

Wicklow Mountain Views



THE NEWSLETTER OF WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

SUMMER 2018

A Letter from the Chair



Dear members and supporters, I would like to wish everyone a most enjoyable summer season. It seems rather incredible that following the blizzard conditions in the spring we are now having one of the driest summers on record. These extreme conditions are particularly difficult in the uplands. The blizzards cut off many upland communities for days and now the dry conditions are bringing their own problems including devastating wildfires.

I write this letter as the outgoing Chairman having served in the position for the last three years. I am happy to say that Tom Byrne has been elected to serve as the next Chairman of Wicklow Uplands Council and I wish him the very best in the role. I have been involved with the Uplands Council since the very beginning and its development over the past two decades has been a very interesting journey with many challenges successfully overcome through various partnerships and projects.

The idea for this organisation came from a group organised by the late Adrian Phillips, a founder member of the Irish Uplands Forum, and others. This movement began around 1995 when there had been a long period of difficulties between upland farmers and other voluntary and statutory organisations. A meeting was called to discuss the formation of a new organisation to represent the non-statutory views in the uplands with Wicklow Uplands Council coming into existence soon after.

The members resolved to form an organisation which could solve problems by compromise rather than through conflict and I am proud to say that since that time, the Uplands Council has continued to operate on the basis of consensus and partnership with no decision of the Board decided by vote. This ethos has encouraged open discussions and ensured that all voices have had an opportunity to be heard with equal weight and consideration.

Over the past twenty years, the Uplands Council has tackled various issues and identified solutions through innovative projects and programmes. Tensions between stakeholders have largely eased due to this open dialogue but issues can arise from time to time and the Uplands Council continues to play an important role, believing in the importance of partnerships to ensure sustainability.

This past year has been particularly busy for the Uplands Council. The successful proposal for the Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS) project for the Wicklow and Dublin uplands was announced in January and its implementation is ongoing. It is a substantial undertaking and presents an enormous opportunity for the organisation to lead the way yet again.

SUAS was developed based on years of research carried out by Wicklow Uplands Council and partners, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who have worked, collaborated and participated in the vegetation projects in whatever way. I would especially like to thank our staff past and present.

We have a very full work programme aside from SUAS: The vision for a long distance route from Bray Station to Woodenbridge is getting ever closer with agreements now in place for a trail from Bray Head to link to the Sugar Loaf

Way. We will be collaborating with the Wicklow Heritage Office this year on a heritage recording project to create a digital archive of built, natural and cultural heritage associated with the communities along the route and its surrounding landscape. Plans are also in place to secure LEADER funding for a path condition survey to access the current condition of upland paths in conjunction with Mountaineering Ireland. In addition we have just been notified that we have been awarded a tender for the provision of deer management services in Co Wicklow in conjunction with the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership.

The work of Wicklow Uplands Council could not continue without financial support and we are very grateful to our funders and supporters. The Heritage Council continues to be our main supporter and it was they who first believed in the values and opportunities that an organisation like ours could provide. The Heritage Council plays a very important role in providing heritage advice and assistance to community groups and organisations like ours and without that initial and ongoing support we would not be where we are today. Of course we are also very grateful to Denis O'Brien, a long-time supporter of the organisation and to Wicklow County Council for their continued assistance.

As is evident throughout this newsletter, Wicklow Uplands Council is involved in many activities and projects and I hope that you will enjoy reading more about them and the various other projects and initiatives in the county.

Finally, to all our members past and present, our board and our staff, and to anybody who has contributed in any way, I would like to extend my sincere thanks.

Sean Byrne
Chair, Wicklow Uplands Council

Nostalgic Dog Control Campaign Proves Successful

Unfortunately, Co. Wicklow along with many farmers nationwide suffered from a number of very serious sheep attacks this year resulting in fatalities and the maiming of flocks.

Wicklow Uplands Council continues to advocate strongly for responsible dog control and recently opted to try a nostalgic approach to share the message of dog control across the internet. By reintroducing the Department of Agriculture's 'Bonzo Wants to Go Out' ad to build an awareness campaign seeking dog owners' assistance in preventing sheep attacks, the Uplands Council was surprised to discover that they had created an instant hit on social media. First aired on RTE in 1984, the animated ad was remembered by many, most especially for its effective closing line 'Keep your dog under control - running free, he can be a killer'

The local media, also keen to support the message, took note of the online success, publishing several articles on the campaign and the need for greater awareness by both dog owners residing in the vicinity and those visiting farmland areas during the lambing season.



'Bonzo wants to go out' still proves to be a hit.

As the number of recreational users in the Wicklow uplands continues to grow, upland farmers are finding uncontrolled dogs to be a serious challenge. Uncontrolled dogs, even with playful intent may cause great distress to livestock and can cause serious injury or a fatality. Sheep can become stuck in wire or holes and easily break legs on uneven ground when being chased. Anxiety can also result in sheep fatalities, even up to 2 - 3 days after being chased.

Wicklow Uplands Council stresses that dog owners should respect signage advising where dogs are not welcome and to keep dogs on a leash at all times in areas where sheep are present, most especially during lambing season.

According to the Irish Farmers Association, an estimated 300 - 400 attacks occur nationwide each year which results in up to 4,000 sheep being killed or suffering serious injury. Perhaps it is now time for a fully funded nationwide campaign to address this very serious issue – something the Wicklow Uplands Council would very much welcome and offer its complete support of.

Further information on the policies and advice of Wicklow Uplands Council can be found on our website: www.wicklowuplands.ie

Members of the public are requested to please report any incidents of livestock worrying to Wicklow County Council Ph: 0404 20236 or Email: env@wicklowcoco.ie

**Stray dogs should be reported to the
ISPCA Dog Warden Service Ph: 0404 44873.**



Litter Pick of the Wicklow Gap

In keeping with Wicklow Uplands Council's advocacy of keeping the upland region in the pristine condition it deserves to be found in, an extensive litter pick event of the Wicklow Gap was organised in April.

The evening event which was held in conjunction with The PURE Project and the An Taisce National Spring Clean, saw teams of volunteers scattered along the well-known scenic route, filling bags of discarded waste scattered along the roadside and surrounding lands. In addition to a 5.5km stretch of the renowned mountain road, volunteers also restored the Glendasan Mine site and a short section of the popular St. Kevin's Way to its natural unspoilt state.

Due in part to the remoteness of the region illegal dumping has unfortunately become a feature of the area. This was reflected in the assortment of waste successfully collected, which included tyres, domestic and industrial waste, car parts and even a kitchen sink!

This year's National Spring Clean initiative celebrated its 20th anniversary with community groups participating in several hundred events throughout Co. Wicklow.



Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS) Pilot Project

The Wicklow uplands are renowned as an area of outstanding natural beauty and provide an important landscape for a range of recreational activities. The uplands also provide an important natural resource to produce food and energy as well as providing high quality fresh water supplies to adjacent urban populations. This great natural resource was traditionally managed by upland farmers whose activities kept habitats in good environmental condition. However, over the past two decades changes in legislation and farming activities, have led to a gradual decline in the quality and condition of upland habitats.

For the past number of years Wicklow Uplands Council has researched and highlighted these declining conditions and advocated the need for targeted support for upland farming. In direct response to that body of research, the Uplands Council has recently secured funding for a new pilot project for the Wicklow/Dublin uplands called a Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS). The SUAS project was developed using a bottom-up approach with the support of local upland farmers and is one of just 12 projects from across Ireland to be awarded funding by the Department of Agriculture under the new European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture Productivity and Sustainability (EIP AGRI) initiative. Two other upland projects based in the MacGillycuddy Reeks and The Blackstairs are also among the 12 projects.

SUAS is a five year pilot project which aims to address the agricultural, environmental and socio-economic issues associated with upland farming in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands. It is an ambitious project and includes a number of key innovations including;

- **The establishment of commonage groups with their own constitutions**
- **Integrating the environmental (ecological and water) and farm data into a single commonage management plan**
- **Assisting farmers to take responsibility for the development, implementation, and delivery of their own management plan**
- **The use of an auction-based payment system to incentivise participants to develop solutions to specific issues they have identified on their farmed area**

A lot of work has been done since January to get the project initiated. Following a call for expressions of interest in March, an initial three commonages and one non-commonage farmer have been selected to participate in SUAS. Over the summer period each group will undergo a facilitated process to get established as a formal group and elect a Chairperson. It is essential that the group works well together as they will implement their management plan co-operatively. A further 2 commonages and another non commonage farmer will be selected later this year.

The next step is an on-site ecological and water quality assessment. The assessments will identify the current status of the site and make recommendations on how to improve its condition. Using that information the farmers will then be assisted in developing their management plan. The plan will also take into account farm data e.g. flock size, grazing period. Farmers will decide themselves what measures they would like to carry out to improve the habitat condition. Measures may include but are not limited to; vegetation removal through controlled managed burning or mechanical means, increased shepherding activities, cattle grazing, providing livestock holding infrastructure etc. Payments will be made for time spent carrying out the activities in line with the agreed management plan.

An auction-based measure has also been included in the SUAS pilot which will encourage participants to explore further actions and measures that address problems they have identified on their farmed area. Participants can make a proposal to the SUAS team who will provide finance to develop the best idea that is brought forward. Measures considered under the auction system will provide added value to the project. It is envisaged that such measures may include:

- **Provision of signage, both educational and directional to archaeological sites**
- **Heather restoration in Molina dominated areas**
- **Protecting rare and endangered species – e.g. temporary fencing, grazing exclusion zones**
- **Bracken control**

To support SUAS an Operational Group comprised of a team of experts has been assembled with a diverse range of skills. The organisations involved include; Wicklow Uplands Council, Teagasc, NPWS, UCD, LAWCO and IFAC Accountants. A full time project manager will also be employed to guide and support the participating farmers.

The vision for SUAS is that it will create a blueprint for future upland agri-environment schemes. There are indications from Europe that the next round of CAP will have a greater focus on bottom-up, locally led schemes and therefore it is crucial that SUAS and the other upland projects work successfully for all involved.

Progress updates for SUAS will be published to our website. Further information on all the EIP projects can be found at www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/innovation

Brian Dunne
Coordinator, Wicklow Uplands Council





Co. Wicklow's Rural Recreation Officer

The Rural Recreation Officer (RRO) works closely with community groups, small business enterprises and tourism bodies to access advice, support and funding for the development and enhancement of recreational projects, activity tourism and related infrastructure.

There are 12 RROs positions nationwide that are funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with the support of Fáilte Ireland. The positions stem from the recognition of the important task of developing sustainable tourism in local communities.

Managed by County Wicklow Partnership, and currently the only RRO funded for on the east coast, the position is considered to be an essential link to the continued growth of Wicklow's tourism sector.

The Rural Recreation Officer also acts as a local connection with stakeholders that include Sport Ireland Trails, Coillte, Wicklow Co. Council, Fáilte Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Wicklow Uplands Council and private landowners who provide recreational users access to their lands. Naturally, the fostering of warm relationships between all interested parties is a key focus to the role.

The responsibilities of the Rural Recreation Officer include:

- The implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy
- Promoting and encouraging the development, delivery and improvement of recreational projects, infrastructure and activities including land, water and air based activities
- The work associated with the roll-out of the National Walks Scheme
- To coordinate and oversee the management and enhancement of trails in the county
- Assisting Fáilte Ireland in the development, marketing and promotion of trails and key walking destinations, including media and trade visits
- Work with local communities in developing trails and assisting in organising walking festivals
- Implementation of the 'Leave No Trace' Initiative

One of the other major undertakings of the role is the current review of the The Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy under the stewardship of the Wicklow Outdoor Recreational Committee. Once completed, it will shape Outdoor Recreation in the County for the next 5 years, and comes at a time of increased development of blueways, greenways and the network of integrated trails throughout the county.

Bryan Fennell took up the position of RRO in February, having previously held the post of a Support & Development Officer with the 'No Name! Club'; a national youth organisation whose headquarters are in Baltinglass.

A resident of the West Wicklow community of Hollywood, he brings to the role extensive experience and qualifications in the recreational, mountaineering, watersports and trails sectors. Bryan holds qualifications in a range of adventure sports and is a qualified outdoor education facilitator, having graduated from GMIT in Castlebar with a degree in Outdoor Education and Leisure. He is an avid adventurer and also sits on the Board of Management of Canoeing Ireland.

Bryan can be contacted in the County Wicklow Partnership on 0402 20955 or by email: bfennell@wicklowpartnership.ie

Continued Success of the PURE Project

The PURE (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) Project was established as a regional environmental initiative to combat incidents of illegal dumping and flytipping in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands region.

The recently published figures of its 10 years of operation demonstrate the success of the project with an overall 45% reduction of the quantity of waste removed. In 2017, a total of 200 tonnes of illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin upland region was removed, compared to 2007's figure of 360 tonnes.

The popularity of the PURE Mile Competition also continues to grow with nearly 60 groups enlisting for the 2018 Competition.

The introduction of the 'Clean Up The Uplands' award, which invites special interest groups such as scouting, walking and cycling groups, businesses and organisations to adopt an upland area, has seen the initiative grow considerably. This involves over 1,000 volunteers working collectively to improve and enhance over 200 miles of road, forestries, woodlands, upland amenities and mountainscapes.

This very welcome news indicates strongly that the PURE Project, the wonderful work of the many PURE Mile groups and the use of anti-litter initiatives are producing impactful change to the region.



**To Report Incidents of Illegal Dumping
Please LO-CALL 1850 365 121**

Member Organisation Profile

County Wicklow Public Participation Network (PPN)



Participants at the recent Hollywood Community Wellbeing Workshop.

What Is It? - It is a network of community groups from all the municipal districts in Co Wicklow that focus on environmental, social inclusion and other community activities across the county. They have a diverse membership base which includes: residents' associations, community councils and a multitude of community groups that operate in support of sports, disability, youth, women, older persons and many other locally led activities.

What Does It Do?

The PPN has three main functions:

- To provide a structure for Co. Wicklow community groups to nominate community representatives to decision and policy making bodies operating within the county.
- To act as a channel for information between various local and national bodies and Co. Wicklow based community groups.

- To support member groups to grow, develop, be informed and to be heard.

How Does It Achieve That?

- By organising seminars and workshops on various themes. Facilitating and participating in consultations. Attending community meetings and events to discover what individuals and groups are discussing.
- The PPN Representatives highlight the concerns, issues and ideas that have been discovered through community engagement.
- In situations when a board or committee require community expertise, the PPN is available for consultation and may ask their members to nominate someone suitable to participate on it.

- On occasion, the PPN may make written submissions to relevant local, national and international bodies on particular issues or suggestions.
- Members are kept informed with a monthly E-bulletin. This provides an update of their work, provides reports from their representatives and shares information about member events. It also promotes any training and funding opportunities that are available.
- Reports, submissions and update bulletins are accessible to view and download on their website and on their social media channels.

Why Should A Group Join The PPN?

- To keep informed of plans and decisions affecting their local area.
- To contribute to plans and shape local policy.
- To be part of a strong collective voice for communities.
- To network, raise their profile, share experiences and support each other.
- Find out about funding opportunities, training and other supports.
- **And It's Free To Join!**

For more information and to join the PPN, please contact:

Helen Howes, PPN Resource Worker
Tel: 087 189 5145
Email: countywicklowppn@gmail.com
www.countywicklowppn.ie

One significant project currently being undertaken by Co. Wicklow PPN, is the ongoing engagement with community groups in each of County Wicklow's Municipal Districts to 'Develop Their Vision for Community Wellbeing'.

The project seeks to create a shared understanding of the wider conditions that individuals and communities need to enjoy a better quality of life, a healthier environment and increased prosperity.

Successful workshops have already taken place around the county, with events in Greystones, Wicklow Town and Arklow to be scheduled in the autumn

Co. Wicklow PPN Training Fair

Saturday 8th September

The Brockagh Centre, Laragh

Information & Advice Stands
From Support Organisations

Community Café Serving Lunch Refreshments

Free Event For Community Groups

More Details Available At:
www.countywicklowppn.ie

Workshops include:

- Charities Regulation
- Digital & Social Media
- GDPR for community groups
- Code of Ethics in Sport
- Managing Your Volunteers
- Garda Vetting
- Governance Code
- Child Protection/Tusla Online Certified Course
- Recycling
- First Responders



Opening of the Roundwood Reservoir Vartry Trails

Under a blue sky and glorious sunshine, the official opening of the new Roundwood Reservoir Vartry Trails took place on the 9th of June. Guests of honour to mark the special occasion were An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, along with Ministers Andrew Doyle and Simon Harris and Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Frank Curran.

Local councillor Shay Cullen and Sean Pierce, Chair of the Roundwood and District Community Council, welcomed the visiting dignitaries and the estimated 800 - 1,000 people who came out to share in the celebrations, which included a BBQ, live music and an inaugural run.

This milestone is the culmination of several years of planning and the devotion of many volunteers who shared the goal of developing a series of looped trails integrated in the historic and picturesque setting of the Vartry Water Supply Scheme.



An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, Ministers Andrew Doyle and Simon Harris and Cathaoirleach Shay Cullen meet with board members of Wicklow Uplands Council at the event.

A selection of four looped trails of various lengths, offer over 20km of trail along the banks of the Vartry Reservoirs and the woodlands and wetlands that surround it. Thriving wildlife, mountain views, marked trails and the close proximity to one of Ireland's highest villages, Roundwood, creates an appealing choice for recreational visitors and it is hoped that the local community will now benefit greatly from its construction.

In addition to the natural upland vista, the Vartry Reservoirs and its buildings are a wonderful example of built heritage and the engineering feat achieved at the time. The Lower Reservoir, which provided Dublin with its first supply of fresh clean water, was constructed between 1862 and 1868 by

damming the River Vartry valley. Due to increased demand, a second embankment 3.5km upstream was completed in 1923 to form the Upper Reservoir. The stone 'valve' or 'draw off' tower constructed c.1865 and its tower-like gateway is one of the most iconic buildings found in the region and is certainly one of the most photographed.

The management of this extensive project, which saw the participation of a number of stakeholders, was undertaken by the Roundwood & District Community Council (RDCC).



An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar cuts the ribbon to officially mark the opening of the Roundwood Reservoir Vartry Trails.

A dedicated team of Rural Social Scheme and Tús participants assigned to the project through Co. Wicklow Partnership were tasked with some aspects of the masonry work and the overall maintenance of the trails.

In close cooperation with Dublin City Council/Irish Water, the project required the installation of three bridges including an impressive 200metre long boardwalk at the Mullinaveige Bridge in place of using the busy R755 Roundwood to Kilmacanogue Road. This key component addresses safety concerns and was specifically funded through the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure 2017 programme administered by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs.

The RDCC successfully secured considerable funding under the Forest Service's 'Neighbourwood Scheme' towards the management of the woodland area, trail development, way marking and the provision of interpretative map boards and information signage in the Upper Reservoir dam area.

Grants were received from IPB Insurance's 'Community Engagement Fund' and Wicklow County Council, with continued local fundraising and commitment, enabling this wonderful amenity to become a reality.

For more information on the trails, please visit: www.roundwood.ie

New Maps for County Wicklow.

EastWest Mapping has recently published three new detailed 1:25,000 scale maps for County Wicklow.

Combined, they largely cover the area south of the Wicklow Gap including Lugnaquilla & Glendalough, extending southwards to Tinahely and Shillelagh and across to the Irish Sea coastline between Arklow and Wicklow town.

The maps present the landscape in great detail, with every building outside of urban areas along with all ditches, main fences and trails being featured.

Members of local communities have

contributed advice and knowledge of heritage sites and placenames found in their localities. The maps also show the locations of many rural businesses and highlight the principal recreational facilities and activities found in the region.

We hope to extend this detailed coverage for county Wicklow in 2019, with a focus on the areas north towards the M50.

Priced at €12.50 in standard paper or €19.50 for fully waterproof maps, these are available from www.eastwestmapping.ie or selected local bookshops and retail outlets.

Barry Dalby, EastWest Mapping



Celebrating Heritage in West Wicklow

In March, the Baltinglass Courthouse provided the landmark setting for a celebration of Wicklow's heritage. Organised by the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council in association with the Baltinglass Town Renewal Group and the Baltinglass Municipal District, the event saw the official launch of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017-22 and the launch of three new Heritage Trail brochures for West Wicklow.

The production of three Heritage Trail brochures highlighting the heritage 'points of interest' that could be visited along three driving/cycling routes; Blessington Lakeside area, West Wicklow and South West Wicklow was carried out as an action of the Wicklow Heritage Plan and co-ordinated by the Heritage Office through a heritage local recording project.

Michael Starrett, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, spoke at the event and highlighted the important role that local communities and individuals have in telling the stories of their local areas. He praised the Plan and the Heritage Trails and re-iterated the Heritage Council's commitment to supporting ongoing heritage activity in Wicklow.

Copies of the brochures are now available in tourist offices and local venues. To read more about these projects, please visit Wicklow's community heritage website:

www.countywicklowheritage.org

Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council



Michael Starrett, CE Heritage Council, Cllr. Edward Timmins, Deirdre Burns, Noel Keyes, Enda Mullen, Joan Kavanagh, Catherine Wright, Dr. Keith Smith, Niamh Fitzgerald, Cllr. Vincent Blake and Frank Curran, CE Wicklow County Council.

Wicklow Heritage Trails Recording Project

Wicklow Uplands Council in partnership with the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council, have recently announced an exciting new heritage recording project along the existing and developing network of walking trails in the east of the county, from Bray to Woodenbridge.

The principle aim of the project is to construct a permanent digital archive of the natural, cultural and built heritage associated with this part of County Wicklow. Once it is completed later this year, the public archive will feature stories captured through oral recordings, a photographic collection and serve to highlight the many points of interest found in the region.

It is envisaged that through the engagement of local communities, a better understanding of their shared heritage will be discovered and celebrated. It also offers an

opportunity to create an ongoing digital archive and the building of an integrated network of interested groups and individuals.

All of the material gathered will assist the future development of visitor and tourism interpretation and to promote the region as part of Ireland's Ancient East.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

Abarta Heritage, who have been commissioned to compile information using local information and other sources, will be making site visits in the coming weeks and months to assess points of interest and to capture the many stories of sites, folklore and traditions along the route.

Local community engagement with groups and individuals is key to the success of this project and it is

anticipated that historical societies, local PURE Mile groups and community heritage organisations will play a central role in its delivery. Training in online archiving and oral history recording techniques will also be provided to interested parties.

If you are interested in getting involved with this project or have information that you would like to share or perhaps would like to become a curator of the material that is gathered, please visit www.wicklowcountyheritage.org for more details.



The 18th century bridge at Clara Vale

New Promotional Brand 'Wicklow Outdoors'



Wicklow County Tourism, working in partnership with Wicklow County Council has developed an exciting new promotional brand: Wicklow Outdoors!

Due to its unique and varied terrain and landscape, Wicklow offers its residents and visitors a wonderful setting for many outdoor activities: walking, hiking, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding, golfing, kayaking, surfing, trail running to name but a few.

Directly south of Dublin and highly accessible by car and public transport, Wicklow is host to vast numbers of people every week, arriving from every corner of Ireland - and beyond!

Home to the largest continuous upland region in Ireland, the county with the most forest land, an abundance of rivers and lakes and over 30km of varied coastline - it's easy to see why Wicklow is by default, the Outdoors Capital of Ireland!

Located in the middle of Ireland's Ancient East, Wicklow offers over 5,000 years of history, including ancient places of worship, early Christian settlements, Viking and Norman sites, rebellions, castles, estates, gardens and of course, Wicklow's Historic Gaol.

Whether it's walking along the Wicklow Way, cycling the Wicklow mountains or travelling by road, visitors experience amazing places, stunning landscapes and a journey through time and the tales that have shaped our county through the ages.

By focusing on what makes Wicklow so special within the Irish tourism offerings, this new brand will greatly assist us to package and promote County Wicklow as the preferred destination of outdoor enthusiasts from around the world!

For more information, please visit www.visitwicklow.ie

**Fred Verdier, Manager
Wicklow County Tourism.**

Information Visit to the European Commission

The visit, which was organised by the Heritage Council, saw the group meet several of Ireland's MEPs and various representatives from a number of Directorate-Generals in the European Commission. The busy schedule included a series of presentations and meetings with participants being briefed directly on the significance of cultural heritage within EU policy and related developments happening within Europe. This year's 'National Heritage Week' theme of 'Share a Story: Make a Connection' is linked with the EYCH.

Brian Dunne gave a presentation to the group that included representatives from a number of Directorate-Generals titled 'A Community Led Approach to Upland Management' which shared insights on the bottom-up approach undertaken by Wicklow Uplands Council. This included the background to the Uplands Council's establishment along with an overview of projects such as the SUAS pilot, developing sustainable recreation opportunities, the PURE Project and experiences of community involvement.



The Irish delegation outside the European Commission

Three Interpretative Panels in Development

Since 2007, Wicklow Uplands Council has worked with a variety of local community groups and Wicklow County Council to develop a network of 13 heritage interpretative panels in towns and villages across County Wicklow.

The panels provide information on local history, built and natural heritage sites and recreational activities in the area. They have been very successful in helping local communities attract visitors to local amenities and also to promote heritage awareness among local residents. Each panel is specifically tailored with a hand drawn image offering a bird's eye view of the area. They are a key piece of village infrastructure due to their positioning in central locations.

The involvement of the local community is the key to the sustainability of this project. The community provide all the necessary information for the panel and are involved in every stage of its development, deciding on the design and the layout of information.

Communities are encouraged to take ownership, stewardship and care for their panel and participate in the match funding plan. The Uplands Council serves as the intermediary to provide assistance and ensure that the project is completed on time and with a design consistent across all towns and villages in Wicklow.

LEADER funding was recently secured to develop three new panels in the villages of; Ashford, Lackan and Shillelagh. Initial meetings have taken place and the communities will be working on their panels over the summer months.

In Memoriam

Saive Coffey

The death of Saive Coffey in July 2017 left Wicklow Uplands Council bereft of one of its founder members - a person whose wisdom and commitment are irreplaceable. Saive lived most of her life locally in the uplands and was vastly knowledgeable around the needs and hopes of local people - especially farmers - as well as being sensitive to the hopes and expectations of tourists and recreational visitors.



Saive was centrally involved in the conception and development phases of what became Wicklow Uplands Council and was a member of the board of directors for many years. She was a member of the Farming and Landowning panel and had the wisdom and ability to reach across to other Wicklow Upland Council members - in spite of their sometimes differing and conflicting interests.

There was always a willingness on Saive's part to represent the council's interests amongst the broad range of its contacts locally and externally, as well as a deep care for the uplands environment and culture.

Saive was made an honorary member of Wicklow Uplands Council in 2007 in recognition of her contribution and will be fondly remembered.

Colin Murphy

Garech de Brún

The passing of The Hon. Garech de Brún marks the end of an era in the Wicklow uplands. Garech, who was a direct descendant of Arthur Guinness will be remembered as a colourful character, a cultural giant and patron of Irish arts and also as a friend of Wicklow Uplands Council.



Garech was deeply involved in the dispute over the construction of an interpretative centre at Luggala in the 90's which saw the development blocked and led to the early foundations of the Uplands Council. Garech spent most of his life living at Luggala where he famously entertained writers, poets and musicians. The 5,000 acre Luggala estate is currently for sale after entering the market last year with a listed price of €28m. The sale of Luggala brings its own concerns and Wicklow Uplands Council is conscious that the access for recreational use remains unobstructed as it did under Garech's ownership.

Garech is survived by his wife Princess Harshad Purna Devi. May he rest in peace.

Photos reproduced in this newsletter courtesy of Bruno Jensen, Helen Lawless, Fergal Gleeson, Helen Howes, Joe St. Leger and The Irish Times ©