wicklow County Tourism's Executive Board: From left to right, Martyna O'Toole, Neasa Clissman, Cllr. Gerry Walsh, Pat Mellon Chairman, Cllr. Miriam Murphy, Gerard O'Brien, Sean Byrne, Eugene Finnegan. Missing: Pat O'Suilleabhain, Mai Quaid*

Under the guidance of the board, Wicklow County Tourism is committed to undergo a review of its structure and operations, with the objective to maximise allocated and generated resources.

This organisation will continue to work hard in 2017 to expand its reach both in Ireland and abroad, while offering support for the development of local tourism projects.

**Tourism Facts & Figures:**

- The Tourism Industry in Wicklow enables 10,400 jobs.
- The Tourism Industry generates and estimated €122m to the local economy.
- Wicklow hotels' annual contribution is estimated upwards of €2 million
- For every €1 spent in tourism an estimated €1.26 is generated in additional revenue.
- One in every five new jobs created since 2011 was in tourism.
- Visitwicklow.ie will reach 450,000 and 3m page views for 2016
- Wicklow County Tourism has around 300 members

*Fred Verdier, Wicklow County Tourism Development Officer.*

## Heritage Week – Walk and Talk

This year Wicklow Uplands Council joined with hundreds of communities across Ireland who took part in Heritage Week 2016. We promoted our Natural & Built Heritage with a Walk and Talk on the newly opened Avonmore Way near Rathdrum.

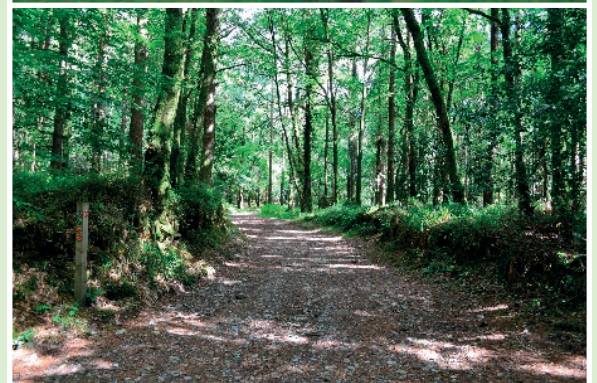
A group of over 30 walkers were led from Stump Forest Entrance by National Parks and Wildlife guide Eleanor Sutherland. Eleanor proved an excellent guide and her expert knowledge on the flora and fauna along the walk was both interesting and enlightening.

At the end of the walk the group arrived at Clara Vale and were treated to super hospitality from the Parish committee.

Pat Dargan, architect and planner, gave a very interesting and informative presentation on the built heritage in the Clara Vale. Pat focused on the importance of Heritage, Community and Continuity. He pointed out various residences in the area which would have served as the pub, post office and shop. The church in Clara Vale has undergone many changes over the years and Pat fascinatingly described these changes from the very earliest written records to recent times.

Pat outlined the significance of communities in relation to heritage and the important role that communities can play in preserving their local heritage features.

The Clara Vale community undertook a number of ambitious restoration projects in the area including; the recovery of old headstones from the river, the erection of a memorial stone to local people who died in World War I and the restoration of an old font. The font was meticulously repaired and restored to its former glory and use. Plans are in place for a community garden which will join the Avonmore way. These projects are testament to the community in Clara Vale who have promoted their own heritage keeping a lasting record of past and present heritage for future generations.



*Charlotte Rosemond, Acting Communications Officer, WUC.*

# S T . K E V I N ' S W A Y

The Pilgrim Paths of Ireland are a collection of ancient religious routes around the country which have documented claims to having been used by pilgrims since ancient times. Walking these ancient ways not only offers the opportunity for spiritual renewal but also provides us with a link to our past, while contributing to sustainable tourism and community development in each area.

St. Kevin's Pilgrim trail from Hollywood to Glendalough, reputedly follows the journey taken by St Kevin to found a monastic settlement in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains. The well-marked



## TRAIL DETAILS

Length 30K (18miles)

Climb 580m

Duration 7 hours

Trail Head Hollywood  
T124 969

Finishes at Glendalough  
Monastic Site N 940 055

Pilgrim Passport  
information 083 4328842  
or 087 2702099

Passport stamping Point  
Glendalough Hotel

track rises gently to the sweeping viewpoint of the Wicklow Gap before descending easily to finish at the ancient monastic site at Glendalough, which was a renowned centre of pilgrimage and learning in the medieval period.

Visit the fine interpretative centre beside Glendalough carpark to get an overview of the history of the area. Little remains of the early monastery that grew up around St Kevin's tomb, and most of the monastic buildings date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the heyday of the European pilgrimage. The cluster includes one of the country's best preserved examples of a round tower. The valley beyond the monastic settlement has much to offer, including a view of the inaccessible 'St Kevin's Bed' from which he reputedly hurled a seductive maiden into the lake below in a determined effort to preserve his chastity!

**Pilgrim passport – walkers can avail of getting a passport stamped for completion of pilgrim paths around Ireland - see [www.pilgrimpath.ie/pilgrim-passport](http://www.pilgrimpath.ie/pilgrim-passport)**

*Charlotte Rosemond,  
Acting Communications Officer, WUC.*

www.letsprint.ie

## Deer Management

One of the Department of Agriculture's most significant achievements over the past decade has been the huge reduction in the level of TB in cattle in every county in the country. Every county that is, except Wicklow. The level of TB in Wicklow remains at two to three times the national average, and continues to cause great hardship and distress to many farm families.

Farmers, private vets and department vets working locally have long suspected a connection between the stubbornly high levels of TB in Wicklow - especially in the Calary area - with the record level of deer in the county. After years of campaigning, the Department of Agriculture eventually agreed to shoot and test 130 deer in the environs of Calary and found the level of TB at 17%.

There was an expectation that the Department of Agriculture (the Department with responsibility for eradicating TB in cattle) would step up to the plate and carry out further scientific investigation and take appropriate action. However the department has proved extremely reticent in taking responsibility. Instead a compromise has been reached, which sees the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership, along with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Arts Heritage and Gaeltacht and the Islands jointly organising a cull in the Calary area over a two year period. The aim of the cull is to

reduce deer numbers in an area covering six DED's to see if TB levels in cattle drop correspondingly.

The cull will be overseen by a steering committee consisting of representatives of the bodies mentioned above and carried out by local hunters under the direction of a coordinator.

Calary however is just one of the areas in Wicklow that is experiencing problems with deer and TB. Farmers all over the Wicklow Uplands are being affected and are calling for action. Wicklow IFA chairman Tom Short chaired a well-attended meeting of farmers in Tinahely recently. Farmer after farmer related harrowing stories of being locked up with TB for years and of experiencing large numbers of deer grazing alongside their cattle and even entering farmyards.

It is sometimes difficult for people to understand the sheer anguish and distress that farmers feel when they see a herd of cows that they've bred over a lifetime taken from their yard for slaughter. The financial loss is considerable but it goes beyond that. Nevertheless we don't want to demonize deer. They are wonderful majestic creatures which are part of the fabric of biodiversity in the uplands. We want to achieve balance; a healthy deer population living in harmony with the environment, including farming, forestry and people.

*Declan O'Neill. Wicklow Uplands Council Board Member*

*Photos reproduced in this newsletter have been kindly provided by Eileen Byrne, Diarmuid O'Brien, Fred Verdier, Brian Dunne, and Pat Sheridan photography.*



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