

# Wicklow Mountain Views



The Newsletter of Wicklow Uplands Council

Autumn 2013



## Letter from the Chair

The Annual General Meeting in June 2013 was characteristically, a valuable marker point for the Uplands Council. For me also, it marked one year as Chairman. From

June the Chair has been supported by our new Vice Chairman Pat Dunne. John Medlycott bowed out, after his agreed one year term of office however he continues to be our consensus 'search and delivery' champion on the Executive and at our Board Meetings.

### Continuing Programmes: Dog control and Vegetation Management

At the outset of 2013, the forward programme included the continuing issues of dog control and vegetation management. The efforts of both subcommittees were indispensable in bringing both themes to a satisfactory point, where future policy and development of the issues were underpinned by good structures which we can all work with, and which will continue to inform and guide us.

### Continuing Programmes: Village Information Panels

The continuing programme of setting up a network of village and town interpretative panels has progressed. The Tinahely and Enniskerry panels were installed in late 2012; Kilmacanogue and Rathdangan earlier this year and we are currently working with communities in Askanagap, Baltinglass and Newcastle.

### Continuing Programmes: Cycleway, Greenway Proposal

Relatively new to the agenda of the Council is the ambitious proposal for a long distance cycleway from Kilmacanogue to Rathdrum. Although the Wicklow Way has shown the way, the developing awareness in the demand for active recreation reminds us that we need to keep up, and compete with initiatives from all over the country to introduce and promote greenways, as well to define new, local routes for cyclists as well as walkers. Our own, quiet successes in negotiating improved agreed access to the uplands should be promoted as a model for other upland communities and could form the basis for government policy on access to the countryside.

### The Annual General Meeting

The AGM in itself was significant. The impact of our Upland Vegetation Management Report and the submission to government on the proposed Coillte sale of assets was acknowledged by Mr Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, in an honest, direct and supportive address which showed understanding for the needs of uplands farmers, articulated so effectively in our Wicklow study report. We are working now to keep this issue on the agenda of government as the five year future of agriculture under the CAP is being determined.

### Pure – Protecting Uplands and Rural Environments

The fragmented management of illegal dumping by central and local authorities led to the creation of the PURE Project in 2006, generating an alliance of local authorities and government to fund a service to the area to manage this issue. Wicklow Uplands Council plays a key role in the project by continuing to employ the PURE project Manager Ian Davis and representing private landowners on the Project Management Committee.

### Car Break-ins in the Uplands

Car break-ins have increased steeply in the last year. Wicklow Uplands Council is liaising with Garda representatives and the Local Authority to seek ways to mitigate and reduce the impact, making visitors aware of the steps they should take to avoid being broken into and examining methods of surveillance at key hotspots.

### Looking to the Future, Preparing A New Three Year Strategy

We have been setting out a structure for our new three year strategy which will ensure that it is a bottom-up process, whilst engaging with the stakeholders in the Uplands, our funders, our members and our constituencies of workers, visitors and residents. I have some suggestions. I hope they too may also find their way through the maze of consultation, and may contribute in assembling the framework which will emerge from this consultation phase;

- ▶ Help to reverse the diminishing availability of local employment and provide for adaptation of skills to new challenges in work

- ▶ Ensure that we project the whole, integrated picture of the Uplands as well as its constituent parts
- ▶ Promote the Uplands and the Council, so that we become better known and acknowledged as a unique culture of people and their landscape working to deliver a sustainable future
- ▶ Develop the very successful ad hoc subcommittees which greatly assist progress and decision making in the Council.

However, it is your turn first as members to highlight those issues which you wish to see us address in the coming years. It is not necessary for you to contain your suggestions within your representative Panel Groups as written suggestions and comments are also welcomed.

We have a relatively small capacity to take on new projects. We shall need to define our priorities, after which we shall seek to fund and provide administration for those seen to be most urgent, significant and achievable and then return to you with a suggested programme.

Finally I would like to offer sincere thanks to our key sponsors without whom our work could not continue, particularly to the Heritage Council who has remained a loyal supporter to the Uplands Council through their own financial cutbacks. Businessman Denis O'Brien has also generously supported the work of the Council through this difficult period. We also appreciate the continuing assistance of Wicklow County Council. The Uplands Council looks forward to working towards a brighter future with our partners and members over the next three years.

**PHILIP GEOGHEGAN**  
Chairman, Wicklow Uplands Council

Different Nation - Different Station

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

# Heritage Week 2013 - Hidden History Walk



*Walkers gather at the ancient ruin of Castlekevin near Annamoe*

On Sunday 18th August a group of about 40 people gathered in Roundwood for a heritage week walk organised by the Wicklow uplands Council and the Roundwood Historical and Folklore Society. The group were all kindly transported by minibus to Castlekevin near Annamoe by Sean Byrne and Gerry O'Toole. Here Martin Timmons, Cathal Mac Oireachtaigh and John Medlycott, the guides for the walk, enthralled participants with their informed comments. Martin outlined the story of the ancient ruin of Castlekevin, a motte and bailey castle which dates back to the coming of the Normans to Ireland. Its name came about after 1216. This fortress was to defend the area against attack by the O'Byrne and O'Toole clans. Having visited the overgrown ruins, the group turned their attention to the area that was formerly the Caslekevin Marsh which was drained in the 1950's.

The next stop was at the gate of the Castlekevin Estate now the property of Daniel Day Lewis and then over a small bridge beside the memorial stone for Andrew Thomas who was killed in 1798. A little further along, the route passed the old Annamoe Rectory where John Borman now lives. At the Annamoe stop the walk guides gave some interesting details on the history of the Annamoe Mill where Lawrence Sterne spent part of his childhood and claimed he was nearly drowned in the mill race. The group then walked on along the main road until they reached the 'Minister's Well' and then diverted

along the old road to Roundwood which was replaced in the 1790s. The contentious dispute about the building of the new road whose engineer was Joseph Holt was explained at a short stop just outside 'Uplands'. The group then walked along the old road and everyone was charmed by the views across the valley to the mountains.

On arrival at Derralossary Church, the indefatigable guides provided many interesting details on the history of this ancient site and told of its connections with the monastery at Glendalough. This is also the burial place of the notorious landlord Hugo of the Glendalough Estate and also of several members of the Barton and Childers families, including the late President Erskine Childers.

The group walked on up the old road towards Roundwood and stopped at the site of the eighteenth century Charter School. Here the guides recounted the work of John 'Pestalozzi' Syngue of Roundwood Park who brought revolutionary ideas about early childhood education to the English speaking world. Eventually and after a splendid afternoon's ramble the group ended back where they started at the WUC office in Roundwood. Great thanks are due to Cara who arranged the outing and to the three local historian guides.

**John Medlycott, WUC Director**



## Recruiting for the Position of Temporary Co-ordinator

Applications are currently being sought for the temporary (maternity leave) position of Co-ordinator of Wicklow Uplands Council commencing in mid-February 2014. The Council works for the sustainable use and enjoyment of the local landscape in partnership with those who live work and recreate there. Approaches used by the Council include co-operation, consensus, partnership and the development of projects that bring value to the area.

The Council are seeking to recruit a part-time Co-ordinator for an initial six month contract. The Co-ordinator will be responsible for the overall operations of the Council including: executive functions, day management and implementation of the strategic and other work plans. The post is based at the Council's office in Roundwood, Co. Wicklow and involves some work outside normal office hours.

Essentially, the Council is seeking an energetic person who can breathe further vision and perspective into the organisation, thereby building on its convincing record of achievements as a voice for the Wicklow uplands. Candidates must have experience in the management of community/voluntary based organisations, strategic planning, working with statutory agencies and developing and delivering successful funding applications. Experience of the Wicklow Uplands, sustainable development, countryside/recreational management, trail planning and design and a relevant third level qualification is desirable.

Applications must be submitted to [info@wicklowuplands.ie](mailto:info@wicklowuplands.ie) no later than **5pm on Monday 11th November 2013** and should include current Curriculum Vitae and cover letter. A full job description is available on request.

# A One Stop Shop for Walking in Wicklow

Wicklow County Tourism is launching a new section on its website dedicated to walks in Wicklow. The link to the walks section of the website is: <http://visitwicklow.ie/category/walks-in-wicklow/>.

All marked walks in Wicklow have been categorised by length, difficulty, type and location. County Wicklow has more than 50 walks including the 7 stages of the Wicklow Way, Coillte forest walks and walks around Glendalough and Tinahely. The information on each walk has been standardised and contains a route description and image as well as information on walk length, difficulty, terrain and location. Each walk has a free downloadable and printable map. This project was 75% financed by County Wicklow Partnership.

Commenting on the launch of the new walks section of the website, Chairman of Wicklow County Tourism, Cllr. Tom Fortune noted 'Wicklow County Tourism has come up with a fantastic platform for information on walks in Wicklow. We truly hope that this initiative will not only attract new visitors to come and experience the variety of walks in our beautiful county, but will also divert visitors to lesser known Wicklow trails and ease the congestion at traditional walking locations such as Glendalough.'

Ronan Mullen from The Adventure Agency gathered all the data for the various walks and advises 'This is by far the largest repository of walks in the country. There's something here for everyone from families to those wanting to push their limits. The layout of the site makes it extremely easy to search through the walks and find the perfect one for you. Best of all there are free maps to download with loads of information on the routes. Special attention should be drawn to the free maps of the Wicklow Way; nowhere else can you get maps like these for free.'

Wicklow Uplands Council is also working with Wicklow County Tourism to create virtual heritage trails for Wicklow's towns and villages on the community pages of [www.visitwicklow.ie](http://www.visitwicklow.ie). They are using information on local natural and built heritage gathered by communities through the Wicklow Uplands Council village interpretative panel project. This will further add to the visitor experience and encourage visitors to experience and enjoy Wicklow's rich local heritage.

For further information please contact Fred Verdier at 0404 20070 or email [fred@visitwicklow.ie](mailto:fred@visitwicklow.ie)

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



Lough Tay: Walkers along the Wicklow Way

## Walks in Wicklow

County Wicklow is blessed with some of Ireland's most beautiful landscapes from coastal beaches and cliffs to hills and mountains. It is no wonder that it is also one of Ireland's best Walking destinations.

### Browse By Category



2 Hours or less Walks



2 to 4 Hours Walks



4 to 6 Hours Walks



Above 6 Hours Walks



Coillte Forest Walks



Family Walks



Glendalough Walks



Tinahely Walks



Wicklow Way Walks

[www.visitwicklow.ie](http://www.visitwicklow.ie)

Wicklow-Walks-QR: Scan this QR code with your smartphone to access the walks.



Lug-Walk: Walkers enjoying the Wicklow Mountains



Ballymanus Cobble Drain



PURE Animation short film 'Bog Standard'

The PURE project is a partnership project and the first of its kind in Ireland which incorporates statutory and non-statutory organisations including: Wicklow County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council, Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Wicklow Uplands Council. The project was established in 2006 to combat illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands and is funded by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government. Since its establishment the lo-call-phone-line 1850 365 121 and the PURE office, have received over 6,200 reports of illegal dumping resulting in the collection over 6,000 individual dumping sites and the removal of approximately 2,100 tonnes of rubbish from the landscape. Wicklow Uplands Council plays an important role in the project by representing the interests of private landowners and administering the project account. It also plays a key role by employing the Project Manager, Ian Davis.

## The PURE Mile Competition

The PURE Mile Competition encourages communities in Wicklow to keep a mile stretch of road (approx. 1.6 km), and the immediate environment litter/rubbish free and so far over 44 communities and local groups have taken part. For the past nine months throughout Wicklow, 14 communities have been extremely busy taking part in regular litter picks and cleanups, researching information about their local wild flowers, plants and trees, animals, built heritage and local history and folklore.

The competition awards night took place on 11th September in The Brooklodge Hotel in Aughrim with over 150 people in attendance. Awards and certificates were presented by Mr. Fergus O' Dowd, T. D., Minister of State, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and Cathaoirleach Jimmy O' Shaughnessy. Minister O' Dowd paid tribute to all of the groups and communities who took part in this year's competition and noted 'that problems such as litter would be significantly reduced if everyone followed the example of civic leadership shown by the people here tonight.' There were 7 awards presented with cash prizes totalling €3,250 presented by Minister O' Dowd and Cathaoirleach Jimmy O' Shaughnessy.

PURE is now inviting all groups and communities living in rural areas, including past entries, to participate and register for the 2014 competition. Application forms and information packs can be requested by emailing [info@PUREproject.ie](mailto:info@PUREproject.ie), by phoning PURE on 0404 45547 or downloading from [www.PUREproject.ie/the-PURE-mile](http://www.PUREproject.ie/the-PURE-mile). The deadline for applications is on or before **20th December 2013**.

## PURE Animation

2013 has also been a very busy year for PURE with their extremely successful secondary school training programme, PURE ANIMATION. This two week environmental/animation training programme introduces teenage students to important environmental issues that are related to The PURE Project including: illegal dumping, litter, fly-tipping, recycling and pollution, all done through the medium of animation. With the guidance of professional animators the students learn how to produce, direct and create their own short animated films.

So far this programme has produced 16 short animated films and PURE is delighted to announce that the short film 'Bog Standard' recently won Best Film in the Under 18's Category at the 2013 Blackrock Animation Film Festival. Participants involved in the creation of 'Bog Standard' were presented with a trophy by Will Becher from Aardmann Studios, the creators of Wallace and Gromit and Shaun the Sheep fame. Bog Standard tells the story of business man Shady Tony and his unfortunate awaking of an angry ancient bog body when Shady and his crew are breaking ground for a new landfill site. Unhappy with the intrusion on his ancient slumber Bog Man takes matters into his own hands and wreaks havoc and revenge.

Many of the PURE Short Animations have screened at both national and international film festivals and the project looks forward to further screenings in the future. All PURE Short Animations are available to view on <http://www.PUREproject.ie/what-we-do/PURE-animation-movies/>.

## New PURE App for Mobile Phones

2013 also saw the launch of the EPA's new app to report illegal dumping. This new app makes it easier for people to report any incident of dumping or litter and it's a great addition to the lo-call phone line, 1850 365 121. All reports will arrive at the PURE project office for investigation and response. The App can be downloaded from the iTunes App Store (search iTunes for: 'See it Say it'). For further information visit: [www.PUREproject.ie](http://www.PUREproject.ie)

Ian Davis, PURE Project Manager

Award	Community	Prize Awarded
Best PURE Mile	Ballinamanogue/ Mullins PURE Mile	€1,000
Special Mention Award	Castletimon PURE Mile	€750
Best Litter Free Mile Award	Ashford PURE Mile	€250
Best Community Effort	Annacurra PURE Mile	€250
Best Education	Knockananna PURE Mile	€250
Best Natural Heritage Award	Macreddin PURE Mile	€250
Best Cultural Heritage	Blessington PURE Mile	€250

>> TO REPORT DUMPERS AND DUMPING LO-CALL <<

**1850 365 121**

Further information on the project and PURE Mile 2012 is available at: [www.pureproject.ie](http://www.pureproject.ie)

# Best Management of Upland Habitats through Farming

Over the past two years Wicklow Uplands Council has been working with hill farmers, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc and the Irish Uplands Forum to identify a way forward to best manage upland vegetation with the help of upland farmers. With LEADER funding support from County Wicklow Partnership, they commissioned 'A Study to Identify Best Management of Upland Habitats in Co. Wicklow', which was launched in June by Mr Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, at the Wicklow Uplands Council AGM. The Minister noted the serious decline in upland hill farmers in Wicklow over the past 10 years and the corresponding drop in ewe numbers in upland DEDs. He complimented the Uplands Council on the report and their grassroots approach and noted that the study report was very timely in light of the ongoing review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

## Key Recommendations

The report highlights the need for:

- ▶ Targeted support for upland farmers through an Upland Agri-environmental Scheme
- ▶ The need for the dates for the Irish burning season to be brought back in line with those in the UK and Northern Ireland and supported through an Uplands Scheme as per our neighbouring countries
- ▶ The establishment of local burning management groups
- ▶ Research on sustainable grazing and the socio-economics of upland farming
- ▶ Practical trials on management techniques to monitor effect on biodiversity (Study Areas)

The report also contains a detailed specification for a Sustainable Uplands Agri-environmental Scheme (SUAS) which describes the role of farmers, costs and benefits which is based on this two year study. A full copy of the report is available to download at [www.wicklowuplands.ie/projects](http://www.wicklowuplands.ie/projects).

Following the AGM, a delegation from Wicklow Uplands Council attended the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Agriculture to present the recommendations of the study report. The proposals were very well received and it was a very positive meeting with T.D.s and senators who advised that support was also needed in their local upland areas. The Committee were also very interested in the proposed 'Co-operation Measure' under Article 36 of the Rural Development Programme. This article, which allows for payment of up to 30% of transaction costs, has never been switched on in the Irish context. This could allow top-up payments for additional work required for co-operation on commonages, local burning management groups, local deer management groups and possibly for additional co-operation work required for designated sites. This is all in keeping with the underlying principle of the scheme which is payment for work done or habitat produced. See <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates> for further information.



Minister Simon Coveney launches WUC Study Report at AGM

## Launch of Oireachtas Committee Report on Commonages

Key recommendations presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Agriculture by Wicklow Uplands Council were included in their report on commonages, namely:

- ▶ That provision be made to extend dates for controlled burning and to return them to the dates which operated in Ireland prior to the Wildlife Act 2000, particularly in upland areas, as a means to improve the management of commonages.
- ▶ That the management of commonages be promoted through output-driven schemes that take careful account of the insights and requirements of those who own and/or manage commonages.

These recommendations will be debated in the Dáil later in the year and Wicklow Uplands Council encourages upland farmers and stakeholders across the country to lobby their local representatives in this regard.

## Stakeholder Workshops on the Review of CAP

Simultaneously consultation is ongoing with the Department of Agriculture on the review of CAP and Wicklow Uplands Council is also participating in this process. Pat Dunne, Chair-man of the Vegetation Working Group, and Cara Heraty, WUC Co-ordinator, attended a workshop hosted by the Department of Agriculture in Portlaoise on 17th July 2013. The case for an Upland Agri-Environment Scheme was put forward at the workshop and the key recommendations of the WUC study report included in an official submission on the review.

Wicklow Uplands Council also attended the Teagasc workshop on the review of CAP Pillar II on 4th July and contributed to discussion by identifying the need for an Upland Agri-Environment Scheme. A copy of the study report was also presented to the Teagasc Director of Research, Dr Frank O' Mara.

## National Uplands Working Group

Wicklow Uplands Council is also a member of the National Uplands Consultation Group (facilitated by Mountaineering Ireland) seeking support for an Uplands Agri-Environment Scheme and ensures that the Wicklow perspective is presented. This group is also working closely with the Department of Agriculture and is further developing detailed specifications for an Upland Agri-Environment Scheme. Pat Dunne also sits on the National Upland Working Group representing and providing a voice for upland farmers.

## Presentation to IFA National Hill Committee Meeting

Wicklow Uplands Council also presented their key recommendations and proposed specifications for an Upland Agri-Environment Scheme to over 100 farmers at the IFA National Hill Committee Meeting in Tuam, Co Galway on 27th September. The recommendations were very well received and it was clear, although there are regional differences, the hill farming issues experienced in Wicklow are widespread across all upland areas of Ireland. It seems that support for a targeted Upland Agri-Environment Scheme is growing within the IFA and their capacity to lobby to gain support at Government level is greatly welcomed. Given the likely cutbacks to Pillar II funds, it seems that a targeted scheme for the uplands of Ireland will be prioritised through the review of CAP.

## Teagasc Walsh Fellow Appointed in Wicklow

Another welcome initiative is the appointment of a Teagasc Walsh Fellow to the Wicklow Area, based in Teagasc office in Tinahely. Fergal McGuire is currently based in U.C.D and will begin his two year research programme with a placement in Tinahely in the New Year to record and examine hill farming practices in Wicklow. Wicklow Uplands Council hopes to meet Fergal over the coming months to discuss the work of their Vegetation Management Working Group and explore ways of assisting and linking with the research that Fergal will be working on.

## Meeting with Mr Jimmy Deenihan T.D. Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

A Wicklow Uplands Council delegation met with Minister Deenihan on Friday 18th October to seek his support for an Upland Agri-Environment Scheme with the capacity to improve the condition of upland habitats across Ireland's Uplands - a task that is the responsibility of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This also provided an opportunity to seek an update on the review of the Irish burning dates which will require a change to the Wildlife Act 2000, which is within the Minister's remit.

**Pat Dunne,**  
Chair of the WUC Vegetation Management Working Group



# Development of a National Deer Management Policy

It is mid-October and the year is pushing on. Autumn has crept upon us, the leaves are turning and it is now stag shooting time. Everything, it seems, progresses except bureaucracy.

This time last year it appeared that the Department of Agriculture was on the verge of creating a National Deer Management Policy. Submissions had been made, a draft policy was produced and discussed, there were more submissions and a deadline was set for the policy launch. Then, sadly, Junior Minister Shane McEntee passed away and naturally the process was suspended.

It only began again this autumn, with what could be interpreted as a step backwards. The new Junior Minister, Tom Hayes, announced another round of consultations. It seems that although consultation is welcomed, it can sometimes be a substitute for action.

Nevertheless something is becoming very clear from the process; the deer problem in the Wicklow Uplands is at a different level to the rest of the country. It is probable that 40% of the country's deer are located here and we are experiencing the huge pressures that spring from such high population levels. However, in Wicklow we have also made far more progress towards identifying a potential solution than anywhere else. The Wicklow Deer Management Group (WDMG) is the only body in the country where all the stakeholders have come together to examine ways of managing deer effectively and the Balinastoe Deer Management Project, which grew out of WDMG, is the first attempt at collaborative, practical management of deer in a specific area.

Any national deer management policy should recognise the extent of the problem in the Wicklow Uplands, and build on the progress we have made in identifying solutions. Now that the consultation period of the process is complete, the next phase in deer management must be decisive co-operative action.



Glendalough Hind – Photo taken by Darren Flynn

**Declan O'Neill, Chairman, Wicklow Deer Management Group**



## Member Organisation Profile - WUC Economic and Tourism Panel



Former Operation Shamrock German refugee children revisit Glencree for 2013 Gathering - 67 years later.

around 1,000 children and was known as 'Operation Shamrock'. Twenty-one of the children were recently reunited at the Glencree on Saturday 5th October 2013 as part of the Gathering 2013. The former refugees were joined by more than 300 guests from Germany, Ireland, Wales and the USA, including some of the foster families who gave homes to the children over 60 years ago.

Many tears were shed as the 'children' shared their memories. Theodore Edward Kavanagh was separated from his brother Tony and brought to Ireland from an orphanage in Germany, "I thought Tony would arrive after me but he never came. I never knew what happened to him until sixty years later when we finally found him in Germany". Despite not being able to speak one another's language, the brothers attended the Gathering event together at Glencree, sitting side by side with huge smiles on their faces.

The Operation Shamrock Gathering was co-hosted by Glencree, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Dublin, the Irish Red Cross and the Wicklow Gathering 2013 Committee.

Glencree Centre for Reconciliation is situated in the Wicklow hills and occupies an historic Office of Public Works site with a history going back to the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion. The centre includes a coffee shop which is a haven for recreational users of the hills and an exhibition entitled 'From Rebellion to Reconciliation'. Conference and training facilities are also available onsite and residential accommodation which can accommodate up to 100 people.

For the past 40 years, Glencree has worked with people to find non-violent ways out of conflict. Current activity on the island of Ireland concerns the out-workings of the 1998 Belfast Agreement by encouraging new peace-making partnerships with politicians, community leaders, women's groups, former combatants, victims/survivors and school students. Glencree also works internationally to bring lessons from the peace process in Ireland/Northern Ireland to other parts of the world including Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan, Haiti and Columbia.

Part of the history of the site was its use as a temporary haven run by The French Sisters of Charity for children from Germany, Austria and France who were caught up the aftermath of the World War II. The project, which was promoted by the Irish Red Cross, involved

**Colin Murphy, Chair of Glencree Policy Council**

# Making the most of Wicklow's Private Woodlands

Close to 20% of Wicklow is under trees. In the past 25 years there has been a significant growth in private planting and 500 private woodland owners now account for 11.7 thousand ha or 33% of the total forest cover. Coillte with 26.4 thousand ha is still the dominant owner. Private planting is outstripping state planting. However Ireland lacks the private farm forest tradition common throughout Europe - including the role played by producer groups.

Wicklow Uplands Council recognised the emerging importance of private forestry in terms of land use and economic importance. In 2008, encouraged by the late Pat Farrington of the Forest Service, WUC engaged forester Michael Doyle to conduct a desk study of the private woodland estate in Wicklow. This led to the formation of the Wicklow Private Woodland Owners Group (WPWOG) with support from Teagasc, Wicklow Rural Partnership and the County Council.

## Production Forecast Study & Market Assessment Study

An early initiative by WPWOG was partnering with County Wicklow Partnership to obtain LEADER funding to do a timber production forecast for the county for the period 2010 – 2030.

A very clear picture emerged of forest owners wanting to learn about and get involved in forest management but in a state of inertia over what to do and when to do it.

Of the owners surveyed only:

- ▶ 10% of forest owners had already thinned their woods
- ▶ 34% had put in inspection paths
- ▶ 17% of forest owners have applied for felling licenses
- ▶ 12% of forest owners have applied for forest road grants
- ▶ 10% had developed road access to their forest



Deere on the Hills – Photo taken by John Kilbride

The findings demonstrated an urgent need especially in relation to first thinning if the long-term value of the timber is to be optimised.

## The Vulcan Project

Timber biomass for energy is rapidly growing in importance as an economic alternative to fossil fuels. Danone, the global dairy product company, has installed a 5MW biomass boiler in its Wexford dairy plant and is a customer for 18,000 tonnes of wood chip per annum. It wants to contract with farmers to supply its biomass needs.

Danone has identified private forestry owner groups in the region for investment from its Ecosystem Fund. The Fund's aim is to link the Company's core business with projects which deliver relevant and powerful social change.

The Vulcan Project is a partnership between Forest Owner Group Companies, the Danone plant in Wexford, Danone's Ecosystem Fund and local LEADER Partnership Companies. Owner groups from Wicklow, Wexford, Kilkenny, Laois, Waterford and South Tipperary are participating.

The core concept of the Vulcan Project is the creation of farmer owned commercial entities to drive the harvesting, processing and marketing of their timber. This would mirror the role played by forest producer groups across Europe. The objective is for these groups to develop sustainable businesses. Once fully operational they can produce a range of biomass and timber products for domestic, industrial and agricultural customers. Danone has committed to purchase the wood fuel for their boiler from groups participating in the project but does not impose any obligation on owners to supply.

With Vulcan and LEADER funding WPWOG has engaged a Facilitator, Harry Everard. He is in the process of building a database of owners and compiling accurate information on their forests. This will be a valuable aid for coordinating and clustering thinning and marketing. WPWOG is now establishing a woodland owners co-op to service owners and commercially optimize returns for their timber.

**Sean Eustace, Hon. Secretary,  
Wicklow Private Woodland Owners Group.**

## WUC New Three Year Strategic Plan

Wicklow Uplands Council's Three Year Strategic Plan 2011-2013 is drawing to a close and the organisation is in the process of consulting with its members and stakeholders regarding the preparation of a new Strategic Plan for the next three year period. This will commence with a Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on 23rd October in the Glendalough Hotel with a view to getting input from all our members.

This is an opportunity for members and stakeholders to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the Wicklow Uplands and to identify priorities for the next three years. There will be a review of progress over the last three year period and a brief update on ongoing projects not yet completed which are likely to continue through to the new plan. Member groups and individuals are asked to consider their proposals within the context of Wicklow Uplands Council's mission:

***'To support the sustainable use of the Wicklow Uplands through consensus and partnership with those who live, work and recreate there'***

Following the consultation process, WUC Co-ordinator Cara Heraty will collate proposals which will be prioritised by the board of directors. A framework for the new plan will be prepared on the basis of the strategic priorities identified by the members and a draft plan prepared for further consultation. This draft three year plan will be presented to members in early 2014 and an opportunity for feedback provided. Given funding limitations, the board has recommended that the preparation of the new Strategic Plan be facilitated in house and that it build on the previous process and 2011-2013 plan undertaken by Kathy Walsh Associates.

Written submissions are also welcome and should be sent to [info@wicklowuplands.ie](mailto:info@wicklowuplands.ie) or Wicklow Uplands Council, Parish Hall, Main St, Roundwood by **Friday 15th November, 2013**. The previous Strategic Plan is available to download on [www.wicklowuplands.ie](http://www.wicklowuplands.ie) under 'about us'.

# REGISTERED DIRECTORS 2013/14

## NOMINEES OF THE FARMERS & PROPERTY OWNERS PANEL



Declan O'Neill



Pat Dunne  
(Vice-Chairman)



Jim Fitzsimons



Sean Malone



Stephen Arthur



Tom Byrne



Donal Anderson

## NOMINEES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL & RECREATIONAL PANEL



John Flynn  
Secretary



Carmel Kealy



David Rooney



Jim Sheehan



Garvan Hickey



Phylis Mates



John Mullen



Finian McEvoy

## NOMINEES OF THE COMMUNITY PANEL

## ECONOMIC & TOURISM PANEL



Geoff Seymour



Sean Byrne  
Hon. Treasurer



Eugene Stephens

## REGISTERED DIRECTORS 2013/14



Philip Geoghegan  
(Chairman)



Pat Mellon



Thomas Healy

## STAFF



Cara Heraty  
Co-ordinator



Margaret Murphy  
Administration Officer



Dairine Nuttall  
(Secretary)



John Medlycott



Claire  
Chambers



Pearse Foley



John Murphy



Nomination  
Pending

Front cover photo:

'Lugnaquilla Mountain' - Photo taken by Pavel Pentlinowski

## WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

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

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

## WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL SEEKS TO

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

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

## Wicklow Uplands Council focuses on issues affecting the Wicklow Uplands

