

# Wicklow Mountain Views



THE NEWSLETTER OF WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

WINTER / SPRING 2018/19

## A Letter from the Chair



It has been an exceptionally busy time for Wicklow Uplands Council. In addition to quite a number of important projects and initiatives gathering pace, we have recently seen the official launch of two large projects.

In November, details of the Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS) Pilot Project were revealed at a special event that saw Minister Andrew Doyle and Michael Starrett, CEO of the Heritage Council give the keynote speeches. The scale and potential of the 5-year project to change the approach to upland farming in Ireland is extraordinary, something that has been reflected in the great interest it has received.

The other large project that commenced in 2018, is the three year contract to develop and implement a sustainable deer management plan for County Wicklow. Working in conjunction with the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership, this project will set up three new deer management units in the county.

Both of these projects follows an enormous amount of work over an extended period of time. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all that were involved in the various stages. The delivery of both projects has expanded the work and visibility of the Council considerably and we should be very proud of the collective achievement it represents.

Aside from our own activities, it has also been a busy time for the upland communities right across Ireland with a number of important events taking place designed to facilitate upland groups

sharing their experiences and to build partnerships.

A delegation from the Uplands Council attended the informative Irish Uplands Forum Conference held in Co. Mayo in October - appropriately titled "Innovation and Partnership in the Uplands". This certainly set the stage for the series of nationwide study visits that soon followed, with Wicklow Uplands Council hosting three upland community groups who came to Wicklow in October and November. For Wicklow Uplands Council, it was a trip to Kerry to join the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum. The group visited Cronin's Yard and viewed the works which are taking place to develop sustainable mountain access routes in The Reeks. There was also plenty of discussion surrounding the EIP projects which both groups are involved in.

Maintaining and developing sustainable trails across the uplands is one of the key areas the Council is involved in and we welcome the exciting announcement of funding for the construction of the Avonmore Way Link Bridge - a major milestone in the vision for a long distance trail linking Bray to Woodenbridge.

Working in partnership with the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council, the Wicklow Heritage Recording Project has discovered and captured an array of material on the heritage found along this long distance route. Abarta Heritage who were commissioned to undertake the project, have delivered some amazing results and I thank them for their tireless work

The early days of Wicklow Uplands Council also coincided with the formation of The Heritage Council, which was established as a statutory body under the Heritage Act in 1995. The arrival of its charismatic Chief Executive, Michael Starrett, to Roundwood the following year, marked the beginning

of what would become one of the most important and valued relationships of Wicklow Uplands Council.

It was this early and constant support from Michael and the Heritage Council, that in many ways has allowed us to grow into the thriving organisation that we see today. The funding and expert guidance that the Heritage Council devote to Ireland's upland communities and their representative organisations is invaluable and we are deeply grateful for their ongoing support. After 22 years at the helm, Michael retired at the end of January 2019 and I would like to extend our sincere thanks and wish him all the best in future endeavours.

On behalf of all the members of Wicklow Uplands Council, I would also like to warmly welcome Virginia Teehan, who commenced the role of Chief Executive of The Heritage Council this month. Virginia's arrival comes at an exciting time for the council as it implements a 5-year strategic plan set to place heritage at the heart of Irish society and decision-making.

Representing our diverse membership on a range of issues remains at the heart of our focus.

The need for responsible dog control in farmland areas is unfortunately a constant challenge for farmers and is one that the Uplands Council continues to highlight vigorously. Our involvement with the Wicklow Joint Policing Committee to reduce incidents of rural crime and car break-ins across the region continues and we thank all of the upland communities for their vigilance

Finally, I would like to thank our Board, members, staff, funders, supporters and those who have contributed in making it possible for the Wicklow Uplands Council to undertake the varied work that fills these pages.

**Tom Byrne,**  
Chair, Wicklow Uplands Council

# The Pure Mile Competition



The PURE Project is a community centered project which helps raise awareness about illegal dumping and the impact it has on the environment. One of the huge successes of the project is the Pure Mile Competition, a community initiative which encourages a diverse range of groups in Wicklow and South Dublin to adopt a mile, or miles, of rural roadside or other natural settings.

The Pure Mile is the perfect opportunity for communities and groups who want to make a positive contribution to their locality and environment. It inspires them to come together to improve and enhance the place they live or recreate in, and instills a sense of community pride and the discovery of local heritage.

In recent years, the addition of the 'Clean-Up The Uplands' category has proved to be a very popular choice for special interest groups such as scouts, recreational activities like cycling, running and walking clubs and with businesses and organisations keen to embrace social responsibility practices. The category asks that they adopt a mile of road, a woodland, an upland car park, a mountainscape or a trail in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands.

The 2018 competition saw over 50 communities, groups, clubs, scouts, primary schools, businesses and organisations, participate in the various categories. Together they collectively improved and enhanced over 220 miles of road, mountains, valleys, forestries, woodlands, upland amenities and beaches, with the removal of around 3,000 bags of rubbish.

To acknowledge and celebrate the many participants who devote so much to ensuring their Pure Mile is

a success, an annual Gala Awards Night is organised at the conclusion of the competition, with each group receiving an invite.



*Some of the young volunteers of the Stratford-On-Slaney Pure Miles (12 miles), winners of the Best Anti-Dumping Initiative.*

The gala event for the 2018 competition was held in October at The Brooklodge Hotel, Macreddin Village, and it saw a large audience gather to discover which groups were to receive one of the awards on the night. The awards and certificates were presented by Mr. Andrew Doyle., Minister of State for Food, Forestry and Horticulture; Frank Curran, CE of Wicklow County Council; and the Cathaoirleach for Wicklow County

Council, Cllr. Pat Vance. Coming from all over Wicklow and South Dublin.

Each one of the participating groups received a Pure Mile Certificate, a selection of native Irish trees and all feature in the 2019 Pure Mile Calendar. Additionally, 13 awards were presented on the night with cash prizes reaching a total of €5,000.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all that took part in the competition and continue to support the work of the Pure Project. The collective efforts of so many are a true inspiration to everyone focused on keeping our uplands and local areas in the pristine condition they deserve to be found in.

**Ian Davis,**  
*Project Manager of The Pure Project.*

For more information on the Pure Project and its initiatives, which includes education in the classroom and engagement through music, theatre and animation, please visit [www.pureproject.ie](http://www.pureproject.ie)

## Pure Mile Awards 2018

- Best Pure Mile Award 2018 - The Baltynanima Pure Mile
- Best Cultural Heritage Award - Glen Heste Pure Mile
- Best Natural Heritage Award - The Avoca Scouts & Beavers Pure Miles
- Best Education Award - Brittas Bay National School Pure Mile
- Best Community Effort Award - Snugborough Donard Pure Miles.
- Best Anti-Dumping Initiative - Stratford-On-Slaney Pure Miles (12 miles)
- Highly Commended Anti-Dumping Award - Ballinabarney, Ballinatombay, Ballyteige Pure Miles
- Highly Commended Anti-Dumping Award - Rednagh Annacurra Pure Miles
- Best Litter Free Mile Award - The 18 Pure Miles of Grangecon
- Highly Commended Litter Free Mile Award - Ballydowling & Ballysheeman Pure Miles

### Clean Up The Uplands Category:

- Overall Award for Best Clean-up the Uplands - Vagabond Tours of Ireland.
- Highly Commended Award - Glenree Walking Group & Atha Cliath Uplands Cleanup Team
- Highly Commended Award Clean-up the Uplands - Reservoir Cogs (cycling group)

## Winner of the Best Pure Mile Award 2018

The Baltynanima Pure Mile Group received the Best Pure Mile Award for 2018 along with a cheque for €1,000.

The Baltynanima Pure Miles encompass over 3 miles that are set around a rectangular circuit which is a very popular walking route with commanding views of many of the upland peaks.

The community group produced an attractive local heritage booklet outlining the flora and fauna and numerous heritage features found

in the area. The group have also created a website full of information, photographs and a news blog that keeps their community informed of upcoming events and local developments.

The award acknowledged the group's interpretative methods relating to their cultural and natural heritage, including a number of locally made informational panels placed along the looped walk.

For more information, please see: [www.PureMileRoundwood.com](http://www.PureMileRoundwood.com)



*The Baltynanima Pure Mile Group, Winner of the Best Pure Mile Award 2018.*

**To Report Illegal Dumping LO-CALL 1850 365 121**

# NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK



## Celebrating National Heritage Week 2018

Each year, during the last week of August, many national and local community organisations participate in Heritage Week by organising events designed to discover and celebrate the natural, built and cultural heritage that surrounds each of us.

2018's Heritage Week, acknowledged the European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH), which encouraged us to 'Share a Story - Make a Connection' to deepen our connection between people and our heritage. Over 2,000 events and activities were included in the nationwide programme, including two very popular events organised by the Wicklow Uplands Council.

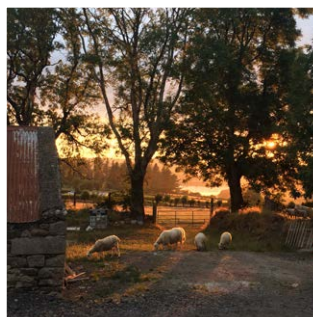
'A Guided Walk of the Sugar Loaf Way' with local walking guide Dairine Nuttall, created the perfect occasion to experience some of the renowned natural beauty and outstanding panoramic views found in the Wicklow Uplands. The event attracted over 40 walkers, who enjoyed a gentle evening stroll on the newly developed trail. The route skirts the well-known Great Sugar Loaf Mountain before sloping downward to join the historic stonewalled path that for centuries, linked upland communities to Kilmacanogue village and beyond. With plenty of stops, there was lots of conversations on the local heritage and folklore and the rich geographic setting that seemed to change as the group rounded each corner.

Wanting to host an event that was accessible to all residents and visitors of County Wicklow, a photography competition and exhibition titled 'Wicklow Connections', was also organised and attracted great interest, with one entry received from as far afield as Germany.

The open competition attracted a huge number of entries, with each image capturing aspects of Wicklow's diverse heritage and the exploration of the photographer's personal connection with County Wicklow. The competition included four categories - Activities, Rural Landscapes, Towns and Villages and a special category for minors. Prizes included over €500 in cash and a number of sponsored recreational related activities. Awarding a winner was made exceptionally difficult given the immense talent that was evident in so many of the photographs submitted.

Following an awards ceremony held to coincide with the beginning of Heritage Week 2018, an exhibition featuring over 40 printed photographs selected from the competition ran for two weeks in the Brockagh Centre in Laragh.

The wonderful collection that formed the basis for the 'Wicklow Connections' exhibition can be viewed on [www.wicklowuplands.ie/gallery](http://www.wicklowuplands.ie/gallery)



*Details of all photographs featured can be found on page 12*

## National Heritage Week 2019

National Heritage Week 2019 will take place on the 17th - 25th of August. Under the theme 'Pastimes - Past Times', we are encouraged to take a stroll through history and explore how our free time has evolved in often fascinating ways. Announcements on the events organised by Wicklow Uplands Council will be made in the coming months and we very much hope that you will join us for the occasion.

# Controlled Burning and The Heritage Act 2018

Having lobbied successive governments to extend the permissive period that allows for controlled burning of upland vegetation, Wicklow Uplands Council welcomes the introduction of The Heritage Act 2018.

Importantly, the current legal period to undertake controlled burning remains from the 1st September till the 28th February. However, the new Act provides for an extension to the current permissive period into March should conditions such as adverse weather require it. This extension is being operated on a two year pilot basis and is subject to Ministerial approval.

Wicklow Uplands Council regards the Act as a crucial opportunity to highlight the need to create permanent changes to the legislation and we call upon landowners to adhere to the legislation and not to presume that the extension will automatically be extended into March.

There is a perception that burning vegetation within the permissive season is 'controlled' while outside the season is 'uncontrolled'. This is not the case. Controlled burning refers to the practice of burning smaller areas of vegetation on a rotational basis. This practice creates a mosaic of vegetation type and structure and supports greater biodiversity. The burns are not intense and do not damage the underlying peat structure.

The practice also requires that notice is given to adjacent landowners and the local Gardaí. Burning areas greater than 5 ha within a designated area requires prior written consent from the NPWS. Uncontrolled burning, regardless of the time of year, is destructive and poses a serious threat to property, public safety and can cause extensive damage.

Wicklow Uplands Council would like to reiterate that it supports the use of controlled burning and the provisions of the new Act which will allow for the practice in the month of March. The opportunity to effectively manage upland vegetation within a realistic season is vital for many upland farmers and it will also play a very important role in the successful implementation of the SUAS project.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has issued draft 'Best Practice Guidelines for Burning Management' and a public consultation on those guidelines was held with the Council submitting its observations.

To assist with the promotion of controlled burning, we have placed relevant information and resources on best practice to our website.



## Sustainable Deer Management Project

Last August, a letter was published in both the Irish Times and the Wicklow People from a woman who had walked the Wicklow Way and was appalled at the prevalence of Sitka Spruce, and the lack of broadleaf and native woodland varieties in the forests along the route. She has a point.

The reason why there is such a dearth of native woodland in the Uplands is to some extent historical, as in the early years of the state, environmental or landscape concerns played very little part in the choice of tree variety - it was all about establishing forests and creating a timber industry.

However, in recent years the main impediment to the establishment of broadleaf and native woodlands is the overpopulation of deer - mainly Sika. While deer cause damage to all tree varieties at every stage of growth, native saplings are particularly susceptible and therefore more difficult to establish and often require expensive deer fencing, which can be prohibitive. The letter indirectly draws attention to the fact that the unsustainable level of deer in Wicklow is not just a farming or forestry problem but an environmental and tourism one as well. In order to have a healthy and diverse woodland, we need a well managed deer population.

The Wicklow Deer Management Partnership (WDMP) has long been campaigning for a professional approach to deer management in the county and 2018 saw an important development. Wicklow Uplands Council and Wicklow Deer Management Partnership have collaborated to successfully tender for a government grant to establish a minimum of three deer management units (DMU's) in the county. A DMU is an area of land where landowners, hunters and other interested parties come together to manage deer with agreed objectives.

We are pleased to announce that we have engaged the services of Pat Mellon, (formerly the Rural Recreation Officer for County Wicklow Partnership) as project coordinator whose duties will include setting up and managing the DMU's.

The project is the first of its kind in Ireland and will be run over a three year period. Should it prove to be successful, it will provide a template for deer management in other problem areas in the country.

**Declan O'Neill,**  
WUC and WDMP Board Member



Members of the Glassamullen Commonage Group, Wicklow Uplands Council and the SUAS Operational Group, meeting with Minister of State for Food, Forestry and Horticulture, Andrew Doyle on the Glassamullen Commonage in November.

# SUAS Pilot Project Launched

After several years of study and planning, the 'Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS)' pilot project developed by Wicklow Uplands Council, received its official launch in November 2018.

Full details of the €1.95 million project designed to assist both commonage groups and individual farmers across the Wicklow and Dublin uplands, were shared to the large audience who attended the event in the Glendalough Hotel. The project was officially launched by Minister of State for Food, Forestry and Horticulture, Andrew Doyle with the CE of The Heritage Council, Michael Starrett, also speaking at the event.



The key objective of the five-year pilot is to develop practical and innovative solutions that will address the complex agricultural, environmental and socio-economic challenges associated with the land management of commonages and hill farms in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands.

The project, among the first of its type in Ireland, was successful in securing funding under the first round of European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture, Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) initiative announced at the beginning of 2018.

Mr Declan Byrne was appointed as the full-time project manager for SUAS in August 2018. Declan has over 17 years' experience as a drystock advisor with Teagasc and well known among upland stakeholders around the country. Declan was a very active member of the vegetation management committee which laid the foundations for the SUAS project and brings a wealth of practical experience to the project. Under his expert guidance the project has been making great progress.

The three commonages that were initially selected to participate in SUAS are; Ballybeg, Glassnamullen and Granamore, along with a non-commonage farm on Powerscourt Paddock. The shareholders of the commonages all underwent a facilitated process throughout the autumn of 2018 and have now developed their own constitutions and become established as formal Commonage Groups. This framework is a critical aspect of the SUAS project and one of its key innovations. From here on, the commonage groups will be acting collectively to develop and agree a management plan for their area with the support of the project team.

Working closely with the participating farmers, is leading ecologist Faith Wilson, whose services have been engaged for the project's duration. Along with recording baseline data, Faith will monitor and advise on the ecology and water quality associated with the participating sites. It is envisaged that works on the ground will begin in early 2019 once the management plans have been fully signed off.



The SUAS project and its findings, represent an enormous opportunity to reverse the decline in the habitats found in the Wicklow and Dublin uplands and to secure its future using sustainable management approaches. Wicklow Uplands Council are very grateful for the attention and advice that the project has, and continues to receive, from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; who under the Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020, are funding all of the EIP initiatives.

Expressions of Interest are currently being sought from participants seeking to join the second round of the project. Closing date for receipt of documents is March 15th, 2019.

(L-R) (1) Dr. Mary Tubridy, Helen Lawless, Michael Starrett, CE of The Heritage Council and Frank Nugent, Chair of the Irish Uplands Forum at the launch event. (2) Pat Dunne, Project Lead of the SUAS Project, giving a detailed presentation at the Glendalough Hotel.

# Sharing Our Wicklow Stories

The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project formed a central element of the recent Our Wicklow Heritage 'Sharing Our Stories' event in Laragh.

Held on Saturday the 24th November in the Brockagh Resource Centre, the aims of the event were twofold; firstly to highlight examples of Wicklow projects carried out in 2018 which focus on gathering and sharing information about Wicklow's heritage in new and creative ways; and secondly, to provide a practical heritage interpretation training workshop.

Following presentations from a selection of community heritage projects; updates from Catherine Wright on digitising the archives; and my own Heritage Office updates on our latest film and animation projects, the next session was a workshop facilitated by Abarta Heritage. Roisin Burke and Neil Jackman from Abarta Heritage gave a progress report on the Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project, and used their experience of desktop research and oral history recording on this project as the template for the workshop.



Neil Jackman of Abarta Heritage presenting at the Sharing Our Stories event.

Abarta explained how 'points of interest' were identified within the scope of the project area, from Bray to Woodenbridge following desktop review and consultations over the course of the Summer. Each Point of Interest (POI) was then given a rating using a traffic light system, 'Green' indicates a POI that is an established attraction or which has strong potential for heritage tourism. There are 13

sites ranked green. 'Amber' POIs have issues or challenges which must be overcome to fulfil their potential, 10 sites are marked in this category. 'Red' POIs have limited potential as visitor attractions, often because they are in private ownership with no access, 16 points of interest fall into this final category.

A key output from the project is the creation of a rich digital database which forms an important archive in its own right, but also serves to inform future tourism and promotional initiatives centred on the network of connected walking trails (both established and emerging).

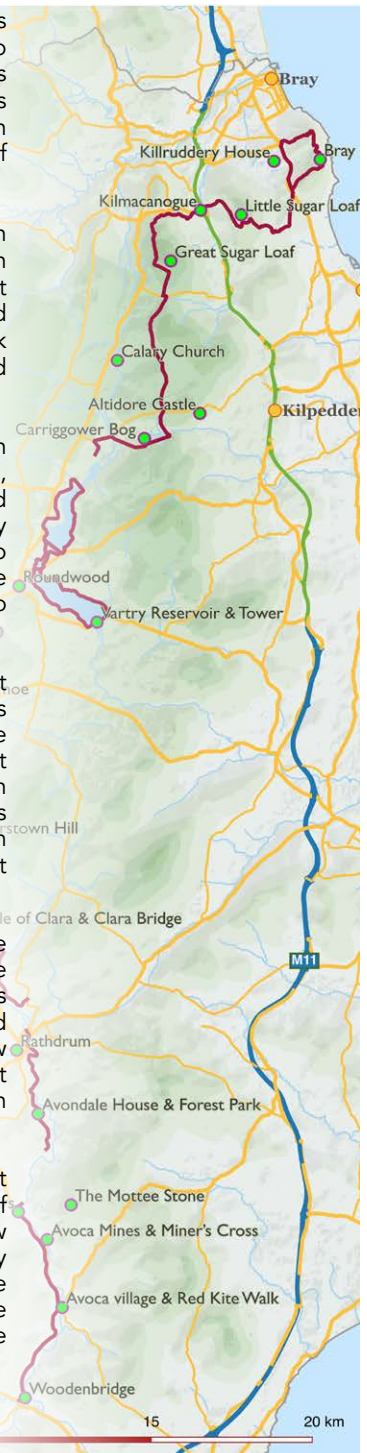
This database contains detailed information on 50 POIs, but rather than being exhaustive, this is a baseline, which can be developed and updated into the future. The methodology and the research sources that were used to compile this database were shared at the event and should be useful for any group embarking upon a similar project.

Oral history recording was an important part of this project, with a number of interviews conducted to date and more planned before the end of the year. Roisin gave a short presentation on oral history recording with lots of useful tips for those interested in this area. Abarta have uploaded information from the Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project to [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org).

This is the online community heritage archive for county Wicklow and the 'home' for the project, where the stories of people, places and topics of Wicklow interest are stored and shared to a global audience. As it is now accessible for everyone to enjoy, why not visit the site, browse the stories and maybe even add your own.

The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project is a joint initiative of the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council and the Wicklow Uplands Council. It is an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan, supported by the Heritage Council and by Wicklow's Creative and Cultural Strategy under the Creative Ireland programme.

**Deirdre Burns,**  
Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council.

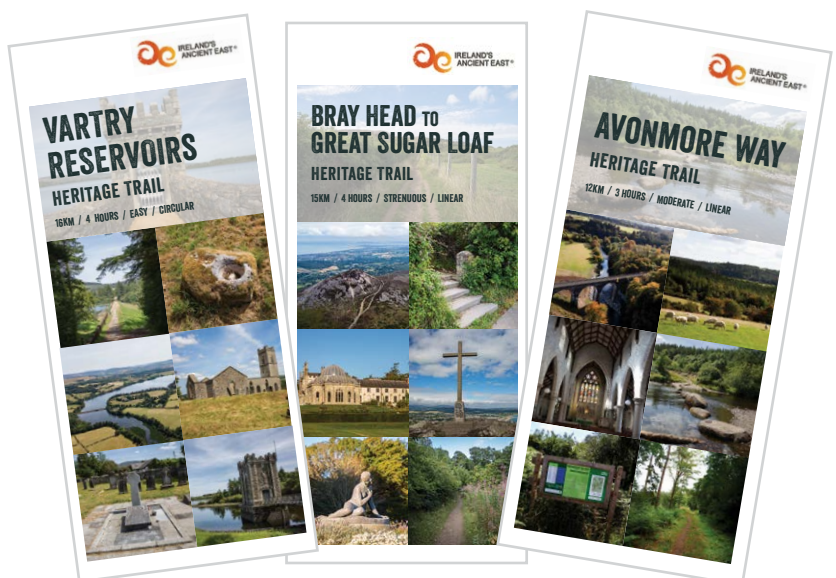


## New Heritage Trail Brochures

Following the completion of the Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project, three heritage trail brochures have been produced by Abarta Heritage for the Avonmore Way, Vartry Reservoir Trails and for the soon to be opened Bray Head Trail, which encompasses a trail through Belmont and the Sugar Loaf Way.

Designed to highlight heritage found on or close to these walking trails, the colourful brochures are full of interesting facts, photographs and a simple map - all to assist in promoting them with even greater appeal.

The brochures are available as a print version in key locations and as a digital download from our website.





## Avonmore Way Link Bridge

Wicklow Uplands Council welcomed the announcement by Minister Michael Ring to grant €392k towards the erection of a suspension footbridge across the Avonmore River at Rathdrum and we commend Wicklow County Council's foresight in making the application.

For Wicklow Uplands Council this bridge will play a very important link to connect the Avonmore Way with the Jubilee Loop and the town of Rathdrum. Eight years ago, Wicklow Uplands Council hosted a meeting in Roundwood titled 'Community-led Tourism', at which the idea of a cycling/walking route between Bray and Rathdrum was first mooted. The concept was that someone could take the train or bus to Rathdrum and cycle or walk back to Bray, or vice versa.

Central to our plan was that this trail would not just traverse the amazing and diverse Wicklow countryside, but to also connect the towns and villages along the way, allowing tourists to experience their rich heritage and hospitality. The envisaged route is about 60 km in length and stretches from Bray to the village of Woodenbridge, passing through Rathdrum.

In the intervening years, we have brought the Avonmore Way from Trooperstown to the edge of Rathdrum via Laragh and through the beautiful Vale of Clara and have made significant progress connecting sections of the route between Bray and the Sugar Loaf via Kilmacanogue. All of this has been achieved through negotiation and consensus with local landowners, both public and private, and local communities. We still have work to do; in particular we need to connect the Avonmore Way to the Vartry Reservoir Trails and then continue to connect the Reservoir Trails to the Sugar Loaf Way.

The progress we have made has been due to remarkable community spirit and the work of many people. It's probably unfair to name individuals, nevertheless this vision wouldn't have progressed without the passion of Geoff Seymour or Finian McEvoy. We would also like to thank Wicklow County Council for their financial support and both the current and past Rural Recreation Officers of County Wicklow Partnership for their dedication and resolve.

The bridge is an exciting development and encourages us to continue dreaming big. How about a greenway between Rathdrum and Glendalough along the Avonmore Way?

**Declan O'Neill,**  
WUC Board Member

## Additional Funding For Trails

County Wicklow has benefited from January's announcement that three trails would receive funding allocations as part of the second phase of the nationwide Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme.

Under a joint initiative between the Department of Rural and Community Development and Fáilte Ireland, the funding allows for the maintenance, enhancement and promotion of the existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in the county. Each of the locations selected are found in the Wicklow uplands and the Council are delighted that investment to the region's growing choice of trails remains a key focus.

St. Kevin's Way, the pilgrim trail from Glendalough to Hollywood, has received €160,000 for upgrade works with The Spinc in the Wicklow Mountains National Park, set to be rerouted and repaired extensively with an allocation of €149,600.

The Vartry Reservoir Trails, which has proved to be a huge success since its opening in the summer of 2018, has received €157,705 to develop amenities further, including a car park at Mullinaveigue Forest to serve the growing number of visitors.



## Walking In Wicklow Brochure

A comprehensive printed brochure featuring the huge selection of walking trails available throughout County Wicklow, has also been produced and will be distributed to public contact points in the coming weeks.

The free booklet unfolds to reveal a countywide map highlighting each of the 38 waymarked trails found in each part of Wicklow. They are designed to inform local communities eager to explore their surroundings and for visitors keen to experience some of the trails the area is increasingly becoming known for. A short description of each trail including its difficulty grade and location, all feature on the rear of the brochure.

Funded through the Outdoor Recreational Scheme and with great assistance from Bryan Fennell, the Rural Recreation Officer of County Wicklow Partnership, this brochure will continue to be updated as new trails are developed.

# Ireland's Upland Communities Working Together

## Irish Uplands Forum Conference

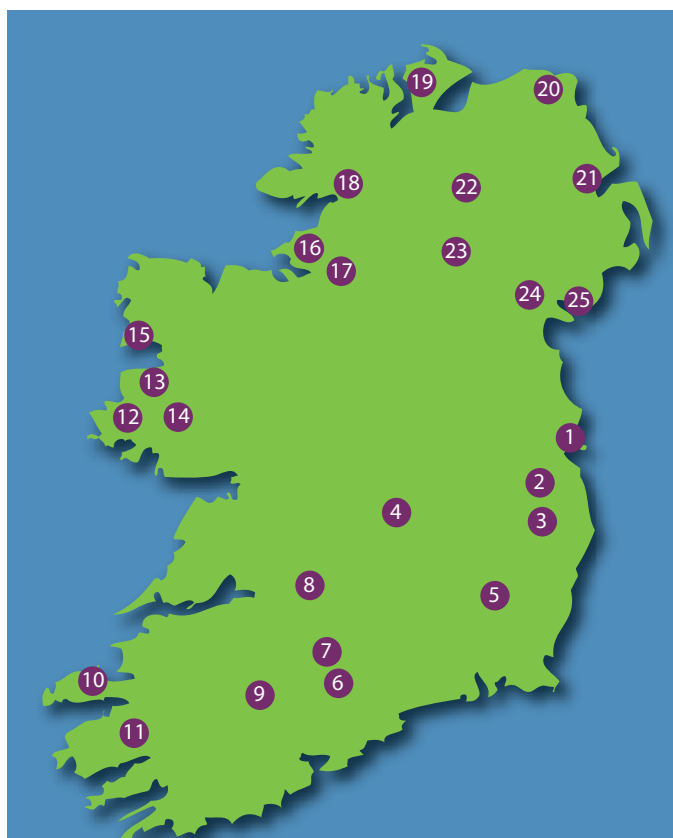
'We protect our endangered upland flora and fauna but we need to start protecting the people who live and work in upland areas', stated Cllr. Michael Holmes at the opening of the 2018 Irish Uplands Forum (IUF) conference held in Mulranny, Co Mayo last October. The statement set the tone and said a lot about the current situation facing Ireland's upland and rural communities. While Dublin and other urban centres are booming again, rural Ireland seems to be left behind, and once vibrant rural communities continue to fade despite the new economic growth.

The two day 'Innovation & Partnership in the Uplands' conference, organised by the IUF, brought together various upland interests including: community groups, statutory bodies and organisations, to discuss sustainable development in the uplands and explore a range of issues and topics affecting today's upland communities. A recent socio-economic study which profiled upland areas around the country, revealed predictable and unexpected characteristics of upland areas, and made a comparison between North and South of the border. A further study is to be carried out for the Wicklow uplands.

The decline in upland farming was a key theme of the conference. It is now widely recognised that farming and a vibrant rural community is essential for the conservation interest in the uplands. However, upland farmers feel that the role they play in managing some of our most environmentally significant habitats is largely overlooked by policymakers. The issues upland farmers face and their concerns for their future, were presented during conference proceedings and further vocalised on a study visit to a nearby farm in the Nephin Beg range.

There was enthusiasm for the new European Innovation Partnership (EIP) projects and the potential they have to support upland farmers in their role as the custodians of hill ecosystems. There are currently 5 EIP projects across the country specifically focusing on upland farming. These projects, SUAS included, aim to remunerate farmers for activities which maintain or improve the condition of the habitats and associated biodiversity. Other very relevant topics discussed at the conference included; the Wild Nephin Project, managing path erosion, ecotourism, growing partnerships and farm diversification.

Mary Mulvey, the new all Ireland upland network coordinator, outlined her role in the coordination of a new island wide network for upland groups. There are currently over 25 groups across the island that Mary has been liaising with to date. She stressed the importance of upland groups working together in order to draw attention to the common issues they face. She reported that while some areas face specific issues, a lack of core and multi-annual funding is the biggest challenge faced by all community groups.



The location of the 25 upland community groups across the island.

Minister Michael Ring addressed the conference and assured that his Department is committed to supporting upland communities. He committed to an increased budget for the Walks Scheme and to provide a pilot indemnity scheme for landowners in The MacGillycuddy Reeks and Mount Gable, Co. Galway before the end of 2018. The scheme was not in place by the end of 2018. In recent weeks it has been announced that there will be a national indemnity scheme announced before the end of 2019. All concerned are waiting anxiously for progress on the matter.

The IUF is currently preparing an account of the conference and will be available at [www.irishuplandsforum.org](http://www.irishuplandsforum.org) upon publication.



Tom Byrne and Brian Dunne of Wicklow Uplands Council meeting with Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring at the conference.



# Upland Study Visits

As well as being an important networking event, the Irish Uplands Forum conference coincided with the initiation of a series of upland study visits which took place throughout October and early November. 'The Uplands Study Visit Grant Scheme 2018' was funded by the Heritage Council and coordinated by the newly formed Uplands Partnership Management Board. The inaugural scheme saw over 150 individuals from 13 upland community groups from around the island cross county lines to undertake study visits to see and experience first-hand, the issues faced by each area and the projects and solutions undertaken.

At the core of the scheme, was the collective focus on the sustainable development of upland areas by fostering relationships and encouraging knowledge sharing between all of the upland community groups. As was evident at the IUF Conference, many areas are facing similar issues and it is important that a strong network is developed between the groups so that they have a voice that will be heard by policymakers.

Wicklow Uplands Council was a very active participant in the scheme. The Council played host to three different upland groups which included; Co. Mayo's 'Nepin Beg Uplands Farming Group'; Co. Kerry's 'Macgillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum'; and a farming group from Achill Island. A delegation from the Uplands Council also travelled to Kerry as part of the scheme.

The visiting groups were all very eager to learn about the role of Wicklow Uplands Council and the various projects that it is involved in. There was particular interest in the SUAS project, PURE, trail developments as well as examples of farm diversification and rural enterprise in Wicklow. The Nepin group also heard from Margaret Hoctor, Kilmullen Lamb Direct. Margaret outlined how her family had developed the successful lamb direct business and the various challenges and opportunities for developing such a business.

Each of the groups paid a visit to Pat Dunne's farm in Glenmalure where he outlined the ongoing success of the 'Zig Zag' permissive access route as well as speaking about the challenges of upland farming in Wicklow and the development of the SUAS project. The visiting groups also visited Lough Dan Guest House where Sean & Theresa Byrne told the story behind their very successful business as well bringing the groups for a guided walk on the Kanturk Access route.



In the middle of October, it was the turn of Wicklow Uplands Council to travel to Co. Kerry. The visit was organised to coincide with a visiting group from the Northern Ireland's Mourne Heritage Trust. The joint group were met and guided by Patricia Deane of The MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum. The Mountain Access Forum which was established in mid 2014, came together to implement an action plan to sustainably manage the 100km<sup>2</sup> area that makes up the Reeks. The Forum has responsibility for the

implementation of Mountain Access Project which works in partnership with the landowners of the area to pilot a permissive access model based on awareness of, and respect for private land.



The groups visited one of the main access routes to Carrantuohill and discussed the challenges faced by the Forum and the local landowners. As recreational activity has increased in the region over the past decade, so too has erosion. This problem is being addressed through traditional path restoration and remedial works. All of the work is being undertaken by landowners who are paid for the tasks they carry out. The works are to a superb standard; however, continued funding is a concern.

The visit concluded with a stop at Cronin's Yard. While the 'Yard' has been used as traditional starting point for Carrantuohill for generations, the Cronin family have now built up a business which caters for the needs of recreational users who pass by. They operate a tea rooms, showers, parking and camping facilities. John Cronin explained how they began with a single vending machine for drinks and the business grew from there. He explained how LEADER funding was secured, which helped to build the tea rooms and facilities. The visit has inspired the group from Wicklow to contemplate that there must be locations in county Wicklow where similar type facilities could be developed.



The Study Visit Scheme was a very worthwhile opportunity for all involved to discuss and share experiences. The movement of 13 groups was also important in raising their visibility to the wider public. It was clear from our discussions that a lack of funding for the groups is the biggest challenge. Wicklow Uplands Council is in an enviable position given that we have funding which allows staff to be employed and projects to be progressed. However, this is not currently available to other upland groups and volunteers are becoming fatigued. This is a major concern as it puts a question mark over their long-term viability and the future management of Ireland's uplands.

(L-R) Members of (1) The Nepin Beg Uplands Farming Group and (2) The Achill Island Farming Group in the Wicklow Uplands. (3) Members of WUC and the Mourne Heritage Trust during a field trip to the Macgillycuddy Reeks.

# Garech de Brún's Carriage Collection

The late Garech de Brún of Luggala, was widely known for his deep appreciation of the arts, serving as a patron and supporter to many artists and the founding of Claddagh Records. However, there was one great interest that largely went unreported - that of antique horse drawn carriages.

By invitation in 2003, Wicklow Uplands Council oversaw a report on an extensive collection of carriages that Garech de Brún had built up over the preceding decades and the feasibility of founding a museum to house and exhibit them.

Retaining the services of a professional Carriage Consultant, the Heritage Council funded report offered a fascinating insight into what is most probably, Ireland's largest private collection.

In total, the collection consisted of 71 carriages, which the report considered to contain many examples of Irish national significance that should be kept in the country - "most notable of these being The Duke of Leinster's four-wheeled private Long Car, which is almost certainly the only one in existence."

The vast collection includes both coaches and town carriages, such as Victorias, Broughams, Sociables and Landaus; vehicles for general use and as many as ten Irish Outside Cars (or Jaunting Cars). Other notable additions

include an extremely rare four-wheeled private Hansom, by Windover of London & Huntingdon and several carriages by Hutton & Sons of Dublin. Considered to be the foremost Irish carriage builders of their time, ranking them among the top firms of the world for their quality of building and for designing State carriages in both Ireland and the UK.



Along with concluding the significant historical value of the collection and the merits of establishing a museum to house them, the report suggested that a workshop also be constructed that employs a craftsman with heritage restoration expertise to restore the collection in a way that allowed for visitors to view the process first-hand.

It has been recently disclosed that contained within Garech de Brún's final will, is an offer to bequeath this entire collection to the state subject to a number of conditions that includes; that they are well maintained, properly housed and that provision is made for reasonable access for public viewing. Another of the conditions, is that the state must indicate its acceptance of the gift within 18 months of it receiving the offer.

Wicklow Uplands Council advocate that given the historical importance and extremely rare opportunity that this offer represents, that the collection should be exhibited publicly in Co. Wicklow. The tourism development potential and heritage significance should be realised in the county that served as Garech's home.

The idea of utilising the state-owned Avondale House and Forest Park close to Rathdrum or a setting of equal historical relevance as a possible location for a museum, was discussed at the time. Given the growing success of the Ireland's Ancient East tourism marketing initiative and that the Avondale estate is in the midst of a major redevelopment, perhaps this offer arrives at the perfect time?

---

## A Unique and Important Film Location



The Screen Industry in Ireland has developed an international reputation and makes a considerable economic contribution. The Irish Audio-Visual Industry supported 14,370 full-time equivalent jobs in 2016, with Gross Value-Added amounting to €857 million and an estimated €191 million in export earnings for Ireland.

The Irish film, television and animation industry is experiencing a period of sustained success and critical acclaim. It provides valuable cultural exports that reach substantial global audiences and brings benefits to other industries such as tourism and many other sectors.

The significant role that Co. Wicklow plays in achieving this success, is due to the presence of both the Ardmore and Ashford Studios, a large number of skilled crew and talent living in the area, the variety of attractive locations and its proximity to Dublin City and Airport.

The stunningly beautiful Luggala Estate in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains has attracted a long list of internationally acclaimed film and television productions such as John Boorman's 'Excalibur', to most recently, the television series 'Vikings' who selected its glacier features to double for Kattagat in Norway.

The reason the 5,000 acre estate has been so popular with film makers, is that there is a wide range of accessible, unique and versatile locations that can double up for worldwide locations, as well as presenting scenery that is devoid of modern intrusions.

It cannot be overemphasised how important it is to keep this area open as a film location to the screen industry in Ireland and that the sale of these lands poses a real risk and threat to the future growth of the industry.

With the expansion of the studio infrastructure on the east coast of Ireland, will come increased demand for exactly this type of location, and professionals in the industry urge the state to buy the state in order to ensure future sustainability of the screen sector.

**Vibeke Delahunt,**  
County Wicklow Film Commission

# The Future of the Luggala Estate

Most people reading this will be familiar with Luggala – a spectacular estate with a starry history, set in one of the most beautiful parts of the Wicklow Uplands. The estate which comprises the main house and seven others, Lough Tay and over 5000 acres, is very much in the news at present. It has been for sale for €28 million since January 2017 and following the passing of owner Garech de Brún last March, private property signs were erected.

Garech de Brún was a great friend to Wicklow Uplands Council and very supportive of its role. He was central to the campaign to prevent the Office of Public Works (OPW) building an Interpretive Centre outside the gates of his estate in the mid 90's. At the time the OPW were exempt from having to apply for planning permission and one result of the campaign was the changing of the law, compelling the OPW to apply for permission, giving the public the opportunity to have their say.

Luggala House was built as a shooting lodge by the La Touche family in 1787 and was sold on to Viscount Powerscourt. It was later leased to Ernest Guinness and he bought the house in 1937 as a wedding present for his youngest daughter Oonagh, Garech's mother. Robert O'Byrne's book "Luggala Days" details the fantastic parties and exotic range of guests who came to enjoy this magnificent setting and the lavish hospitality of the Guinness family. This tradition was carried on by Garech, a generous host, who also allowed walkers permissive access, on foot, through his lands to enjoy the stunning scenery.

Now Garech has gone and all has changed. The estate is for sale and in recent months signage has gone up on the perimeter of the estate, reminding people that the estate is private and that they are trespassing. This is particularly noticeable at the points where tour buses and visitors park and cross the road to admire the stunning views over the lake and estate. The "Guinness Lake" is a staple of any day tour of Wicklow and the recent use of the estate to film the "Vikings" series has only added to the interest.

Wicklow Uplands Council considers this sale as an opportunity for the State to add to Wicklow Mountains National Park by acquiring some of the lands, most particularly the two mountains, Luggala and Knocknaclohogue, and the access down to Lough Dan. This is the area where pedestrian access has been allowed for many years and much use has been made of this privilege.

There is a strong case to be made for the state to acquire some of the land, leaving the house, lake and grounds private, as is the current arrangement. This should formally preserve the access allowed in recent years for future generations. It would be a great shame to let this opportunity slip away and would benefit tourism and local recreation interests alike.

In 2017, 275,000 overseas visitors who spent an estimated €73 million, visited Wicklow – and 319,000 domestic visitors, with a total spend in the order of €49 million. These are impressive figures, and most visitors expect to see some wonderful scenery in the Garden County as part of their experience. We are fortunate to have a National Park so close to our capital city and any move to enhance the park would be welcomed.

Members of Wicklow Uplands Council, along with several other stakeholders recently met with Minister for Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan to discuss the strategic importance of Luggala. Following a lengthy discussion, we were reassured that her department remained fully engaged with the process and that she clearly understood the value and potential of the upland estate.

We hope that the next chapter in the history of the Luggala Estate is a positive one from the point of view of those who enjoy these mountains and views – whether local or visitor.

**Dairine Nuttall,**  
*Ireland Tour Guide and WUC Board Member*



# Heritage Ireland 2030

A public consultation process on the new heritage plan for Ireland, 'Heritage Ireland 2030', was announced in November and provides an important opportunity for each of us to ensure that our heritage is valued, enjoyed and protected for future generations.

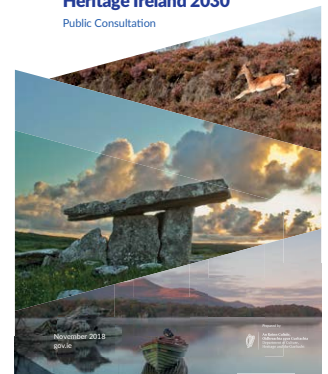
'Heritage Ireland 2030' will guide the government's heritage priorities and investment over the next decade and beyond, and will be based around three themes

consisting of national leadership; supporting stronger heritage partnerships; and building community and local involvement in heritage.

To share your views and assist with the shaping of the plan, please visit:

[www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/heritageireland2030](http://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/heritageireland2030)

**The consultation closing date is  
28 February 2019**



## The Retirement of Michael Starrett



In 1998 when a business plan was being prepared for what was to become Wicklow Uplands Council, a list of possible public sector funders was included in the hope and expectation that there could be a solid and sustainable start.

Most of the bodies which were asked for money declined or kicked the request to touch. Thankfully, The Heritage Council committed support to the three-year business

plan, and was a noble exception as a commitment was made for a larger figure than had been requested. Thus Wicklow Uplands Council was formed and has been supported ever since.

Over the years, Michael has continued to offer advice and to commit The Heritage Council's resources on a scale that reflects the Upland Council's positive status in the sustainable development sector in Ireland and abroad. Michael Starrett's grasp of the power of public/private sustainable development partnerships, is arguably unique in Ireland and is reflected in the achievements of The Heritage Council under his leadership and direction.

Wicklow Uplands Council remains forever grateful for Michael's insight and constant support and wish him a long, happy and well-deserved retirement.

**Colin Murphy**  
Retired, WUC Director

## Directors Of Wicklow Uplands Council 2018/19

### Farmers and Property Owners Panel

**Declan O'Neill** ..... Farmer  
**Pat Dunne** ..... Wicklow County IFA  
**Tom Byrne** ..... Wicklow County IFA (Chair)  
**Joe Morrissey** ..... Wicklow County IFA  
**Owen Brady** ..... Farmer  
**Sean Malone** ..... Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association  
**Denis Halpin** ..... Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association

### Environmental and Recreational Panel

**Carmel Kealy** ..... Motor Cycle Union of Ireland (Secretary)  
**Jim Sheehan** ..... Mountaineering Ireland  
**Louis O'Byrne** ..... Individual Member  
**Pearse Foley** ..... An Óige

### Community Panel

**Finian McEvoy** ..... Glendalough & District Development Association  
**Hilda Hall** ..... County Wicklow Farm Family Group  
**Garvan Hickey** ..... Macra na Feirme (Treasurer)  
**Claire Chambers** ..... Roundwood & District Community Council

### Economic and Tourism Panel

**Eugene Stephens** ..... Ashford Self Catering Cottages  
**Dairine Nuttall** ..... Wicklow Nordic Walking & Ireland Tour Guide  
**Geoffrey Seymour** ..... Roundwood & District Community Council (Vice Chair)  
**Sean Byrne** ..... Lough Dan House B & B

### CO Options

**Philip Geoghegan** ..... Ballymurrin Quaker Farmstead  
**John Medlycott** ..... Individual Member  
**Donal Anderson** ..... Dublin IFA  
**Daniel Molloy** ..... Individual member  
**John Mullen** ..... Tinahely Community Projects  
**John Flynn** ..... Co. Wicklow Game Conservation Council  
**Peter Houlihan** ..... Shillelagh People's Property Company

### Wicklow Uplands Council Staff

**Brian Dunne** ..... Coordinator  
**Margaret Murphy** ..... Administration Officer  
**Conor Hipwell** ..... Communications Officer  
**Pat Mellon** ..... Deer Management Project Manager

The photographs featured from the 'Wicklow Connections' photography exhibition are: (L-R, from the top) - (1) 'Carrig Lane, Lacken' - Shane Keogh, (2) 'Woodland Road' - Lucia Luka, (3) 'Air Corps At Work' - Ronan Harding Downes, (4) 'Enduro World Championships' - Brendan Cullen, (5) 'The Heart of Wicklow' - Anthony Lynch, (6) 'Blessington Lake' - Hilda Smith, (7) 'Connection with the Past' - Lana Woodward, (8) 'Fairy Steps of Wicklow' - John Cox.

Photos and images reproduced in this newsletter courtesy of Mick Kelly, Justin Farrelly, Brendan Cullen, Ronan Harding Downes, Garech de Brún, Abarta Heritage, Irish Uplands Forum, History / A+E Networks, The Heritage Council, Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.