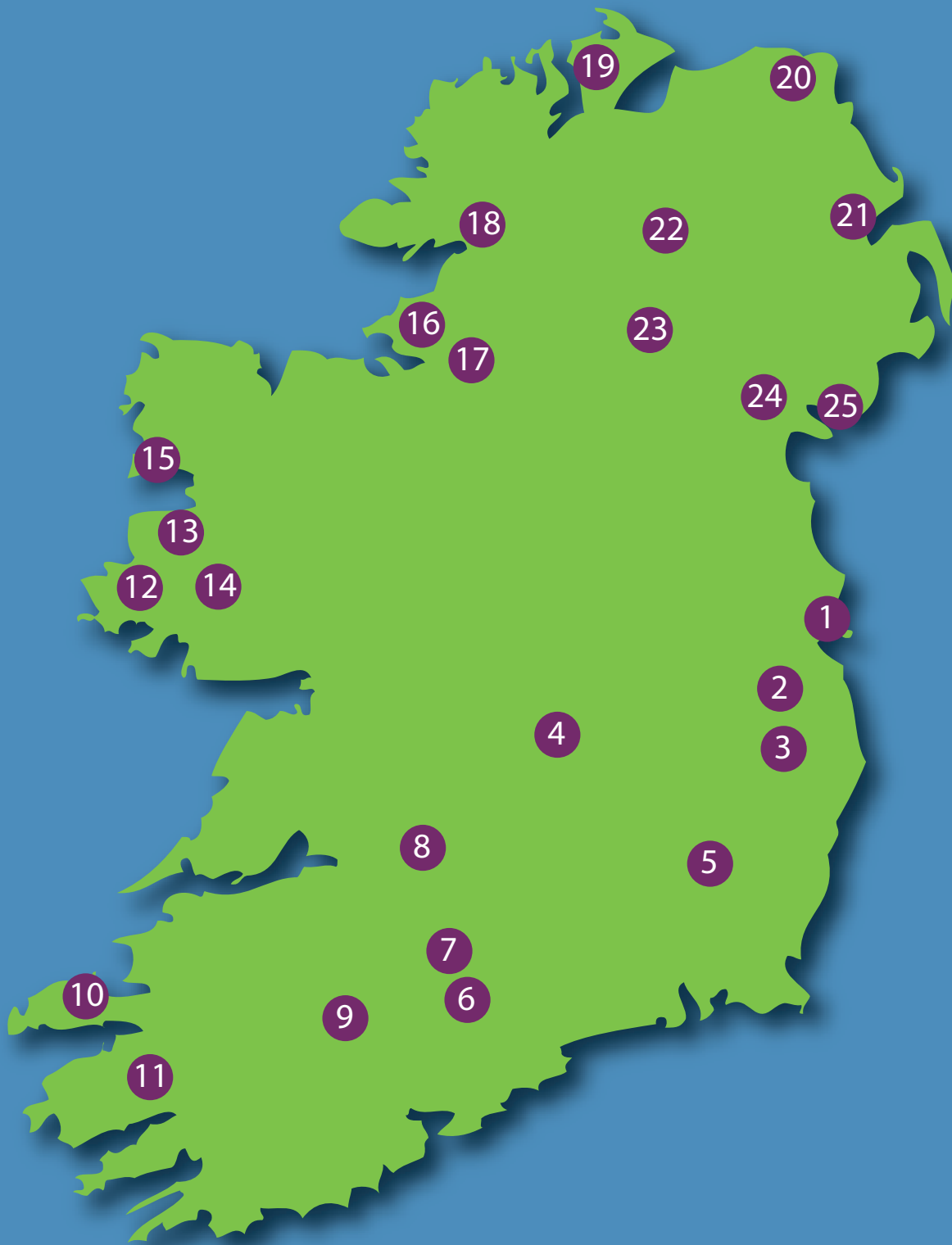


Uplands Community Study

Irish Uplands Forum

May 2016

By Alan Hill



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|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | Howth Special Area Amenity Order (SAAO) | 14 | Binn Shlé ibhe Access Scheme |
| 2 | Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) | 15 | The Old Irish Goat Society |
| 3 | Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC) | 16 | Ballinrillick Environmental Group |
| 4 | Slieve Bloom Rural Development Society | 17 | Boleybrack Red Grouse & Upland Conservation Group |
| 5 | Blackstairs Farming Group | 18 | Drimarone Development Group |
| 6 | Munster Vales | 19 | Sliabh Sneacht Centre, Innishowen |
| 7 | Galtees Steering Group | 20 | Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust |
| 8 | Slieve Felim Upland Forum | 21 | Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) |
| 9 | Ballyhoura Development | 22 | Sperrins Outdoor Recreation Forum (SORF) |
| 10 | Mount Brandon Nature Reserve | 23 | Knockatallon Development Company, Sliabh Beagh |
| 11 | MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Forum | 24 | Ring of Gullion, South Armagh |
| 12 | Leenane Development Association | 25 | Mourne Heritage Trust |
| 13 | Murrisk Development Association | | |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
3. METHODOLOGY	3
4. SURVEY ANALYSIS	4
5. FINDINGS	11
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	22
APPENDICES	25
<i>Group Profiles 1-25</i>	26
<i>Summary Sheets</i>	75
<i>Survey</i>	77

1 INTRODUCTION

The Irish Uplands Forum (IUF) is a national voluntary body founded in 1995 to help sustain upland areas and communities in the face of unprecedented social, economic and environmental change. It draws membership from agriculture, environmental, academic, rural community development, recreation, and tourism interests. The Forum is built on developing a partnership model to address rural upland decline.

For the purposes of this Study upland communities refers to those residing 150m or more above sea level in recognised upland areas where the principal peaks are in excess of 300m. They tend to be semi-natural habitats above the upper limits of enclosed farmland often formed by generations of farmers. The upland areas comprise roughly 14% of the land mass of the island but only possessing approximately 2% of the population. These numbers are declining to the point that a further reduction down to 1% is conceivable within our lifetimes. Many upland communities today are asking the question what impact will such a reduction have on services, infrastructure, the environment and landscape, economic activity, tourism, recreational usage and traditional upland farming culture and practice. There are undoubtedly significant threats to this cornerstone of rural life. Are we possibly sleepwalking our way into the terminal decline of one of the landscapes that helps define our national character? We may currently be living through a tipping point.

The purpose of this Research, the first of its kind, is to create a snap shot in time of where the most prominent and representative upland community groups are in relation to the way they are organised, what they do and the obstacles they face. Significant engagement took place with twenty five projects over a five month period from October 2015 until early 2016 across the whole island. The list of participants is not totally comprehensive but hopefully the issues raised by the core sample are representative of all upland communities.

The whole conversation around this project was marked by evidence of a massive commitment at individual group level to improve the quality of life and conserve this fragile environment for future generations. If passion and intelligence alone could safeguard the uplands then they would be in a healthy place today ... sadly a multitude of factors paints a more complex picture which this Study hopes to capture and reflect upon. The Irish Uplands Forum acknowledges the support of the Heritage Council in making this project possible.



2 UPLANDS COMMUNITY STUDY

Irish Upland Forum April 2016
Executive Summary

Ireland's uplands North and South comprise the majority of Ireland's most scenic and high nature value farmland and provide the main attraction to most tourists and domestic recreational users. However in iconic upland landscapes such as Kerry, Connemara, Mayo, Donegal, Mourne, Leitrim, Wicklow and the Antrim Glens there is an ongoing crisis in the upland rural economy and environment that requires local management. This Study commissioned by the Irish Uplands Forum (IUF) and carried out late 2015 early 2016 has profiled twenty-five local upland community based groups actively concerned with the current and future socio-economic sustainability of their communities and landscape. Each group has been profiled in a standardised format which describes the history and motivation for the establishment of each group, their long term vision, structure, territory, operations, core budget, sample activities, key issues and challenges addressed, problems encountered, unresolved issues and lessons learned.

What emerges from the Study is that local groups demonstrate a great commitment to address identified local challenges. They have become directly involved in resolving issues around hill-farming and promoting upland agri-environmental schemes. They have carried out innovative projects concerned with vegetation management involving controlled burning and landscape management. Many groups are responsible for walking route development and maintenance of infrastructure and some groups are operating projects which facilitate local permissible recreational access to open mountain and managing the risks from dogs. Some are actively supporting the local provision of services and facilities for tourists and year round recreational

users and expanding the recreational use of upland environments. In short these groups have not waited for central government to address the environmental, social and economic disadvantage of their upland areas arising from the decline of hill farming and poor prices for farm products, they are trying hard to find alternative income sources to keep their communities viable, schools and other essential local services open.

The survival of most of these voluntary groups and their ability to plan properly is constantly endangered through a lack of continuity of funding. An integrated and properly resourced state solution will improve the security of such groups to the benefit of upland communities. The wider community will also be well served by the provision of a wider scope of recreational services and a landscape that is sustainably managed by those who live, work and recreate there.

In order for these groups to learn from each other and coordinate greater information exchange, training and management support a system is required to coordinate greater networking of upland community groups across the whole island. The usefulness of an island wide representative body to foster greater coordination and facilitate innovative solutions to common problems is obvious from the research results. This body can be a voice to central governments north and south, to address the needs of upland communities and environments and utilise the local energy and commitment of upland communities. The first step is the provision of multi-year funding for active upland groups and a national upland network co-ordinator to organise information gathering, dissemination, training and management support for all groups.





METHODOLOGY 3

INTRODUCTION

This Study has consciously invested considerable time into talking with many of the leading representatives of upland communities across the island.

These conversations were structured, in total taking place over a four month period and occurred in each of the locations.

The consultation phase had three objectives:-

- Ensure completion of the bespoke Upland Community Group Study - Survey;
- Draw out from the groups suggestions, observations and concerns in relation to enhancing the quality of life and conserving the upland environment for future generations and;
- Gather the specific data required to draft individual Profiles of each group within a common template.

Reality determined that not every group on the island could be consulted as part of the project. A list of consultees was drawn up employing some of the following selection criteria:-

- Geographical location (including cross border);
- History and age of the group;
- Operational, participation and funding profile;
- Scale of the group;
- Any special programming interests / projects delivered;
- Previous engagement with the IUF.

An initial 'Introduction to the Study' by the Chair of the IUF was emailed to the invited participants. This was followed by direct contact between the consultant and the groups to give more detail on the terms of reference and set up appointments. The Survey was emailed to all in advance.

THE SURVEY

The purpose of the thirty three question Survey was to provide a framework for the conversations. They were completed on the day of the meeting by the consultant as the conversations progressed. See Appendix.

The design of the Survey falls into five distinct sections namely history of the group; structure and management of the group; reflection on performance; obstacles encountered and the future of their community and landscape. The purpose behind the questions was to build up a picture of where groups have come from, how they are functioning today and where they see themselves going to in the future. With this common approach being taken with each group it was hoped a coherent picture would begin to emerge. An analysis of the Survey results follows in the next section.

THE SESSIONS

The session lasted between a minimum of two and up to five hours. On average between two and three people attended each session but numbers ranged from one to seven. Participants usually included the Chair of the group often with a 'manager' and a seasoned group member however this varied. From the outset it was made clear to groups that the session would follow a conversational format as opposed to an interview session. This approach likely enhanced the enjoyment and usefulness of the session for both parties.

THE PROFILES

An important output of this process was the drafting of one thousand word profiles of each group. These again followed a fourteen question template completed by the consultant post session. Each group had an opportunity to feedback and approve their profile. The IUF hope that this suite of profiles will be a useful resource over the coming years for all those interested in upland affairs. An opportunity exists to ensure these are refreshed on an on-going basis and make them readily available online for all. New profiles can be easily added employing the simple template to build up a more comprehensive picture of upland groups.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL & PERSPECTIVES

A number of external bodies fed into the process at the consultation phase including Teagasc, Irish Rural Link, Sports NI, NI Environmental Agency and Pobal. Mid way through the process the IUF convened a review session where partners such as Mounteering Ireland were able to contribute.

The Study is acutely aware pressures on upland communities are a European wide challenge. Debate for example in the UK has been ongoing for decades evidenced by valuable documents such as the Commission for Rural Communities, High Ground, High Potential – a future for England's Upland Communities (2010) which was closely followed by the House of Commons, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Farming in the Uplands (2010-11) Report. A broader investigation of European wide upland community studies and the possible transfer of learnings to Ireland would be a valuable addition to the research material currently available.

SUMMARY PROFILE OF CONSULTEES

- Consultations: 25
- Participants: 71 (44 male / 27 female)
- Counties Represented: 21 of 32 (including 5 NI)

4 SURVEY ANALYSIS

1 INTRODUCTION

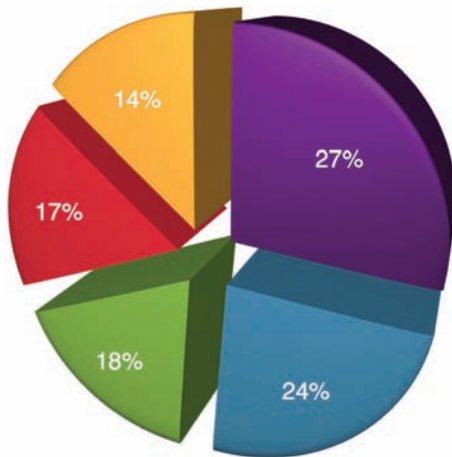
The following section provides an analysis of the Survey employed during the consultation phase. Questions (1-17) comprise feedback received from consulted groups. A more detailed and rounded assessment of the information is also contained in the following 'Findings' section.

1. REASONS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF GROUP

Objective

Identify the major motivation(s) for the creation of each group.

- Local Development Response
- Recreation / Trail Development / Mountain Access
- Specific Local Challenges
- Agri-Environmental Scheme / Game Management
- Sustainable Tourism



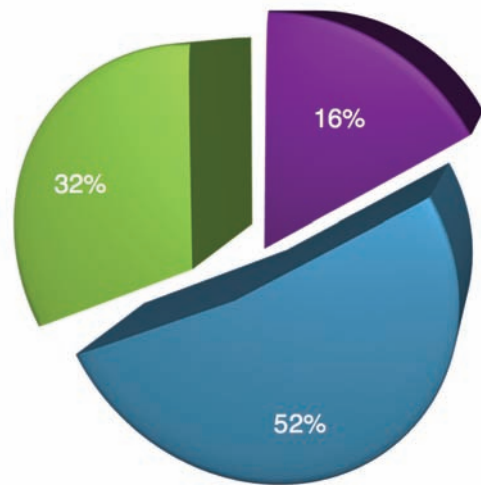
Comment: Allowing for multiple reasons in some groups more than 50% cited economic / job creation coupled with broad recreational development including negotiated access as the primary motivation. Addressing local challenges varied from countering fly tipping to managing areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Specific responses to endangered species include Red Grouse, Dexter cattle and the Old Irish Goat. It should be recognised that most groups were founded out of more than one motivation.

2. AGE OF GROUPS CONSULTED

Objective

Establish when were the consulted groups formed.

- 1960-1990
- 1990-2010
- 2010-2016

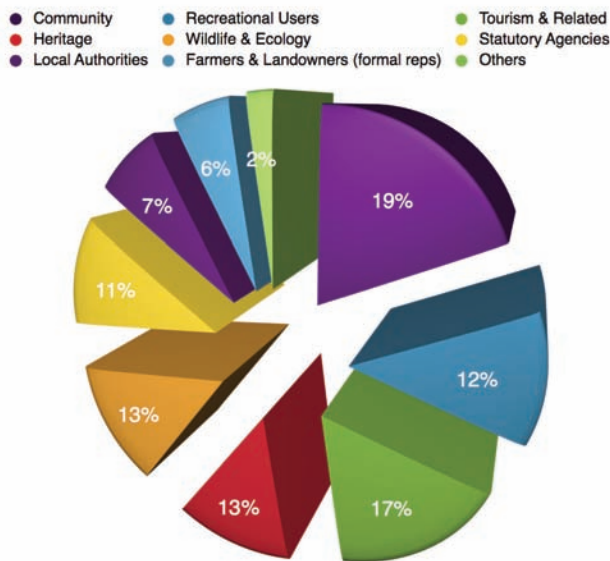


Comment: It is significant that nearly a third of the groups have been formed in an austerity environment and are still in their infancy. The majority were established through two decades of growth and relative prosperity. The first wave of groups from the 1960's onwards fell into two categories a) regulatory requirement and b) specific issue to be addressed e.g building a community centre and developing a tourism destination. What is not in this list is uplands groups that were founded and have now disappeared.

3. REPRESENTATION ON GROUPS

Objective

As a total of all those formally on groups across the island how are categories represented.



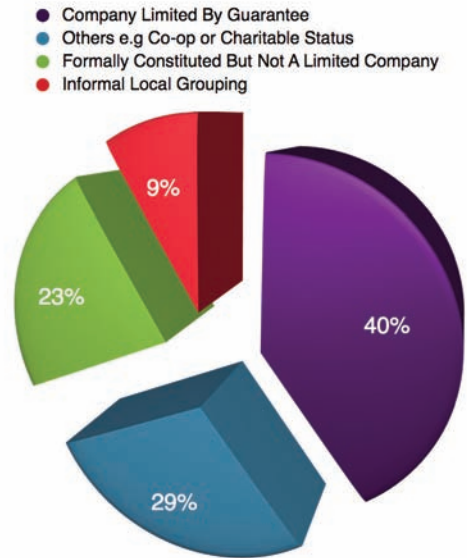
Comment: Some immediate observations:-

- 1) the almost universal involvement of 'community organisations' in the formal structure of upland groups consulted
- 2) the overall broad participation and reach
- 3) formally the farming community appears to be underrepresented however informally every group has a farmer(s) represented or they were representing another stakeholder e.g heritage representative who also happens to be a farmer and
- 4) in the region of 50% of groups had 'public sector' representatives formally on their boards / management committees. Private sector / business interests along with recreational users tended to be only moderately represented. Local authorities specifically tended to be underrepresented.

4. STRUCTURE OF GROUPS

Objective

How are the Groups constituted.

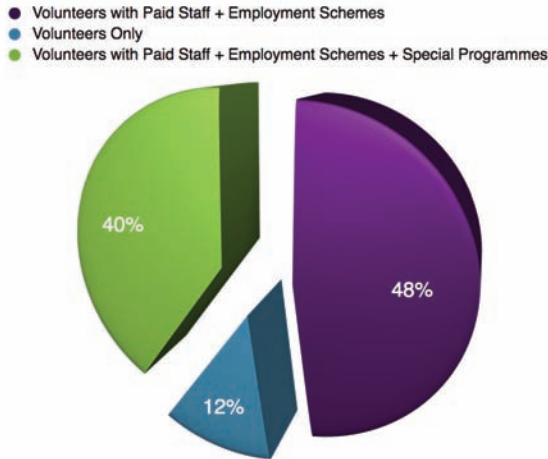


Comment: It appears to take 'time' for the newer groups to formally establish themselves. The more mature groups tend to gravitate towards a limited company model. The requirements of funders tend on occasions to dictate exact structures. Only one traditional Co-operative Society was identified. A significant number of the groups who were limited companies also had charitable status.

5. OPERATIONAL CAPACITY OF GROUPS

Objective

What administrative / managerial capacity underpins the groups.

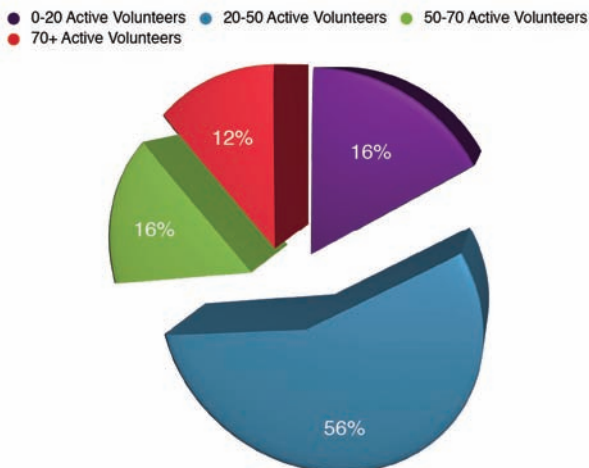


Comment: The role / significance of government employment programmes should be acknowledged in helping to maintain upland groups. Informally and formally the generous input of public officers e.g Sports NI and Rural Recreation Officers (RRO's) & LEADER / RDP in RoI is highly valued by recipient groups. A popular model identified is the voluntary committee with support from a small number of part-time (e.g. 19.5hrs per week) supported through the likes of Tus, RRS and CE Schemes often including a manager. These manager posts tend to be occupied by capable and passionate local people who are paid a modest wage and often are uncertain about the sustainability of their post from year to year. Volunteers are likely to remain the engine that makes upland community groups function.

6. NUMBER OF ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS PER GROUP

Objective

How many dependable volunteers have the groups access to at short notice.

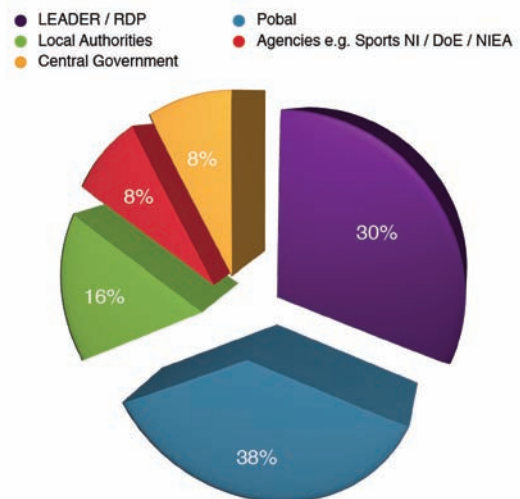


Comment: In total there were over 1000 active and mature volunteers recorded across the island with over 50% of the groups having immediate access to 20-50 people. This is a valuable human resource for future local and island wide projects. A centralised database would be a helpful tool. There is an opportunity for further training of uplands volunteers. This volunteer corps should never be taken for granted, a lesson the more mature groups have learned over time.

7. SOURCES OF FUNDING & FINANCIAL SUPPORT (Public)

Objective

Where does the public funding and support for the groups come from.

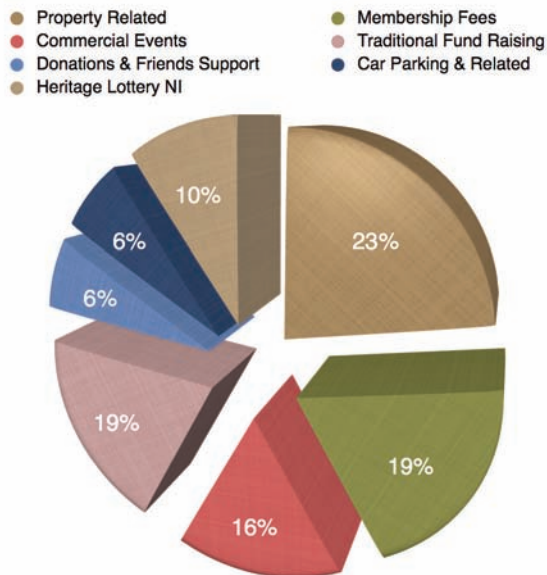


Comment: The role of both Pobal (RoI / employment support) and the LEADER / RDP programme (programming supports) are significant, together representing over two thirds of financial supports. Local authority supports in RoI are modest. However the more joined up thinking in relation to funding groups in NI, especially through the local authorities together with the dovetailing of specialist agency money, creates a more solid financial foundation for groups north of the border. The limited amount of central government money tended to be channelled to special pilot projects such as the Mountain Access Scheme. These figures are obviously relating to public funding only and don't account for self generating income from the groups. With a few notable exception the level and consistency of self generated funds is disappointing.

8. SOURCES OF FUNDING (Self Generated)

Objective

Where do groups generate their own income outside traditional public sources.

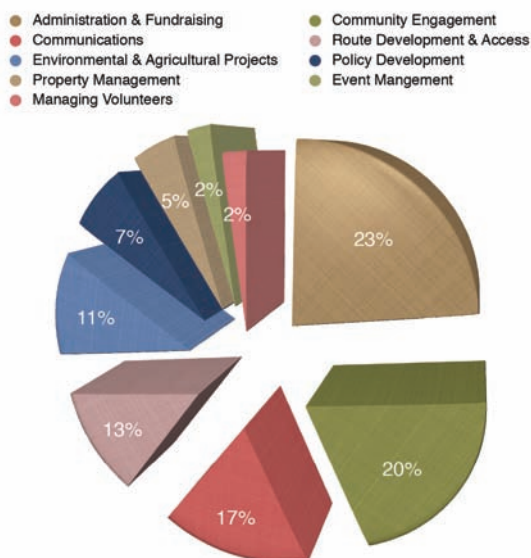


Comment: There is a correlation between the age of the group and their experience / ability to creatively generate needed income. Some of the more enterprising groups who build and manage facilities were impressive in their potential to raise necessary income. Much of this income was predictable year on year thus creating a war chest for match funds, service debt or to meet once off financial needs. Additional training / mentoring in this area for groups would be wise.

9. INDICATIVE WORK PROGRAMME OF GROUPS

Objective

What were the types and frequency of actions undertaken by groups.

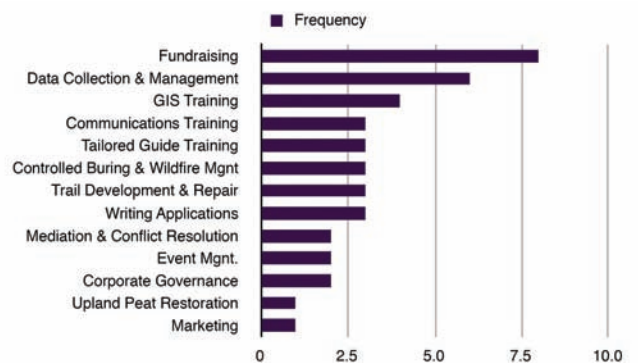


Comment: The bureaucratic / office time commitment of groups is significant. When combined with sourcing / managing public funds, developing policy and organising meetings it amounts to about half of all work undertaken by upland community groups today. Engaging with the community is a significant category and figured highly in all consultations. Route development and agri-environmental scheme management together amounted to about a quarter of all activity. Event management rated lower than expected however this may have been represented somewhat in overall community engagement.

10. TRAINING AND MENTORING NEEDS OF GROUPS

Objective

What were the specific training needs / requirements identified by the groups.

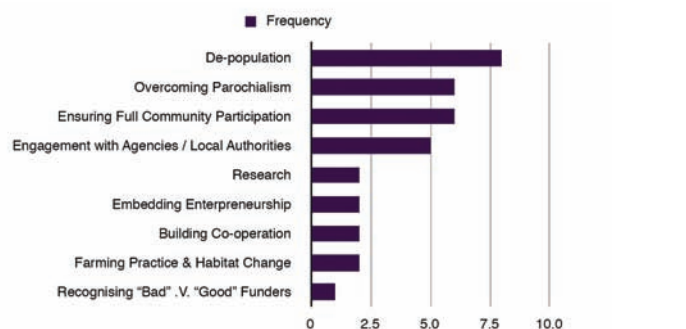


Comment: The majority of needs are relatively specific to upland communities. The feedback demonstrated a maturity and understanding of deficiencies within groups. Potential funders of future training in upland areas will be keen to digest this information and to align it with their programmes.

11. ISSUES ADDRESSED BY GROUPS / GLOBAL

Objective

Identify what appear to be the most significant general issues addressed by the groups.

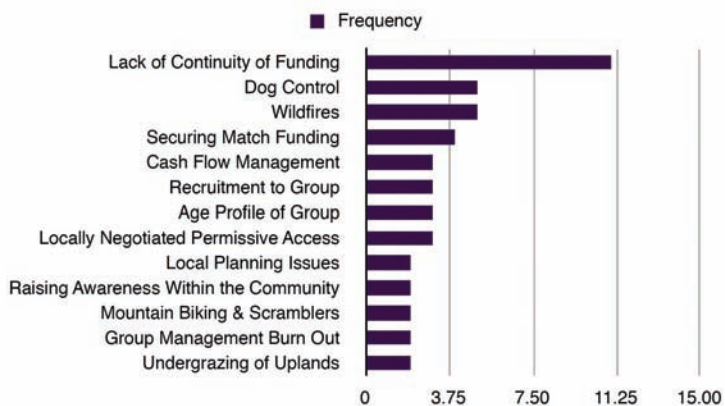


Comment: A broad mix of social and demographic change allied to management and political issues. The need for more baseline research data compiled by groups was interesting along with developing the commercial capacity within communities.

12. ISSUES IMPACTING ON GROUPS / LOCAL AND OPERATIONAL

Objective

Establish what local issues and obstacles were exercising the groups.

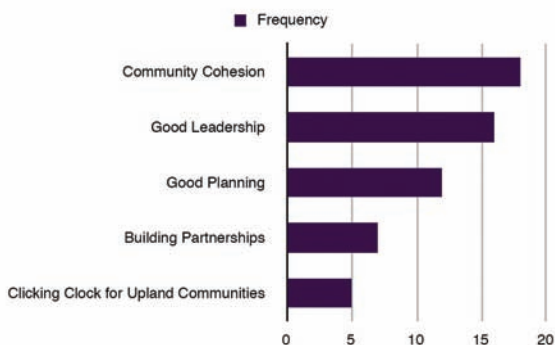


Comment: The lack of continuity of funding and day to day financial sustainability is highlighted as a significant obstacle followed by the composition of the groups. Broader environmental and recreational challenges are also to the fore.

13. LESSONS LEARNED BY THE GROUPS

Objective

What do the groups see as the most important lessons they have learned.



Comment: Groups were common in recognising the importance of building and maintaining a spirit of community co-operation. Most demonstrated great skill, patience and a truly bottom-up community development philosophy which is the foundation stone upon which most of the groups are built upon. The Chair was often the embodiment of this belief in the face of unprecedented threats to the very fabric of their communities. Although most groups were resource starved there was the acceptance of sound short to medium term planning especially in relation to the environment. Building effective external partnerships was often commented upon but there was an acceptance many groups underperformed in this area.

14. LESSONS LEARNED BY THE GROUPS

Additional Random Comments:

- Like-minded people can move mountains;
- Employ proper channels, do not use local politicians;
- Try to avoid 'debt';
- Poor quality / expensive and unpredictable broadband is an inhibitor to development;
- We are just a name on a map for those outside our areas;
- Only call meetings when there is something to discuss;
- Invest in infrastructure and private sector investment will follow;
- Community centres are a great resource to build the capacity and cohesion of the community;
- It took us about 15 years to learn how to 'do' meetings;
- Failure is a learning;
- Take advice;
- Volunteers need to be as professional as paid staff;
- It takes so long to get things done ... You need courage and drive to succeed. Don't give up.
- Upland farmers are bias against cattle;
- As the farm size gets bigger and bigger how many viable farmers will there be in upland areas in the future?
- There is a surprising public interest in the popular science issues affecting the uplands;
- Community Reps tend not to attend daytime meetings;
- Permissive access is not that big an issue as it once was however it remains unresolved across the island;
- There is no appetite at the centre to come up with a suitable long term solution for critical upland problems;
- Revisit, evaluate and modify where necessary your original vision and objectives every 2/3 years;
- Community goodwill towards 'Community Clean Up & Recycle Days';
- Three volunteers shook a can for 1 day and got 150e while in house we spent three weeks working on an application and got over 700k. Experience counts massively in securing funding and trying to sustain your group;
- As the group gets bigger the level of soft skills required rises significantly;
- To keep the farming community fully engaged they need to be softened with subsidies;
- Follow a community led / bottom up model which you trust and know will work for you;
- Agricultural colleges around the country are not informing the next generation of farmers on uplands farming;
- The mismatch of the outputs and productivity of a voluntary board/management committee V the increasing professional standards demanded of funders and the wider community;
- Perceived Public Sector Culture – no agency gets into trouble for saying 'no' but often will for saying 'yes';
- The effectiveness of the groups relationship with the local authority / LEADER company often boils down to individual relationships;

- There needs to be some concrete 'pay back' for volunteers;
- The challenge of increased uplands afforestation making whole areas 'dark' and further diminishing traditional communities. Will the next generation be as keen to return home given such a scenario?
- Need for a dedicated uplands 'heritage scheme' similar to the national walks scheme as uplands archaeology in particular has not been tapped into;
- We will get 25/30 people turn up for a heather cut on the mountain but not one will show up for a meeting...voluntarism comes in different forms;
- We are not victims...we are doing not complaining;
- It is as simple as this...we are fighting now for our economic survival;
- Recognising the value of carbon credits for blanket bogs and secure payback for upland farmers;
- We have to prove our community is healthy and sustainable ... who could justify funding a 'black hole';
- National political priorities and local history hold us back;
- It is not possible to raise a family on a 100 acre upland farm today where you would be lucky to have a 16-20k annual profit;
- Invasive species is a big and growing problem e.g rhododendrons and wild rhubarb;
- The role of the likes of the FAS / CE scheme workers who have built / reinstated dry stone walls should be acknowledged;
- It's been so difficult to get good national publicity ...local media support has been great because we are always working on it.

15. GROUPS BELIEVE AN ALL-ISLAND NETWORK CAN ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING ISSUES

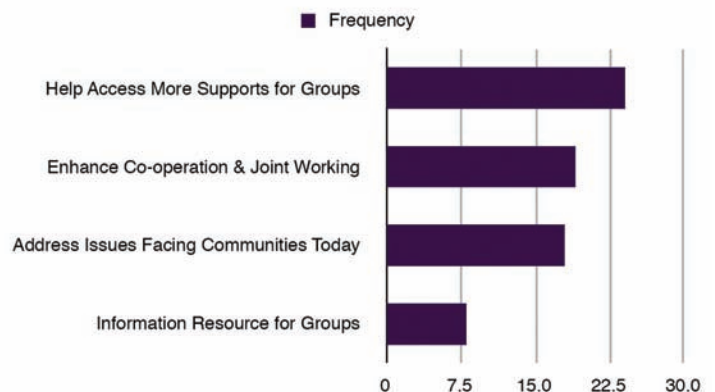
Objective

What do the Groups believe should be the key focus of a potential all- island uplands network.

Additional Random Comments:

- Recognising and celebrating the good work being achieved by upland communities;
- Enhancing employment creation especially through small indigenous businesses;
- Visitor management planning in the uplands is important at a local and all-island level;
- Monitor and plan for urban encroachment;
- Joint project development and training;
- Fund raising of scale across the island;
- Endangered species management and support;
- Enhancing signage and public information;
- Develop a portal web identity for upland communities;
- Support those community groups who have hostels/hotel to be suitably networked /joint marketed (X 4 border counties/cross border);
- Recognise and support uplands high nature farming and do not be afraid to take findings/initiatives directly to Europe;
- Meet like minded people from around the country to talk, share and plan;
- Examine collective insurance;
- Formally link and exchange with other upland communities internationally.

Comment: Only one group expressed any reservation about the benefits of an all-island uplands community network. Their concern was that the networks 'agenda' could be too farmer lead at the expense of recreational development. There was general agreement that the core work programme of such a network would focus on 1) lobbying / awareness raising of the threat to upland communities and 2) facilitating groups getting to know each other, share their skills and engage in joint working.



16. WHAT DO GROUPS HAVE IN COMMON .V. WHAT DO THEY NOT HAVE IN COMMON

Objective

What unites and separates the upland community Groups on the island of Ireland today.

GROUPS TEND TO HAVE IN COMMON

- Committed and tightly knit band of volunteers with strong leadership;
- Clear geographically focused territory;
- General goodwill of the larger community but seldom translates into anything more than passive support leaving the hard work to be done by a dedicated few;
- Relative harmony between distinct stakeholders such as farming, environmental and recreational users;
- Small but healthy volunteer corps;
- Largely under resourced (skills / financial) but seldom deflated;
- Little medium/long term strategic planning (funding led);
- Management committee fatigue and genuine concern about the future of their community
- Age profile of Groups (middle aged+ demographic);
- All seek greater facilitation, tailored supports and global leadership.

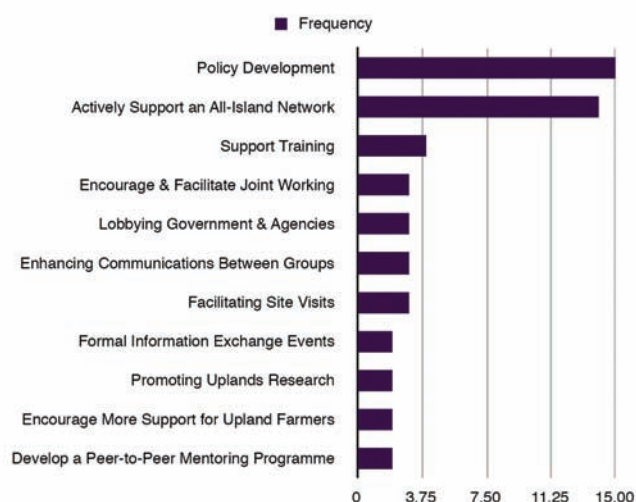
GROUPS TEND NOT TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING IN COMMON

- Groups vary on the scale of their operation, their original vision / purpose, sources of funding and longevity;
- Groups are largely unaware of the detailed purpose and actions behind their sister Groups across the island;
- Work programmes vary in line with local needs and short term funding opportunities;
- Relationships with key local partners e.g. LA's varies greatly often defined by personal relationships;
- Significant differences between Groups in relations to their 'commercial acumen' especially around event management and fund raising;
- Communications planning, management and execution varies greatly between Groups especially in relation to web identity, information & publications and employment of social media;
- Groups vary in relation to their active engagement with support NGO's like the IUF;
- There are some distinct differences between north and south of the border in relation to funding and operations;
- The openness and capacity of Groups to recruit new members varies greatly.

17. GROUPS VISION FOR THE IUF

Objective

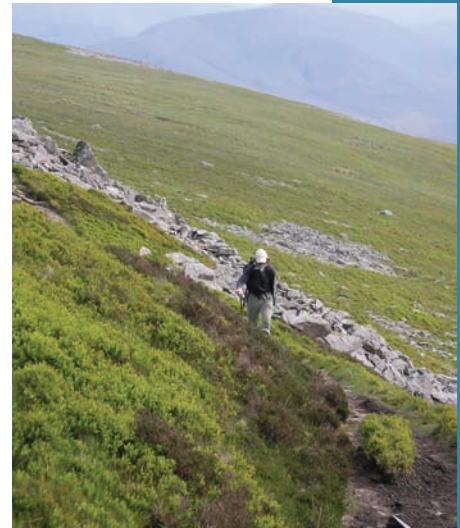
Establish how the consulted groups see the role of the IUF going forward.



Comment: The feedback from consulted groups is clear, there is a need / opportunity for the IUF to development policy documents to be presented to governments and appropriate agencies. This is coupled with the IUF seen to be the facilitator enabling the creation of an island wide network of upland communities. Remaining observation from groups fall into general categories such as training needs, delivering events and practical networking between upland groups.

“Are we now reaching a tipping point in relation to the very sustainability of upland communities and without immediate change from the centre uplands will disappear as we know them today within a generation or two.”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



SUMMARY FINDINGS

1. In the last twenty years many communities in the Irish uplands have organised themselves to address economic and social challenges unique to upland areas. This Study has identified and profiled many of the key groups and lists the challenges they are addressing.
2. Programming issues addressed by these groups include:
 - Support for sustainable hill-farming and upland agri-environmental schemes and projects
 - Vegetation control, controlled burning and environmental landscape management
 - Permissible recreational access and dog control
 - Walking trail development and maintenance
 - Enhanced provision of services and facilities for tourism and recreational use of upland environments
 - Economic disadvantage and local job creation.
3. There is a need/opportunity to co-ordinate greater upland community group networking across the whole island to facilitate greater information exchange, coordination of training and management supports for groups.
4. There is a need to establish an island wide representative body of upland community groups to foster greater co-ordination and to facilitate more innovative solutions of scale to common problems. This body can help make the important case to central governments south and north on the very real stresses being encountered by upland communities and environments.
5. The survival of most of these voluntary groups and their ability to plan properly is constantly endangered through a lack of continuity of funding. An integrated and properly resourced state solution will improve the security of such groups to the benefit of upland communities and the sustainable management of Irish mountain landscapes.
6. This mandate for change secured from the groups consulted should be viewed in a positive light by the IUF as a means to re-evaluate and position the organisation for the future.



6 ANALYSIS OF DETAILED FINDINGS

“It is a privilege to live among these special mountains
... I often feel I should have a passport to come home.”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



STRENGTHS

1 Common Purpose

There exist core similarities between all groups whether they are north and south of the border. The group consultation sessions reveal a number of consistent traits. There is great energy, generosity, natural intelligence and pride in place evident in all the groups. There is a hunger for change and thrust for opportunities. This is coupled with frustration, fatigue and palpable fear for the future. All groups are working virtually solo, independent up to now of any fraternal network or consistent inter-group networking. As one participant said “Plug us into each other and we will light up rural Ireland.”

2 Valuing Volunteers

There is ample evidence of impressive energy, drive, skills and cohesion at local group level ... those who volunteer across the uplands areas provide an often undervalued service to their communities that is not recognised by the state. On the ground more needs to be done to formally attract in and manage 'friends of' the various upland groups to make the most of their limited time input. A small number of groups were outstanding in this area of managing volunteers.

3 Farmer & Community Relationships

The more sustainable groups place great effort on building and maintaining a good working relationship between the farmers / landowners and community. In its totality relationships between farmers and the upland communities groups today are very good but can never be taken for granted. The important and supportive role played by the Rural Recreation Officers in the RoI and the limited number of council based Access Officers and Biodiversity Officers in the NI was recognised by groups.

4 Community Development

Many groups demonstrate a genuine commitment to 'a bottom-up approach bringing all parties together and keeping them together'. This philosophy is deeply embedded and sometimes may negatively impact on a more pragmatic approach to delivering tough or contentious actions. The cross pollination between local groups in any one community ensures adequate communication and practical co-operation especially in relation to fundraising and the local events calendar. One yardstick of a 'community health' is seen through the prism of institutions, enterprises and organisations such as the churches, the GAA, the ICA, the farm representative bodies, the axis of the shop/pub/post office and the beacon of the hundreds of community centres around the island that host most of the upland groups. These will likely remain the heartbeat of the communities into the future and show little signs of terminal decline.

5 Leadership

High level of capable and committed leadership. Many community leaders make huge personal sacrifices to ensure the continuity of their group. The majority interviewed for this Study would describe themselves as teetering on the edge of 'burn out'. However they continue to give and lead. Succession planning is often non-existent and would be a simple tool to employ to make the organisation more robust and less vulnerable to change. As 'leaders' bow out it would be fitting that their efforts (successes and failures), observations, suggestions and network of contacts are formally recorded to aid future generations. This could be done through a straightforward questionnaire conducted by the incoming chair. A number of groups identified the need for the tailored training of the next generation of upland community leaders. The networking benefit alone for this small cohort would justify the investment.

6 Events Management

There is good event management skills in some groups, but not in all ... from an income generation and public relations perspective the delivery of regular high quality events is important to keep a focus on key issues both locally and to a wider audience. For example an opportunity exists to creating a necklace of branded and coordinated 'walking festivals' in upland areas throughout the year with improved scheduling, marketing, adding value through packaging, sharing of skills and enhanced management of databases.

7 Local Priorities

Agendas are very similar across all the groups – countering depopulation in local and practical ways; addressing the threat to traditional uplands farming; negotiated access and recreational provision; maintaining basic local services; enhancing infrastructure, environmental management and conservation. The opportunity for joint action and lobbying is very real and the timing appears favourable. This Study clearly demonstrates that there is a need and desire to see this happen on the ground. It is interesting to observe that the specific / single project groups like the Dexters, Boleybrack and the Old Irish Goats Society see themselves as having multiple objectives including e.g tourism, recreational usage, conservation and even artisan food brand development. There is an undoubted cohesion across all groups.

8 Local Walking Clubs

There was universal goodwill towards all the walking clubs who appeared to be working seamlessly with their local community groups. On many fronts from conservation, litter collection, path repair, organising walking festivals and guiding services the local clubs, often with up to 150 members, were viewed as a valuable yet independent resource. It was also recognised that some clubs had members with particular skills that may not be available directly within the community group.



“Do Upland Communities matter?”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



WEAKNESS

1 Lack of Continuity of Funding

A significant number of groups cited this obstacle, above all others, as a threat to their survival. Their inability to plan even a year ahead in some circumstances (e.g. continuity of employment) resulted in a number of groups classing themselves as being in constant 'crisis management' mode. For voluntary groups this is deeply demoralising and ineffective given the valuable role they play and the time invested in uplands community development.

2 Research and Case Making

No evidence of significant joined up thinking on designing, commissioning, storing, analysing and distributing research findings. More focused multi disciplinary research will greatly help support a heavier 'economic argument' for an increased in public investment into upland communities. Up to now the de fault position has tended to be overly emotional, often area specific and spoken by a hundred weak voices articulating often short term solutions. These have largely fallen on deaf ears. Irish upland areas going forward will need to foresee and possibly prepared for events such as significant reductions in grazing and controlled burning. Some communities conversely could experience agricultural intensification 'up the hill' with significant increases in grazing (new and traditional types) or an expansion of arable or bio-energy crops due to expected increases in national / global demand for food and energy. For example the National Survey of Upland Habitats is a valuable specialist uplands research project conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Some excellent uplands focused research is being conducted at third level institutions including the IT sector. The likes of Mountain Research Ireland and Helping the Hills bring valuable support to research and practical conservation. All these scenarios will take place in the context of climate change. Are we investing enough in research to help plot the best way forward for our uplands?

3 Separation

There is a considerable degree of separation among the groups (silo mentality). A feeling of 'isolation' and 'removal' was evident from many groups consulted.

4 Training Coordination

No centralised formal 'training, learning, upskilling, capacity building and/or mentoring' for upland community activists ... as with the previous point on professional research the lack of co-ordination significantly inhibits development. There are substantial training programmes available through multiple partners from the Rural Development Programme (RDP) to Teagasc and from Mountaineering Ireland to Failte Ireland. However it all appears too piece meal with little follow-up and some duplication. Some communities have stated that the programmes often appear to be more about the delivery of the course than the real long term needs and well-being of the participants. Let us take for example social media training. Although all groups use social media to some degree it tends to be peripheral to more traditional media in the majority of cases. SMS and email is growing as the preferred media to call meetings. Sophisticated strategies tend to be employed by the larger more mature destination. Consequently, a significant opportunity exists for tailored training and social media support programme available to all upland groups. This could herald the development of an 'uplands portal site' which has been suggested by a number of groups. By way of illustration a You Tube search on 'Irish Uplands' revealed the first page totally devoted to videos of the Irish Setter Men's Wingshooter boot! Better co-ordination would likely deliver more tangible benefits on the ground to those that will benefit most. There was no obvious example of any cross border training initiatives for upland communities. In summary more medium to long term thinking in relation to training needs would represent a smarter use of limited public resources.

5 Income Generation

There are few good examples of successful and sustainable local fund raising / income generation or long term partnership building with the private sector.

6 Data Collection

Virtually all groups accept there is poor data collection at national and area specific levels e.g. visitor numbers, local skills and training needs, erosion, urban encroachment, planning decisions, invasive species, rural depopulation, innovation and practice in route development and path maintenance and repair. Specifically there is poor recreational visitor data collection / information gathering and analysis including path counters, a point raised by a few groups. It is only recently that we are beginning to witness the instillation of fit for purpose digital footfall counters in some areas, this should be extended to all upland recreational areas. The local authority should lead out on this initiative (as more are beginning to do) along with key agencies such as Failte Ireland or the NPWS. In a related field there are likely deficiencies in the majority of group databases in terms of their design, management and use. In the medium to long term an island wide data management system could be examined.

7 Practical Cooperation

Few if any examples of financial efficiencies such as joint purchasing between groups of goods/services e.g signage commission, route furniture, consultancy services, sharing of specialist staff, joint commissioning of academic research, communications especially design and printing, web/social media cooperation/ optimisation.

8 Inter-community Awareness

Critical lack of practical awareness and physical familiarisation between groups of what the 'other' has to offer by way of advice / contacts / visitor offering and case studies.

9 INFRASTRUCTURAL PROVISION

Poor infrastructure including roads, public transport and signage ... there is a strongly held belief by many groups this underinvestment will likely continue across peripheral upland areas.

10 INNOVATION

Few examples of innovation of scale in upland areas...Ireland appear to under-perform when it comes to inspirational working models of communities that are sustaining themselves through the delivery of an integrated local development strategy (by ourselves, for ourselves) ... all groups consulted are largely dependent on public funding to survive which has deep cultural and institutional meaning for society as a whole. The constant tension between a pure voluntarism ethos and the practical needs to generate income to match public funding is ever present in virtually all groups.



“Why should my bog be used free of charge by a 500 acre dairy farmer in Cork to off-set their carbon emissions?”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



OPPORTUNITIES

1. Network Development

There is a need / opportunity to co-ordinate greater upland community group networking across the whole island.

2. Engagement with Public Bodies

Pobal acts as an intermediary for programmes funded by the Irish Government and the EU that impact heavily on upland areas in the RoI. Virtually all the groups consulted secure support from Pobal with notable programmes including the RSS and Tus. In Northern Ireland by contrast groups tend to receive funding through local authorities and support agencies / initiatives like NI Environmental Agency, Sports NI and Heritage Lottery funding. Pobal are the single most significant enabler of upland community groups in Ireland today. A conversation needs to occur at a senior level to examine potential further interventions, conducting on-going upland related socio-economic research, fostering greater cohesion and adding value to existing Pobal programmes. On a similar vein it has been suggested the Department of Agriculture (RoI) have significant funding available under the Life Programme to support the likes of upland community networks but there needs to be a mature, informed and considered engagement with them. Likewise the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (biodiversity), the Department of the Environment (built and natural heritage), Department of Transport, Sport and Tourism (with Failte Ireland) are all key departments that need eventually to be brought to the table to generate the type of joined up plan of scale and innovation to make a meaningful difference to address the decline of Ireland's upland communities. North of the border things are more streamline with the coming together of the former departments of Agriculture and Environment into the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs which should help engagement. The continued commitment of Comhairle na Tuaithe (Countryside Council) to upland

areas should be widely acknowledged. The story of Comhar na nOileán Teo., which is the LEADER / Partnership Company for the inhabited offshore islands of Ireland & for the Galway Gaeltacht since October 2012 could provide valuable lessons on building an uplands network and engaging collectively with public bodies. The Company was formed in 2008/2009 by the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs with the aim to streamline delivery of all programmes to this disperse community.

3. Cross Border

There is a real curiosity and willingness in Northern Ireland to engage with RoI upland community partners and vice versa with knowledge transfer high on the list of objectives. Obvious structural differences exist between uplands in each jurisdiction as is evident throughout this Study. For example Sports NI in 2013/2014 commissioned four Outdoor Recreation Action Plans for key upland areas. While at roughly the same time Comhairle na Tuaithe commissioned two pilot Mountain Access Schemes. This is an illustration of slightly differing approaches to more coherent thinking on the uplands. However the critical difference between north and south of the border is the active role of the local authorities in NI and the availability of funding. There is little evidence of any formal and consistent relationship building across the border in relation to the uplands with the noteworthy exception of the geopark networks in Cavan / Fermanagh and Louth, Armagh and Down. The potential for immediate dividends, both directly and indirectly, from this simple action are significant.

4. Irish Uplands Forum

The IUF are seen by all to have a greater role to play in:- fostering a greater spirit of co-operation and cohesion among groups across the island; facilitating more innovative solutions of scale to upland problems

and; helping to make the important case to central governments on the very real stresses being encountered in upland communities and environments today. This expectation should be viewed in a positive light as a means to re-evaluate and position the IUF for the next twenty years as was previously stated.

5. Farming Futures

“Farmers tend to have a pessimistic take on upland areas ...” this contention was based on having had their 'income slashed with the demise of REPS', they see their children emigrating and their neighbours getting out of farming. However there are a minority of voices captured in this Study who believe upland landscapes and communities will develop a new personality where recreation, adventure sports, arts and crafts, environmental education, local food production and renewable energy will come more to the fore replacing traditional uplands farming as the core driver of the local economies. Twenty-first century products and services for a twenty-first century affluent urban markets as one consultee commented. But who will be the custodians of the grazing patterns and scrub control?

6. Training

The nature, format and scheduling of publicly funded training programmes being delivered in upland areas needs to be examined afresh. The training needs on the ground speak of more tailored training on upland issues such as GPS, Mountain Rescue, Fund Raising, Environmental Management and Tour Guiding combined with bio-diversity / environmental education. Too much of the training being delivered is a 'once off with no follow-up and to an 'off the shelf design' according to some groups. There was a small number of examples of 'on-going progressive, lifelong learning. One to one peer mentoring has been mentioned by a number of groups as 'highly desirable' (as well as being cost effective). Three senior and experienced people associated with the most mature upland groups on the island have offer to provide a few days free gratis mentoring to key people in aspiring groups ... this goodwill and commitment to practical networking among groups needs to be followed up and developed. A small number of groups also see themselves as being providers of training as a means of generating income.

7. Commercial Enterprise

There is scope to look at successful community owned commercial ventures that have and are working often outside Ireland e.g. specialist community retailing, original events of scale and imaginative linkages with the diaspora. An impressive example at home is the Knockatallon group who built and manage Ireland's only community owned hotel (2* / 28 bed/ FI Approved). It should be acknowledged that the promoters of the vast majority of uplands tourism, recreation and hospitality enterprise are private sector operator. Are these risk takers providing employment and often sourcing products / services locally been given the

support and acknowledgement they deserve? At local level is the community engaging with and capitalising upon this 'asset' in their midst ... the accommodation provider, the specialist shop, the restaurant, the artist, craft worker, bike rental operation or the outdoor adventure centre? Business in upland areas is likely seasonal, footfall is low and margins are tight.

8. Administration

Limited administrative capacity and resources was commented upon by a number of groups as a major frustration and drain on energy and time. In practical terms it was often left to busy and possibly inexperienced group members to draft minutes, compose letter / emails, copy and file material, follow up or prepare documentation for funding applications, submit reports to funders, seeking out local data, travel to meetings at their own time and expense and book and service meeting rooms. This is a problem that should not be over looked. Some solutions have been provided by local LEADER companies who allow groups to 'embed' themselves when required and use the resources of an office, a hot desk type scenario. Could this be examined more broadly? The 'personal' relationship built up with officers of the LEADER companies, the NPWS, the local authorities and related agencies was often cited as a critical enabler to help 'getting things done'.

9. Controlled Burning

It is clear from the consultations that traditional uplands burning techniques are again gaining traction as a positive land management tool among both experts and farmers. This appears partly related to the increase and severity in some recent years (2010 / '11) of uncontrolled wildfires which led in Ireland to the loss of nearly 30,000 hectares of forest and open land. Management of vegetation is the main objective to this traditional farming practice with the favouring of heather species which need to be managed, over less beneficial species such as molinia, in order to provide the maximum level of nutrition throughout the year. Burning also helps to maximise habitats, promotes greater bio-diversity in the uplands and minimises 'fuel'. Controlled burning is permitted by law between September 01 and Feb 28th each year (see: Department of Agriculture's Codes of Practice for Prescribed Burning / www.agriculture.gov.ie). A number of groups are talking about or running special courses on controlled burning from perspectives like environmental, scientific, farm management, logistical and legal with the farming community as the primary target. There appears however to be an information 'gap' at present. A simple centralised database and/or learning resource would be a valuable information and networking tool as part of a broader 'library of practical information' on all aspects of uplands management, research, case studies and good practices both at home and abroad to help decision making on the ground.

10. Trail Development

Standards in relation to trail / route development, maintenance and management. There was often vigorous debate on the relationship groups have with advisory and support bodies like the National Trails Office. There was also some criticism of the 'lack of promotion and visibility' of the National Looped Walks programme by Fáilte Ireland. It is clear there is some degree of confusion among groups in relation to current guidelines on trail development, inspection and maintenance. There was criticism by some groups of the engineering and materials used on some new trails around the island. Signage was often mentioned as being inconsistent and confusing to the visitor ... this was raised repeatedly in relation to erecting appropriate signage advising / educating dog owners who wish to take their pets on to the hills. There is undoubtedly a number of groups who have built up significant experience on designing and building sustainable trails. These skills are a valuable 'resource' to the upland areas. Every practical effort needs to be made to ensure they can inform and support the ongoing trails network development across the island. An illustration of best practice can be seen in the Mourne Heritage Trust where their chief ranger will embed himself with a contractor for the duration of the contract to ensure that all standards were fully complied with. The same level of local knowledge is being acquired for example in the MacGillycuddy Reeks where a recently completed programme trained up eight local farmers / landowners on path maintenance. These innovative and often cost effective local solutions need to be replicated elsewhere.

11. Research

Climate change presents an opportunity for longitudinal research in upland areas. A possible approach suggested would be to assess whether observed climate changes (e.g. temperature rises, changes in precipitation patterns) and impacts (e.g. peat erosion) have had an effect on the local communities to date (economic and social). An assessment of how each group is currently interacting with these pressures would be a helpful next step. This information could then provide a useful baseline against which future climate risk could be assessed, management and options identified. An academic champion(s) would be required to design, oversee and validate the whole process. Examination of this as a cross border academic institutions lead project of scale is encouraged.

12. Building Partnerships

There is little experience within groups of participating in or managing inter-territorial / transnational projects. From a number of perspectives including PEACE 4 (NI / Board Counties), EU Life, RDP Transnational / Inter-Territorial there are considerable opportunities for 'new partnerships' to emerge to the benefit of all in upland communities. From a research and innovation perspective eventually there may be some opportunities, along with academic and international partner, to examine the EU H2020 programme and other such initiatives on environment, indigenous job creation in upland areas and traditional farming. From acquiring new skills, making new professional contacts, delivering new relevant programming on the ground and enhancing a group's overall self esteem participation in such initiatives shouldn't be underestimated.

13. Media and Communications

Island wide awareness of upland areas, as a collective community and landscape, is at a very low level. There was some disquiet at the perceived inability of the national media to cover upland related stories. The popular belief was that when the media covers the uplands it tends to be cliché ridden features like severe weather related, mountain rescue, bog bodies, plight and severity of upland hill sheep farming, summer wild fires or long distance recreational trails. Are these the only 'stories' the public would be interested in? An opportunity exists to craft an alternative set of stories for reporters, correspondents, relevant bloggers, producers and news editors. Professionalise and increased coverage of new real stories and imagery from the uplands. This will be a sign of a slowly emerging attitudinal shift in society. It would be helpful to examine creating an island wide Upland Awards Scheme to acknowledge and celebrate 'excellence' in all aspects of upland life today. The PR dividend (internal and external) from such a scheme with a suitable headline sponsor could be substantial. By example of what can be achieved look no further than the Tidy Towns movement over the last two decades.

14. Route Expansion

From a recreational user perspective there are obvious opportunities through greater 'route linkage and synergy' e.g. Dublin Mountain Partnership / Wicklow Uplands Council; Ring of Gullion and the Mourne Heritage Trust.

15. Climate Change

A slowly increasing awareness at broad community / inter-community level of the impact of key issues in particular the proposed mass forestation over the coming decades and the importance of planning for the impact of climate change. The argument can be made post-Paris Climate Summit of late 2015 (COP21) that a reduced carbon economy will likely have far reaching impacts on upland communities for example the cost of the fuel to run the family cars and the role the upland bogs as carbon sinks helping the island economy off set carbon emissions and increased erosion of upland landscapes due to increased rainfall. In the region of 20% of groups were actively planning for climate change in practical ways.

16. Outreach & Engagement

There are some examples of excellent educational material designed and distributed by groups. Little speaks as effectively to local school children as the Slieve Bloom Story Telling Festival, a stand out example of actively engaging with hundreds of local children through five local national schools. The Knockmealdown Active group have produced an impressive graphic novel illuminating local history and heritage (its currently in its third print run). It would be valuable if each group examined how it engages with upcoming generations. This task could be supported through better sharing of information, good practice initiatives and case studies among groups across the island. The active participation by transition year student (post primary / year 4) was positively commented upon by a number of upland groups.

“Why is there only one community owned wind farm in the whole of the Irish uplands?”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



“The retention of the uplands is a low public priorities in a post austerity Ireland.”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



THREATS

1. Sustainability

Virtually no group is financially sustainable into the medium term without public support and funding. Regular funding uncertainty was highlighted as a critical issue by the majority of groups.

2. Key Relationships

The relationship between a number of groups and their local authority often appeared to be strained.

3. Lack of Strategic Planning

The threat today to the upland communities is an example of a serious structural problem attempting to resolve itself without a 'plan'. No dedicated / coordinated public money is flowing into upland areas, in either jurisdiction, to support the delivery of an integrated medium to long term development strategy.

4. Demographic Trends

Trends include higher number of single occupant households linked to increasing age profile and rural poverty issues; with agriculture (especially hill sheep) declining and off farm jobs on the increase farm income is now becoming a minor contributor to the majority of upland households; increase in the number of women contributing to upland household income and; the migration of the younger, educated and mobile generations from the upland communities. In themselves these are worrying and unhealthy trends which are largely common across the European Union.

5. Generational Engagement

Need to get more capable people onto group management committees plus get more people actively participating on the ground in delivering events and rolling programmes. The difficulty of bringing young people (under 30's) into the upland community development melting pot was often flagged as an insurmountable problem. The mean age of those who participated in this

Study was between 50-55yrs (oldest 80yrs+ / youngest mid 20's). However the Slieve Felim Group in Tipperary are bucking the trend by actively targeting and recruiting 20's/30's year old's. It has been a successful strategy. The next chair of the Group will be in his mid- 20's. He has 'shadowed' the current chair for the last year. The composition (background /skills/experience/generation and gender) of groups across the island needs to be regularly refreshed. This is not always the case from the evidence of this Study.

6. Bureaucracy

There are some unhelpful guidelines and conditions being imposed on groups at the behest of funding programmes that often appear counter-intuitive and are viewed by some groups as an obstacle to progress.

7. Survival Strategy

There appears to be an emerging informal 'strategy for survival' common to virtually all upland areas. In simple terms it can be defined as – those remaining in farming are farming larger areas; off farm jobs (sometimes multiple per household and especially women) are now the rule and; those remaining in farming are farming closer to the main road ignoring difficult to reach upland areas because it takes 'too long to get to the less accessible upland areas' in an increasing time starved world. According to many groups the loss of REPS support payments has certainly exasperated the situation (currently GLAS / GLAS + programmes). The move down to the 'main road' means there are fewer lights on at night in upland areas allied to the gravitation of services and the conducting of commerce to the towns ... even tourism often cited as the 'saviour' of peripheral upland areas leaves a marginal financial legacy (and jobs) in these communities owing to the clustering of accommodation, tourist services and entertainment in the lowland towns and main villages. Anecdotally the social loss is often dramatic take for example the 42km

stretch of the Bluestacks Way, Donegal where there are only sixteen farming homesteads remaining today adjacent to the route where 'one hamlet' would have had that number in the 1960's. This paradigm will likely not change. Likewise farming culture, traditions and practice are on the decline ... there appears to be no radical 'solutions' on the horizon only 'more of the same' according to many groups. Pressure to retain rural national schools, post office, pubs and keep community health clinics open leads some consultees to argue that the very fabric of rural upland society is being critically undermined. One group described themselves as being 'on the endangered species list'. What would the overall economic, social and cultural 'cost' to the island be of a 1% reduction (from an estimated 2% today) in uplands population over the coming twenty years? Has this 'loss' and impact been countenanced by central governments many groups are asking?

8. Broadband

Patchy, restricting business. The 'broadband apartheid' as it was described in one group session between rural and urban Ireland remains a significant structural obstacle restricting progress. Today mobile phone and internet reception in virtually all upland areas is unpredictable.

9. Local Politics

Tensions emerged in relation to communicating effectively with agencies / public bodies and in particular local authorities. It is likely inevitable when two different organisational cultures 'meet' (community/voluntary .V. professional multi disciplinary local government) there will often be friction, misunderstandings and conflicting agendas. The upland groups are no different to thousands of other groupings across the island who often feel their voice is not being heard or even worse they are in some way being victimised. The challenge for all groups is to constantly work on 'building personal relationships' with key decision makers in their region. This will take skill, time and patience especially from the chairperson who's main responsibility is to deal with the external world on behalf of the group. The more 'successful' groups consulted tended to iron out these tensions at an early stage.

10. Fear of Form Filling

There is a perception in many groups of limited advice / guidance especially in relation to accessing public financial supports. Groups largely survive from funding application to funding application which obviously inhibits any medium to long term planning. For voluntary groups it has been argued the limited funds available (staff, administration, special programming, training, marketing etc) are often 'bureaucratic heavy' and insensitive. Three observations can be made in this regard emerging from the consultations a) the more applications submitted the more skilled the group becomes and the greater likelihood of future success and b) many groups appear to have a nervous reaction to form filling and find the whole prospect of completing an application daunting and c) the new LEADER/RDP Programme is set to commence in late 2016 and run until 2020 its core objectives are to "promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas". If groups across the island have not engaged with the programme they should do so immediately at local level.

11. Work Life Balance

People resident in upland areas appear to be increasingly time poor because of commuting stresses to work in larger towns ... this in turn often reduces the time they can contribute towards voluntary community activity/ interaction.

12. Visibility & Awareness

Hill walking / cross country walking attracted nearly 1.2m participating overseas visitors in 2014 with the nearest other category being cycling at 286k (i.e. activities participated in while visiting / RoI figures) – among the domestic market walking was again the top category with 22% participating while on holiday. Many groups ask where is the economic dividend, where are the jobs for upland communities from this near spiritual need for the modern world to access wilderness areas?



“I don't see a complete abandonment of upland agriculture ... this is not an inevitable slide downwards”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

“No landscape is natural, it has been managed and the way I manage it is my legacy to future generations who will live in this place.”

Consultee / IUF Study, 2015



Lower Lake in Glendalough - Bruno Jensen

1 CREATE AN IRISH UPLANDS COMMUNITY NETWORK

BACKGROUND

There is a demonstrable need reflected in this Study for a professionally managed and suitably resourced network of upland communities across the island of Ireland. The IUF immediately have an important role to play as an honest broker in facilitating potential groups coming together to examine the 'whats and hows'. An agreed terms of reference for the network will be an important first step. The 'how' may be a little more challenging as it involves expenditure, resources, dedicated skills and a concrete prioritised work programme. The sequencing of this task could roll out as follows:- a) the IUF examines with its partners how it could facilitate and provide secretarial support to such an embryonic grouping of 25+ upland destinations and b) engage subsequently with the likes of Irish Rural Link (IRL) to see how they could support and facilitate the practical management of the initial network going forward. IRL is a national network formed in 1991 of organisations and individuals campaigning for sustainable rural development in Ireland and Europe. They importantly provides a structure through which rural groups and individuals, representing disadvantaged rural communities like the uplands, can articulate their common needs and priorities, share their experiences and present their case to policy-makers at local, national and European level. They are a non-profit organisation and the only group represented at the national social partnership talks solely representing rural communities interests. Initial conversations with the CEO of the organisation suggest they would be interested in adding an 'Uplands Community Network' to the likes of the Wetlands Forum and Rural Transport, they manage both networks.

Immediate Actions

Full discussion at the IUF 2016 Conference (May 26-27th Beaufort, Co Kerry) with the assembled representatives of upland community groups on how best to create a network including its composition, structure, resourcing and work programme. There is a clear mandate given to the IUF through the consultation process for such action. (Note: there are no immediate financial implications to this early stage of scoping work.)

Time line

Hold an initial meeting with the network and key strategic partners by the end of 2016.

Driver

Initially the IUF in tandem with local upland groups.

2 PRODUCE A PLAN

Background

To give the new network momentum and purpose will require, among other things, the creation of a fully integrated work plan with short term quick wins, a 5yr action plan (up to the end of 2021 comprising clear targets) coupled with a broader and more ambitious twenty year vision for the uplands. The plan needs to be fully aligned to all existing related public strategies, objectives and funding streams on both sides of the border. There is ample advice available from partners on designing a brief, going through procurement and managing any contracts. It would be advisable to examine the terms of reference for similarly complex all island projects in the past. The network should oversee the creation of the plan as 'action learning' whereby they are adequately engaged with the information gathering / consultation process and the evolution of the end document. The more the network understands the process

undertaken and the actions proposed the more the network will likely 'own' the end plan.

Immediate Actions

Early engagement by the IUF with partners to flag the project and secure a commitment to fund it; once formed the network can refine the brief and operationally begin to take the project forward.

Time line

Plan completed by mid 2017 (6 months delivery time from commission to delivery).

Drivers

Executive of the newly formed network.

3 EARLY ACTIONS

Background

This is the space in which community and voluntary sector groups often fails to perform. The IUF, with the emerging network, have a few key advantages over many 'rural proposals' trying to catch the ear of government and Europe. These include:- a new capable all island bottom up entity; documented plight from the uplands and its environmental / social impacts (e.g Pobal data); science and climate change; the tourism / recreational potential of the uplands; and the potential loss of traditional uplands farming. At an individual group level it would be advisable to formally request an annual meeting with their local authority CEO and the senior management team to review the recent past and preview work and issues over the coming year. As a bridge building tool aim to get the Council to nominate a 'point person' to act as the one stop person for all things relating to the uplands.

Immediate Actions

Deliver a high profile launch(s) for the Study. The IUF should then formally request to make a presentation to Comhairle na Tuatha and the Dail's Select Committee on Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht who have a Sub-committee on Environment, Community and Local Government which appears to be the best 'fit' for the issues and challenges facing upland communities. This should be matched by a similar request to the Assembly in Stormont to present to all parties in the Long Gallery. Two other presentations are worth considering a) a regular meeting of the County and City Management Association (CCMA) which is the "representative voice" of the local government management network and b) a regular meeting of the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) which is the representative body of Local Development Companies (LDCs) in Ireland. Finally individual key government departmental meetings should be scheduled in both jurisdictions which could form part of the consultation phase for the development of the plan. Be open to additional opportunities that will undoubtedly present themselves as momentum and publicity grows. Evaluate all

meeting and formally record commitments / follow-up actions. (Note: ensure all the communications / presentational material employed is both consistent, professional and all associated with the meetings are rehearsed and on message.)

Time line

Initial actions by the end of 2016 and on-going thereafter.

Drivers

IUF in association with the new Network.

4 CO-ORDINATE FUNDING

Background

Lack of funding is the biggest single impediment holding back upland community groups. Austerity over recent years has deeply affected the operational capacity of many. As previously demonstrated the lack of a single unified voice speaking on behalf of the upland communities makes it politically 'easy' to ignore calls for increased resources regardless of how justified the case may be. This reality is hopefully about to change with an emerging uplands network. One of its first tasks should be a formal engagement with all key funding programmes into upland areas to examine if resources could be more effectively managed and with greater impact on the ground. This process has already begun with the goodwill shown by Pobal to engage with upland communities at this strategic level. The case making recommendation above illustrates the inter-connectedness and cross cutting nature of many funding mechanisms.

Immediate Actions

Prioritise and have a formal meeting over time with all relevant funders into upland communities. (Note: Many of the funders will be likely consulted as part of the information gathering phase of the plan.)

Time line

All relevant funders met by early 2017 in both jurisdictions.

Drivers

IUF in association with the new network supported by any professional advisors.



5 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF UPLAND GROUPS

Background

A recurring theme of the Study are issues surrounding improving the capacity of the upland groups across the island. Each group had a 'shopping list' of tailored training or mentoring programming they identified as a 'need'. More joined up thinking is required from all parties to ensure appropriate programmes are delivered to those with the greatest need. Millions of euro are about to be spent in rural Ireland through the next Rural Development Programme (RDP) on multiple aspects of training, upskilling and capacity support. The challenge is to ensure that those with the responsibility to spend it (obviously within the strict EU guidelines imposed) are fully familiar with and positively disposed to the needs of upland groups. There is considerable scope in harnessing the skills and experience of a number of the 'leaders' of recognised upland communities to pay site visits to more aspiring groups and mentor them on pre-arranged topics. The symbolic impact alone of this 'exchange' programme would speak highly of the potential of the network as a genuine bottom-up self supporting 'collective'. This quick win should be progressed immediately.

Immediate Actions

Identify the training needs of groups and secure an early win by coordinating appropriate courses e.g. Controlled Burning & Wildfire Management, Mediation & Conflict Resolution, Event Management and Trail Development and Repair (see Q.10 Survey). A tailored pilot mentoring programme should be examined. Engage at a national level with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government who oversee the RDP/LEADER Programme; the plan will dig more deeply into the operational and financial needs of groups and present appropriate solutions.

Time line

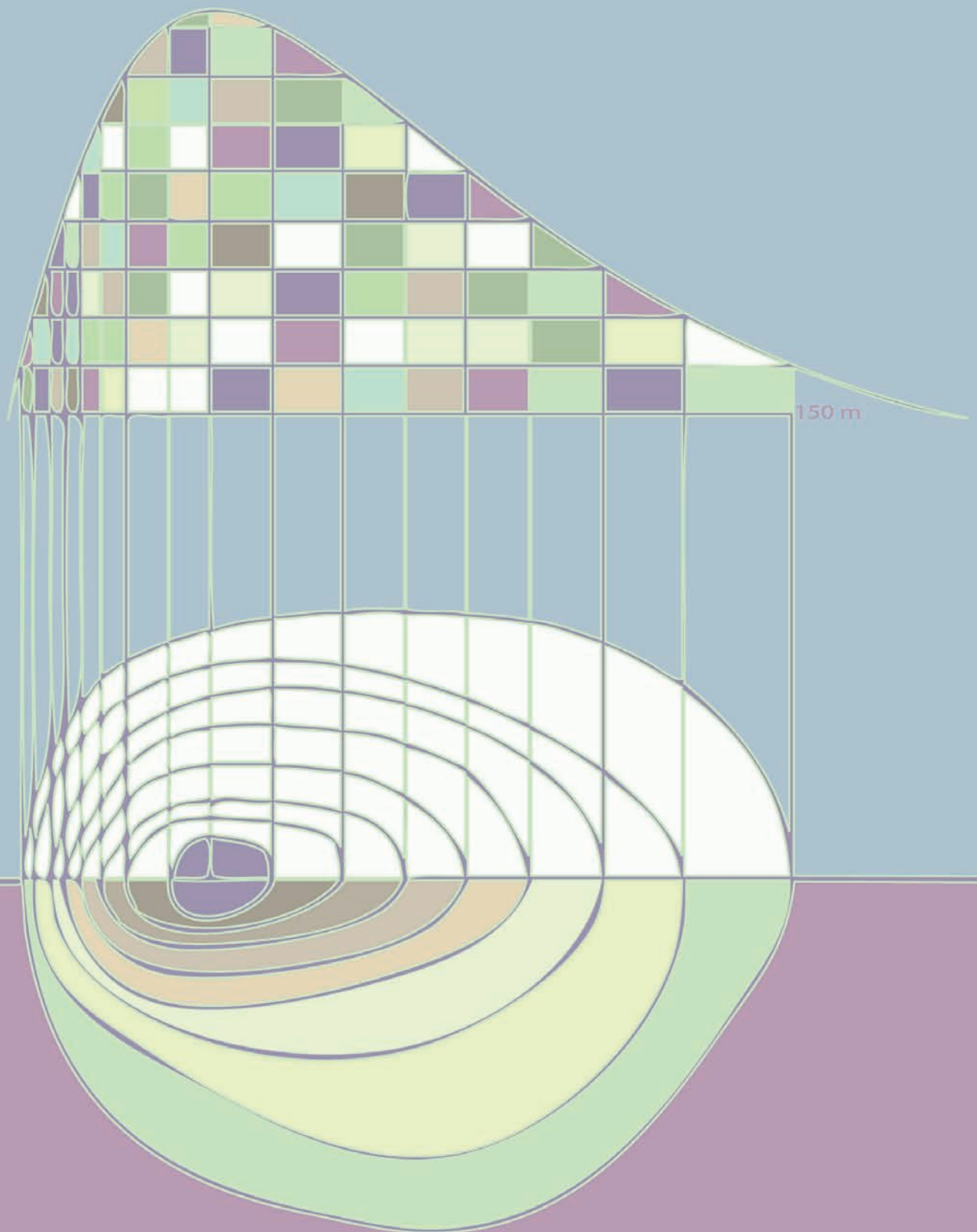
Departmental engagement by Q4/2016 ensuring to co-ordinate with the consultation phase of the plan; Aim to deliver and evaluate the first pilot mentoring programme (X 3 mentors) by the end of 2016.

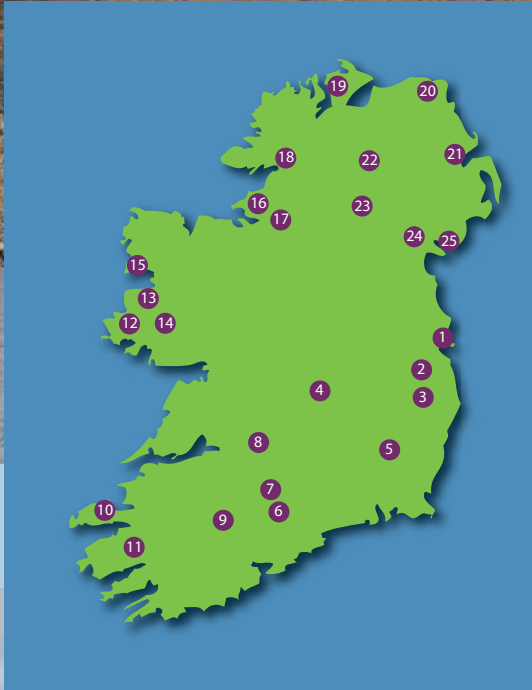
Driver

IUF in association with the new network supported by professional advisors.



APPENDICES





PROFILE LISTING

- 1 Howth Special Area Amenity Order (SAAO) Management Committee
- 2 Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP)
- 3 Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC)
- 4 Slieve Bloom Rural Development Society
- 5 Blackstairs Farming Group
- 6 Munster Vales (including Knockmealdown Active)
- 7 Galtees Steering Group
- 8 Slieve Felim Upland Forum
- 9 Ballyhoura Development, Co Limerick
- 10 Mount Brandon Nature Reserve (Dexter Cattle Research Project)
- 11 MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Forum
- 12 Leenane Development Association – Walking Sub Group
- 13 Murrisk Development Association
- 14 Binn Shléibhe Access Scheme, Co Galway
- 15 The Old Irish Goat Society
- 16 Ballintrillick Environmental Group (Incorporating the Glens to Sea, Sligo/Leitrim)
- 17 Boleybrack Red Grouse and Upland Conservation Group, Co Leitrim
- 18 Drimarone Development Group, Bluestacks, Co. Donegal
- 19 Sliabh Sneacht Centre, Innishowen, Co Donegal
- 20 Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust
- 21 Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP)
- 22 Sperrins Outdoor Recreation Forum (SORF)
- 23 Knockatallon Development Company, Sliabh Beagh, Monaghan
- 24 Ring of Gullion, South Armagh
- 25 Mourne Heritage Trust



1 Howth Special Area Amenity Order (SAAO) Management Committee

1 Contact

Helen Lahert, Chair.
Email: helenlahert53@gmail.com

“Enjoying and Protecting Howth's
Unique Landscape”

2 Territory

Howth SAAO has a total of 547 hectares. It comprises heathland, woods, cliffs and wooded residential areas on the south east side of the peninsula in north County Dublin. Highest elevation 171m. The area comprises 8k residents. Given the site's proximity to Dublin city and relatively good public transport access, visitors numbers especially at peak times are substantial.

3 Founded 1999 (SAAO Designation)

4 Genesis

The need for a multiple stakeholder management committee arose from the SAAO ministerial order which set out a framework for the conservation and protection of the area in accordance with the Planning Act and Planning Regulations.

5 Vision

To ensure that the natural environment and development activity work hand-in-hand to conserve the Howth Peninsula & Ireland's Eye (28 hectares) for future generations.

6 Key Objectives

To produce and maintain to the highest operational and professional standards the demands of the conservation, protection and development management in the Howth SAAO area; To facilitate appropriate educational, recreational and community interests and activities, consistent with the conservation imperative; Deliver on a small number of flagship projects and; All to be achieved through practical partnership and co-operation.

7 Structure

The voluntary SAAO Management Committee formally includes community groups, landowners, local elected representatives, trade and tourism interests, and wildlife and ecology specialists. There are two Working Groups:- Conservation and Recreation and Planning, Communications and Tourism. The Committee are working to deliver an Operational Plan 2015-2020.

8 Operational Management

Fingal County Council has provided invaluable support through a number of part time experienced officers who work with the Committee on ecology, landscape, conservation management, engineering, planning, built heritage as well as providing significant administration.

9 Annual Core Budget

30k (excluding in kind Council supports)

10 Sample Programming

Maintenance and repair of paths including four new looped walks totally 42km; Provision of directional signage in conjunction with the Local Authority; Grassland and heatherland management including the removal of Rhododendron; Undertaking research project including a Plant Survey ... the SAAO has worked with the likes of the Botanic Gardens; Protection of wildlife including the Red Squirrel Conservation Project; Formal input into the planning process and; Protection of historic sites including one national monument.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Overcoming the lack of clarity in public sector decision making e.g. keeping elected councillors informed and on side at all times; The lack of communications internally between groups e.g. the Local Authority could be planning a year in advance but the community groups may only be planning days in advance; Adequate resources to plan effectively into the medium term; There has been an enormous increase in visitor numbers over the last few years, consequently the committee is doing ongoing visitor counts in a number of key places.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Wildfire education and management; The provision of adequate insurance never seems to go away; There is no adequate Visitor Management Plan in place and; Expenditure from visitors doesn't tend to stretch beyond the promenade;

13 Lessons Learned

Factor in the the addition time it takes to 'get things done' by a voluntary committee; Be aware of the heightened standards now expected of any voluntary group from public bodies, potential funders and the general public; Work consistently hard to keep the broad community informed and; The SAAO is adjacent to a large urban fringe which presents its own unique set of challenges e.g. as more SAAO quality projects come on stream visitor numbers are destined to grow. Growth in numbers has infrastructural provision implications such as car parking. More visitors will likely bring more anti-social behaviour such as wildfires and general damage Future planning is essential and; The challenge of balancing the needs of the business community to increased tourist footfall and the resultant erosion and ecological damage.

14 Work Profile

Special projects management 40%; Pathway maintenance and management 30%; Administration and Fund Raising 20%; Communications 10%.

2 Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP)

1 Contact

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Mobile +353 86 8067773
www.dublinmountains.ie

“It is vital for us to have a good clear relationship with the recreational users of the Dublin Mountains.”

2 Territory

The DMP area stretches from Shankill in the east to Tallaght in the west embracing the Hell Fire / Massy's Estate spur. The Mountains are located immediately to the east and south of the M50 bypass of Dublin city. Other recreation points include Cruagh Wood, Tibbradden Wood, Kilmashogue, Ticknock, Carrickgollogan and Barnaslingan. The highest peak is Fairy Castle, 536m. (Note: The upland areas around Three Rock and Two Rock mountains are a nesting ground for Red Grouse and valuable for their heath habitats and exposed rocky outcrops.)

3 Founded 2008

4 Genesis

The Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) was established with the ultimate aim of improving the recreational experience for users of the Dublin Mountains, whilst recognising the objectives and constraints of the various landowners. The partner organisations involved are Coillte the main landowner, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Dublin City Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Dublin Mountains Initiative, an umbrella group representing the recreation users of the Dublin Mountains.

5 Vision

A High Quality Recreation Amenity and Experience; Breathing Space for the People of Dublin and Responsible Visitors and; Sustainable Economic Activity for those who Own or Manage the Land.

6 Key Objectives

Easy access to the countryside within the Dublin area, including limited access by public transport; An increased recreational value of the forest recreation resource owned; Opportunities to promote heath and well-being; Improving the tourism appeal of the capital; Managing interactions between recreation users; Providing services to land managers in managing recreational use and misuse and; Discouraging unwelcome forms of recreation for the hills.

7 Structure

The DMP is a formally constituted partnership with Memoandum & Articles revised every three years. There is a Memorandum of Understanding between the strategic partners mentioned above. There are 8 approx meetings per year with on average 10-12 attending each formal meeting.

8 Operational Management

Coillte have responsibility for all the administration, managing the partnership and day to day responsibility for the Mountains. There is a full time manager with part time administrative support. The DMP are implementing a Dublin Mountains Strategic Plan for Development of Outdoor Recreation (2007-2017) . There is also the delivery of an Annual Work Programme which feeds into the above strategy. Coillte management and computer systems are employed by the DMP. The DMP issues an Annual Report each year. (Note: The DMP can avail of the Coillte in-house ecologist and environmental team.)

9 Annual Core Budget

250k per annum (Note: The larger proportion of the core funding comes from the local authorities with Coillte providing the staff / administration.)

10 Sample Programming

Volunteer Rangers – currently 22 signed up, trained and active ... active over weekends when they act as the 'public face' of the DMP; Conservation & Track Repair - DMP works closely with Mountain Meitheal who are a voluntary group who undertake conservation and restoration projects on forest and mountain tracks and trails; Building & Promoting Permanent Orientating Courses – to date Coillte have worked in partnership with local authorities and clubs to open up five courses in the Dublin Mountains; Supporting Partners – e.g. Larch Hill (Scouting Ireland National Centre) in the Dublin Mountains; Charity Fund Raising – the DMP is now in its second year helping, with its volunteers, to raise funds for Barretstown Castle with 120k raised to date; Dublin Mountain Way (opened 2010) is a 40km flagship waymarked route delivered by the DMP, it was 30 years in the planning and took 18 months to build; Communications - management of the www.dublinmountain.ie web site and the active Facebook page www.facebook.com/dmpvr which has all the up to date information on free walks and events.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Learning to navigate through the understandable conflicts in an urban fringe between the preferences and needs of recreational users, responsible land management and economic objectives; Encroachment of built development is threatening some foot-hills areas; Integrated Management - there is limited integrated and co-ordinated management of outdoor recreation activity in the Dublin Mountains; Access Issues – DMP have begun a process of signing all the public lands with trail head signs and threshold signs. Entrances will be marked with "walkers welcome" or "mountain access route" signs. Mountain biking is permitted at Ticknock the official mountain bike trail site in the Dublin Mountains but is not permitted on any other DMP lands or any Coillte forests in the DMP area.; Listening to the community e.g local residents near St Ann's Graveyard, Glenasmole had issues with the original Dublin Mountain Way route which was quickly re-routed to the satisfaction of all.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Path erosion – securing the funding for remedial work for human induced erosion; Car Park Management - limited vehicle capacities, site security issues and extended periods of closure exert pressures at key times of the year; Unauthorised access on a non-permissive basis e.g. scramblers, mountain bikers and anti-social wild camping ... the DMP has no enforcement authority and rely on the Garda Sí ochána; Communication & Education – there remains limited public information on outdoor recreational opportunities, landscape and heritage in the Dublin Mountains; When resources allow the DMP needs a Volunteer Manager similar to a post popular in the UK.

13 Lessons Learned

We are a different scenario to any other uplands area in Ireland as we are only 5mins from the M50 motorway; The need to keep the public access lands open, sensitively managed and promoted; Practical Response to Climate Change - the uplands receive a lot of water so when building trails we ensure they can withstand this, so what might look oversized on a good day, is there to take the pressure of the extreme rainfall on a bad day; Understanding & Responding to the Visitors Needs - it's important for upland areas to gear themselves to respond to evolving contemporary market trends and

expectations; Long Distance Route Development – there exists an opportunity for an east –west route linking to the current north-south Wicklow Way in more concrete ways; Understanding the internal dynamics of a partnership with multiple agenda takes time and patience; Understanding how best to engage with recreational users again takes time and patience; The overall DMP management model works very well and certainly could be transferable to other destinations faced with a similar set of challenges to the Dublin Mountains.

14 Work Profile

Administration & Engagement 60%; Site Supervision 15%; Rangers 15%; Future Planning 5%; Public Communications Material 5%.



3 Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC)

1 Contact

Cara Heraty, Main Street, Roundwood, Co. Wicklow
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Email: cdoyle@wicklowuplands.ie
www.wicklowuplands.ie

2 Territory

From Tallaght in the north to Tinahely in the south comprising the Wicklow Mountains National Park flanked by the N81 to the west and the N11 to the east. The highest peak is Lugnaquilla at 925 metres.

3 Founded 1996

4 Genesis

Born out of need for 'conflict management' and an opportunity to develop a 'common local agenda'. Modelled on Mourne Heritage Trust.

5 Vision

To support the sustainable use of the Wicklow uplands through consensus and partnership with those who live, work and recreate there.

6 Key Objectives

To encourage rural employment; To support the retention of the rural population; To promote the Wicklow Uplands by collectively promoting towns and villages which act as a 'gateways' to the area; To continue to develop opportunities for sustainable recreation and; To encourage best management of our natural heritage, habitats and landscapes.

7 Structure & Staff

Company limited by guarantee with charitable status from inception. Broadly representative bottom-up Board that works in close partnership with state agencies / bodies but are not represented on the Board of Directors. The Board steps down annually and is elected each year at the AGM. Officers including the Chair step down after being in office for three years. The delivery of the overall work programme is supported by four panels who meet twice a year to discuss upcoming issues and recommend potential solutions - Farming and Landowning; Economic and Tourism; Environment and Recreation and; Community. At its core there is a full time Co-ordinator, a part time Administrator and a part time Communications Officer. There is a full time Pure, Project Manager, with this work administered through the WUC plus an RRS worker on St Kevins Way. Throughout any year there will be other project work undertaken on contract as required. This has fallen from four full time staff in 2006.

“We needed to bring everyone along on the journey”

8 Operational Management

The Board are encouraged to engage in and support the work of the Uplands Council particularly through sub-committees and policy development. The Board are set clear targets as is the co-ordinator with good governance always to the forefront of decision making. Meetings occur about ten per annum with a 75% attendance. An active programme of constant 'outreach' to all the communities is an important part of the annual work programme as experience teaches that 'face-to-face meetings are better than fancy newsletters'. In excess of twenty five local volunteers could be mobilised at short notice.

9 Annual Core Budget

100k approx per annum - Heritage Council 65k; Local Benefactor 30k on rolling three year commitment; Local Authority 4k and Own funds through membership 2k. Note: 1) the Pure project has an annual 100k rolling budget 2) attempts at fund raising have not yielded much return in the past and has not warranted the effort have put in. There is the feeling that WUC attempts to generate its own income may take away from the efforts of the likes of Mountain Rescue. Experience has taught the WUC that its better to target key individuals / agencies or suitable programmes for project funding.

10 Sample Programming

The WUC has a long and successful history of working with communities and private landowners to open up access for walking on privately owned land particularly in areas of high amenity e.g. the Tinahely Railway Walk (first section) and the Glenmalure Zig Zag access to Lugnaquilla. It has also demonstrated a clear commitment to working hand in glove with the farming community, which has led to a number of significant environmental and landscape management initiatives. Among the standout programming themes are:- Outdoor Recreation working closely with the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee, including the Outdoor Recreation Officer on trails like the Wicklow Way & St Kevin's Way; The PURE project is a regional partnership initiative which aims to combat illegal dumping and fly tipping in the Wicklow/ Dublin region working with over seventy communities. Since its establishment (2006) there have been over 7,650 reports of illegal dumping resulting in over 7,350 collections and the removal of approximately 2,400 tonnes of rubbish from the landscape; the WUC plays a leading role in vegetation management of the uplands which has become critical as traditional hill sheep farming continues to decline.

This is aligned to the rise in the extent and frequency of unregulated burning resulting in part from restrictive permissible burning dates which has had a detrimental effect on the biodiversity and agricultural values of the Wicklow upland. Uncontrolled wildfires continue to threaten the conservation status of the Natura 2000 sites including designated SACs and SPAs and pose a serious threat to forestry and private upland properties and public safety; the WUC will soon have an Inventory of Biodiversity for the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands which in the future will enable them to look at how this may be affected by climate change; Village Interpretative Panels – over the last decade the WUC has worked with a number of local communities to develop a network of interpretative panels (X 13 to date) which promote and raise awareness of the natural and built heritage in local towns and villages. This initiative further galvanises the relationship and trust built up between the WUC and its partner communities on the ground; a Rural Security Initiative demonstrating a practical co-operation approach to addressing rural crime in upland areas and; Winter & Severe Weather – working closely with the local authority providing a daily co-ordinated report during any severe weather events. The WUC acts as a one point of contact where local community representatives report issues and requests which are then fed on to central county planning. Severe flooding events are on the increase in the catchment area.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

The traditional east-west county divide and the need to keep 'all connected'; the constant challenge to match valuable project with finite funding and; Overcoming 'funding gaps' between the end of one funding cycle and the start of the next.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Unmanaged car parking in the uplands; Linking villages effectively to existing long distance routes; uncontrolled dogs in upland areas remains highly contentious; the constant need to reach out to effectively speak to the local community; land abandonment, de-population and the changing profile of uplands farming and; the threat to habitat and endangered species.

13 Lessons Learned

A 'partnership approach' is the more efficient approach to ensure long term sustainability; Consensus building is slow, challenging and requires a high level of skill; the inputs of the community are vital in the whole process for they articulate the 'inherited knowledge' going back generations.

14 Work Profile

Vegetation Management Initiatives 20%; Communications 20%; Administration and Fund Raising 20%; Community Engagement 15%; Access/ Route Development 15%; Policy Development 10%.



4 Slieve Bloom Rural Development Society

1 Contact

Frank Bergin, Chair, Slieve Bloom Rural Development Co-operative Society,
Community Centre, Kinnity, Co Offaly.
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www.slievebloom.ie

“In the Heart of Ireland”

2 Territory

Slieve Bloom mountain straddles counties Laois and Offaly. The area is approximately 15 miles long X 5 miles wide stretching from near Roscrea in the south to Rosenallis in the north and from Mountrath in the east to Kinnity in the west. Arderin mountain is the highest point in the range with an elevation of 527 metres. In the region of 95% of the upland area is owned by Coillte. The Slieve Bloom, along with the Massif Central in France, are reputed to be the oldest mountains in Europe. (Note: Slieve Bloom currently claims over 1000+ part time / full time sheep farmers.)

3 Founded 1975 (Note: It remains the only uplands community group who took part in this Study that is constituted as a co-operative society on the friendly societies register.)

4 Genesis

The original motivation was to secure for Slieve Bloom 'disadvantaged status' (Mountain Sheep Grazing) for the farming community. After this status was secured non-farming partners came on board especially rural tourism, environmental and conservation interests and subtly changed the focus of the group. The Slieve Bloom Nature Reserve was established in 1985 (2300 hectares) managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It aims to ensure the conservation of the delicate mountain blanket bog ecosystem in line with a number of different environmental designations. Over time, and with public funding support, sustainable tourism (especially walking and storytelling festivals) came to the fore.

5 Vision

To protect, research, develop and promote the Slieve Bloom landscape, environment and communities for the benefit of this and future generations.

6 Key Objectives

Maintain and develop existing and new walking trails comprising 2 X long distance waymarked walks + 16 Looped Walks; To promote Slieve Bloom as a green clean environment open to all to visit; To further develop and enhance existing festivals; To maintain the bottom up community ethos that has underpinned and sustained the group for the last two decades.

7 Structure

In the region of 15 active members attend management committee meetings. Representatives are informally drawn from the Community, Recreation (Walking Club & Storytelling Group), Farming, and Accommodation. Meetings are called 'when they are required' and may amount to 12 meetings in a year as they often double up as festival coordination meetings for the two large annual events.

8 Operational Management

The group had a full time rural tourism officer and office supports but funding ceased in the mid/late 1990's. The operation has been exclusively voluntary since that time and estimates they contribute between 300/400 hours per year. This figure is largely made up of Walk Leaders 'time' guiding regular walks throughout the year.

9 Annual Core Budget

4.5k pa (Note: Funding is all self generating e.g. Slieve Bloom Walking Club Membership (120+ member) and the Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival returns an annual profit.)

10 Sample Programming

The successful three day Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival is now in its 12th year. In the region of 200 visitors (many repeat) will attend. In addition to nighttime events professional storytellers go into 23 local schools engaging each year with hundreds of local children mostly on mythology, heritage and the environment themes; The Slieve Bloom Walking Festival is now in its 21st year and attracts over 150 walks per annum. All guides are local, trained and voluntary; Rip Off Map for visitors to the area distributed extensively through public spaces, retail outlets and tourism accommodation and services; Supporting Dr John Feehan, author of many books on Irish landscapes including "The Landscape of The Slieve Bloom" roll out highly popular 3/5 days courses during the summer months on local geology, ecology and landscape. (Note: There is an Eco Walking Festival scheduled for 2016.)

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

How can a small voluntary group practically address de- population in their community; Damage being caused by mountain bikes and scramblers; The absence of public funding restricts the outputs of the group; As a voluntary group how to avoid trying to do too much as it tends to put unnecessary pressure on a small number of committed people.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

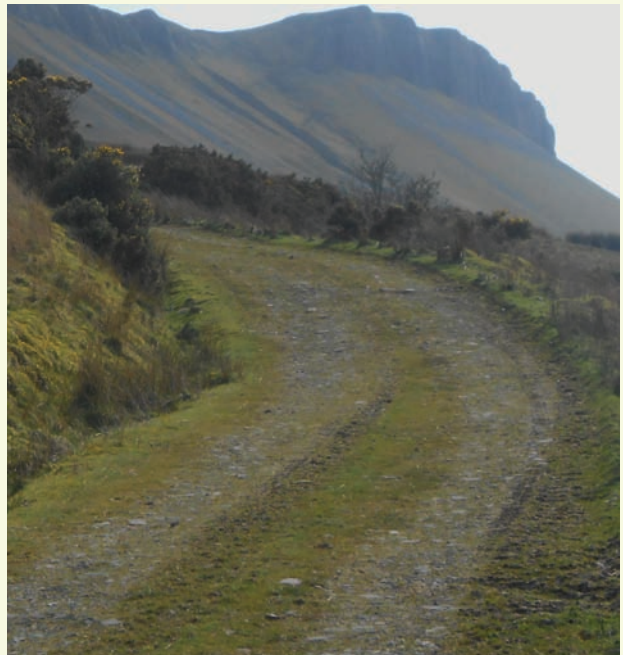
Rural crime is unsettling upland communities in Slieve Bloom; The group would like to get involved more in responding to planning issues; Bring in new blood into the group (constant recruitment); Need for on-going training especially in bespoke themes like adding value to our festivals and good international practice in designing and delivering group guided experiences in the uplands.

13 Lessons Learned

The groups approach to any events / activity is rooted in the concept of permissive access and cooperation with all locals; The walking, watching and talking type events formula is popular with today's visitors to the uplands; Always check with landowners in relation to permissive access, never take things for granted; Develop a good working relationship with Coillte personnel on the ground in order to be able to 'get things done'; Over the space of the last three decades there has been a dramatic drift from the uplands down to the main road; the Slieve Bloom Walking Club has been a positive development in the area as it draws walkers from as far afield as Limerick and Cork; Only call meetings when there is something to discuss.

14 Work Profile

Walks (Festival, Eco & General Walks) 75%;
Storytelling Festival 15%; Administration & Communications 10%.



5 Blackstairs Farming Group

1 Contact

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Blackstairs Farming Group,
Scorteen, Borris, Co. Carlow.
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2 Territory

Blackstairs Mountains straddling the Carlow / Wexford mountains running in a north east / south west direction for about 22km. Mount Leinster at 796m is the highest mountain in the range with six peaks in excess of 520m. The principle centres of population defining the area are Bunclody to the east, Rathnure, Kiltealy, St Mullin's in the south, Borris and Ballymurphy to the west and Myshall in the north. There are 2,637ha of commonage in Carlow and 2,626ha in Wexford. According to the Department of Agriculture Commonage Container list there are forty four commonages on the Blackstairs covering a total area of 4,901ha with 235 active shareholders (i.e. farmers who declared commonage as part of their SPS application in 2014). The Blackstairs Mountains SAC (dry & wet heath) is the only example of moorland above 300m in Counties Wexford and Carlow.

3 Founded June 2014.

4 Genesis

The Group grew out of a need for locally focused projects designed to respond to specific local environmental challenges with locally driven solutions. Addressing depopulation, conservation and economic sustainability lie at the heart of the project. By example between 1991 / 2011 there was a 50% reduction in the number of local farmers under 40yrs engaged in farming. The current Rural Development Programme (RDP) has earmarked €70 million funding for community led farming for conservation pilot schemes. This realization that EU habitat designations in The Blackstairs & Barrow Valley could be used to access EU funds for their sustainable management in partnership with the local community was a primary motivation. The Group sees any future special project farm payments as a compliment to GLAS not a substitution for GLAS. (Note: GLAS is the new agri-environment scheme, part of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.)

5 Vision

To work towards the sustainable management and development of The Blackstairs Uplands & Hinterlands using a community based partnership approach.

“There is no college in the country that will teach you this ... the skills of the hill sheep farmer need to be recognised, valued and sustained.”

6 Key Objectives

To secure a locally led farming for conservation project in The Blackstairs Uplands & Hinterlands; To put in place supports for farmers to better manage existing recreational use of farmed land; To engage with stakeholders at both community and statutory level and; To advocate for the farmer and the farming community's essential role in maintaining and enhancing the built, natural and cultural heritage of The Blackstairs Uplands & Hinterlands.

7 Structure

Membership is open to anyone who has an interest in assisting the new Group to achieve its aims. Currently the Group Committee has 24 members. The Group has no formal community or recreational representatives, however committee members are active in farming / landowning, tourism, heritage and ecology and the group is in contact with statutory bodies and agencies. There are local elected council representatives (X 2/cross party). The Group has no formal community or recreational representatives however farming / landowning, tourism, heritage and ecology plus statutory bodies / agencies sit on the Group. There are local elected council representatives (X 3 / cross party) sitting on the Group helping cement relations with the local authorities (X 2 / Carlow & Wexford). There is a broad geographical representation on the Group. The Group is formally constituted but not registered and are examining acquiring charitable status. Any public meetings held attract in excess of 100 people. Meetings tend to be held in Rathanna Community Hall in the middle of the territory.

8 Operational Management

The Group is voluntary. There was however a short 5 month window for a paid part time co-ordinator enabling the development of the locally led agri-environment project in 2015 through a grant from the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP). The Group has access to over 50 active local volunteers.

9 Annual Core Budget

40k for specific projects (18 month period- 2014/2015).

10 Sample Work Programme 2015 / 2016

Environment & Agriculture (Note: Currently under review given recent expansion in number of committee members.): Develop a Vegetation Management Plan for the Blackstairs Uplands to form the basis for a Blackstairs locally-led Agri-Environment Scheme seeking Department of Agriculture funding under the RDP 2014- 2020; Liaise with the Irish Uplands Forum (IUF), Sligo IT, European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP), National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Teagasc, Department of Agriculture and other relevant bodies. Case Making & Trail Development: Lobby for a Comhairle na Tuaithe Mountain Access Scheme Pilot; Liaise with landowners and the National Trails Office regarding the feasibility of putting in place 'access trails' on existing access routes to the Blackstairs Uplands. Awareness Raising / Capacity Building: Arrange Study trips for The Blackstairs Farming Group members to view innovative and best practice projects of interest, e.g. The Burren Farming for Conservation Project in Co Clare, Wicklow Uplands Council in Roundwood, Co Wicklow and The Reeks Partnership, The McGillicuddy Reeks, Co Kerry; Attend relevant events held by stakeholders; Participate in the Blackstairs and Barrow Valley Tourism Network; Liaise with statutory and Local Authority bodies, in particular Carlow, Wexford and Kilkenny County Councils; Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford Leader Companies, Tourism Agencies and Local Enterprise Offices. Communications: Develop a Blackstairs Biodiversity website.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Government schemes for upland areas are not working; Internal communications are often hampered by some farmers not having email / access to email and in some cases not having mobile phones; The farm representative bodies tend to under-represent the upland sheep farmers; practically addressing de-population on the ground; Securing adequate / consistent funding to enable the Group firmly bed-down.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Need to examine further the new concept of 'communal flocks' with a possible pilot scheme being a target; Cash flow – without reserves as a new Group we have difficulty meeting bank charges; We currently have no formal 'address'; We could benefit from advice / guidance in dealing with the whole LEADER / RDP programme; Farm practices and the subsequent changes in habitats; The "conservation/ restoration of upland peat" has been identified as a specific theme which offers a particular opportunity for upland communities but how best can a small, voluntary and currently under resourced group capitalise on this?

13 Lessons Learned

You need a 20 year plan if you want to deal with a mountain; Follow a community led, bottom-up model which you trust; You need balanced, committed people in a Group; Be open to take advice; The decline in traditional hill sheep farming and management practices threaten the important wildlife of these areas; Input from farmers is essential so that there is an understanding of local farming practices and the challenges faced by the local hill farming community.

14 Work Profile

Community engagement 40%; Special project delivery 40%; Communications 10%; Administration and fund raising 5%; Stakeholder management 5%.



6 Munster Vales (including Knockmealdown Active)

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2 Territory

Munster Vales is a tourism destination development project in its infancy incorporating the Comeragh, Knockmealdown, Galtee and the Ballyhoura mountain ranges. The purpose of the Munster Vales concept is to promote the geographical area as a brand, linking the counties of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork and Limerick through the notion of the Munster Vales, which are geographically contiguous, and are divided by a set of four county boundaries. The Munster Vales area sits equidistance between four of Ireland's six cities: Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Kilkenny. Gateway towns include Cashel, Tipperary, Carrick on Suir, Dungarvan, Fermoy, Mitchelstown, Buttevant and Charleville. The highest peak is Galtymore at 917m and the area is approx 270k hectares.

3 Founded 2014 (Note: A Concept Development & Feasibility Study – Munster Peaks (Working Title) was commissioned by an all party Munster Peaks Committee in 2013 and delivered in March 2014). Knockmealdown Active emerged from a Recreational Strategy for the Knockmealdown Mountains, February 2011.

4 Genesis

Tipperary Council Council are a key driver of this inter-county project. The motivation behind it is strongly linked to outdoor recreation development, tourism and rural economic revival. The Munster Vales is one of two tourism flagship project for Tipperary with the other being Lough Derg. Importantly it has been preceded by significant upland community initiatives such as the Knockmealdown, Ballyhoura and the Galtees which have developed their own personality, priorities and capacity. (Note: Knockmealdown Active is a multi-community initiative to promote trade and tourism in the communities at the foothills of the Knockmealdown Mountains these communities include Ballyporeen, Clogheen, Goatenbridge, Ardfinnan and Newcastle.)

“The Vales is working across four distinct areas ... the challenge is great.”



5 Vision

Munster Vales: The development of a new tourism destination that will develop and promote all the unique offerings from the Golden Vale to the Munster Peaks.
Knockmealdown Active: To create and promote a well-resourced and unique destination focused on walking, angling, culture and heritage delivered through community based enterprises, festivals and events, and underpinned by an educational and sustainable ethos.

6 Key Objectives

Munster Peaks Priority Actions 2015 / 2016 include:-
Develop a destination marketing plan and at least 4 propositions for the 2016 market; Identify infrastructural projects across the region for further development; Develop a communications strategy and begin immediately to engage with local communities; Complete a training needs analysis and prepare a training programme for tourism providers and; Focus on familiarisation events with the Board and the tourism providers. (Note: The KMD Active objectives tend to be locally focused / project orientated in the realms of enhancing access, delivering events and greater promotional activity.)

7 Structure

The Boards representation are made up of community (5), recreational users (2), farmers / landowners (4), tourism interests (4), heritage (1), wildlife & ecology (2), local authority (3) and local development companies (2). The Board is formally constituted as a limited company and completed training in good governance. They are currently meeting about seven times per year. The KMD Active group is driven by community (Note: KMD Active expressed the opinion that possible sectoral interests could dominate the 'agenda' of a future all island upland communities body that they as a group may not necessarily agree with e.g. recreational access to upland areas.)

8 Operational Management & Staff

Munster Vales: The Tipperary County Councils Tourism Development Officers has a part time coordination input plus a recently appointed RsS marketing post (19.5hrs per week). Waterford County Councils Tourism Officer inputs into the Board as does Tipperary County Council Director of Community and Economic Development (current Chairperson) and a Director from Cork County Council. South Tipperary Development Company and Ballyhoura Development have seats on the Board which staff members fulfil. The voluntary effort on the Board is limited to the five community reps. The Council supplies all the in kind supports required at this stage of development. Knockmealdown Active: Knockmealdown Active demonstrate how effective a community group can be employing Facebook especially in relation to events, fund raising and securing volunteers with nothing but voluntary input.

9 Annual Core Budget

Munster Vales 22k (Note: Munster Vales – Local Authorities, LEO's, RDP and FI through Ireland's Ancient East / Knockmealdown Active – RDP plus own funds in the region of 10k pa) / Knockmealdown Active have had a special programming (non-core) budget of approximately 50k.

10 Sample Programming

Munster Vales: The focus to date has been on administration, research, structure and training. Knockmealdown Active: The design and management of www.knockmealdownactive.com; The on-going development and promotion of St Declan's Way (96km) an ancient pilgrimage route linking the 5th century monastery of St. Declan in Ardmore, County Waterford with Cashel in County Tipperary; Supporting Knockmealdown Walking Club which was officially formed in early 2012; The ongoing development and promotion of an impressive list of local linear and looped walks; Innovative fund raising – e.g. supporting the production of two graphic novels used to promote local history / heritage. Both titles created by local artist Eamon Cowan have sold out generating much needed funds and significant positive publicity; The design and delivery of regular events spread across all five communities.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

A significant challenge is to ensure the Munster Vales adds real value to the existing upland focused initiatives; Lack of dedicated full time staff means development has been limited; Available resources often depends on the individual priorities and available staff and resources within each local authority area; The expected commitment from a voluntary committee from a external world that expects / demands professionalism; The enormous pressure placed on the shoulders of a relatively small number of volunteers; Some national agencies tend to be insensitive and 'tell local groups what to do';

12 Some Unresolved Issues

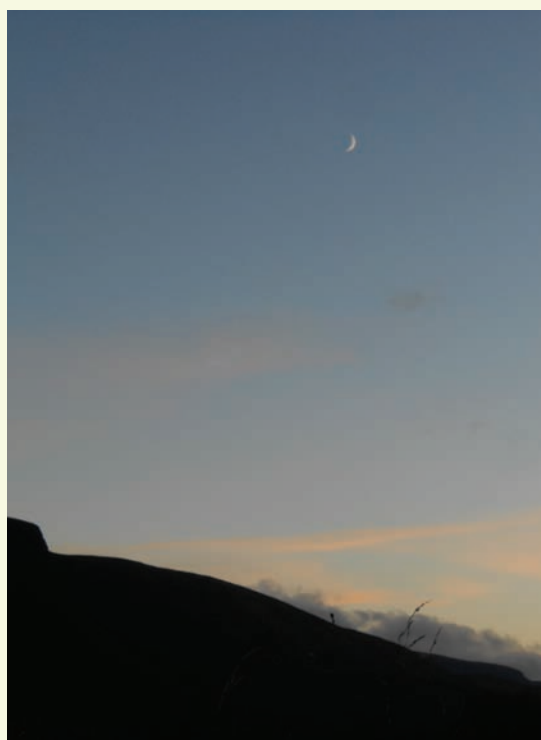
For both Munster Vales and the KMD Active the unpredictability of funding is demotivating and makes it difficult to plan beyond the year ahead; The loss of a significant percentage of the rural tourism accommodation base; Ensuring continuous buy-in from local communities especially across county borders; The Munster Vales is strongly aligning itself to Ireland's Ancient East as a promotional spring board but how easily will the geography and offering fit with the roll out of the IAE overall strategy?; How best to develop and manage a brand that all stakeholders feel comfortable with.

13 Lessons Learned

No agency gets into trouble for saying 'no' but may well for saying 'yes'; You can't have enough local voluntary support with family and friends often the best approach to bringing in new blood; Muintir na Tire played an important role in practically helping Knockmealdown Active in its early days; It pays to be creative and brave when it comes to local fund raising.

14 Work Profile

Munster Vales:- Administration & fund raising 90%; Communications 5%; Community Engagement 5% / Knockmealdown Active:- Route development 30%; Communications 30%; Administration & fund raising 20%; Case making 20%.



7 Galtees Steering Group

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2 Territory

The Galtee Mountains are Ireland's highest inland range and have attracted hill walkers for many decades. The mountains are designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area due to priority habitats like blanket bog, heath and the presence of rare plants on the steep rocky slopes. Its main peaks are Knockeenatoung (601m), Galtybeg (799m) and Galtymore (919m) with the latter being Ireland's only inland Monroe (peak over 3000ft). There are five corrie lakes on the range, accessible only by foot. Coillte land help define the landscape. The Heritage Towns of Tipperary, Cashel and Cahir are attractive portals into the mountains. Other larger communities include Mitchelstown and Kilfinane. The main villages comprise Burncourt, Ballylooby, Kilbehenny, Anglesboro, Galbally, Ballylanders, Lisvarrinane, Glen of Aherlow, and Bansha spread across the three counties of Tipperary, Cork and Limerick. (Note: Tipperary has more than 50 designated trails.)

3 Founded 2011 (Note: The Steering Group was formed following the production of the Galtee Mountains Integrated Management & Tourism Development Strategy co-funded by South Tipperary Development Company and Ballyhoura Development Company.)

4 Genesis

The Galtees Steering Group grew out of the identified need for a more joined up approach to managing a significant uplands area on the island. The multiplicity of stakeholders across three counties made this work challenging. The process employed in developing the Plan (point 3 above) facilitated the informal group coming together, supported by the two LEADER companies. A second phase of the Plan involved helped to recruit members, focus on mission and immediate tasks and finally raise the capacity of the initial group. The recruitment of an experienced external chair was an important part of the foundation laying phase of the project.

5 Vision

The coordination of recreational activity, local food and joined-up service provision to develop an attractive and sustainable 'inland mountain' destination.

"Given the sensitive uplands and riverine environments there is a need for integrated management among all the various players ... full permission of landowners and community collaboration"

6 Key Objectives

The main objective of the SG is to increase visitor numbers to the Galtee region and generate economic benefits to the businesses and communities within the Galtee Catchment area. (Note: The Galtees Steering Group concept is to build collegiality in strategic planning, integrated product & service development, branding/ logo, marketing and promotion – all to enhance what is there and fill gaps where they are identified.)

7 Structure

The SG comprise approximately 12 key people from business, community, rural development agencies, county councils, and statutory agencies such as FI and Coillte (up to 20 are invited to attend). The group see themselves as a community based / bottom up organisation. There are no formal landowner / farming representatives. The SG meet monthly under a current external chair, with quarterly reporting to the 'Galtees Destination' community at large. They are currently informal in structure but aspire to becoming formally constituted in order to be able to access future RDP funding. (Note: At each SG meeting one community is invited to update the meeting about what has happened in their community from a tourism / recreational perspective.)

8 Operational Management & Staff

South Tipperary Development Company host and support the SG with the RRO providing much of the administrative / coordination support required. There are no paid staff, all other effort is voluntary.

9 Annual Core Budget

25k per annum direct / indirect approximately. Expenditure is all "project led" (Note: The only annual budget the group has is what it gets in membership from the communities. The group has however successfully accessed funding for the projects listed .)

10 Sample Programming: The delivery of the Galtee Mountains Path Study (2015) aimed to assess the condition of the mountain paths and provide details on what remedial / repair works are needed to prevent and combat further erosion; The delivery of a multi media Story Map www.exploretipperary.ie ; Worked locally with Knockmealdown Active on delivering a popular tear off map (X 2) of the region; Support for the Galtee Walking Club (est. 2003) currently with over 150 members who deliver events such as the Winter Walking Festival in the

Glen of Aherlow (annually end January); Fund raising – there is a nominal 100e charge per village per year going up to 300e for the larger towns; Training of tour guides particularly in the areas of local heritage; Planning for a new competition to identify the most “Visitor Friendly” community in the Galtees.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

There is growing local concern about the visual and ecological impact of increased recreational visitor numbers on the Galtees with path erosion becoming evident on the ridge-lines and in soft boggy saddles; Parochialism is a major obstacle; Lack of dedicated staff; Funding lags.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

The 'fight for survival' of upland communities; Human flight from the uplands; Pressure on uplands farming with farms needing to get bigger and bigger just to survive; The impact of mass forestry in upland areas over coming decades, have we considered properly and had a proper debate on all the likely implications; Increased numbers of walking clubs / individual walkers, walking festivals and charity fund raising events, especially around Galtymore, call out for an enhanced and integrated visitor management planning; Maintaining the involvement of communities.

13 Lessons Learned

Due to effective communication at local level there are no major outstanding access issues; That the Galtee's possess a far reaching and mature festivals programme that can be further developed; The identification that the Galtees are an excellent area for uplands peat and peat restoration research projects; Need good leadership from the outset; Have a clear terms of reference and keep refreshing these at regular intervals; The certification of national trails needs to be done properly in order to maintain overall standards; Need to dovetail with all other sister bodies such as Ballyhoura, Knockmealdowns, Glen of Aherlow, and the Munster Vales.

14 Work Profile

Administration and fund raising 40%;
Communications 30%; Community engagement 20%;
Route development 10%.



8 Slieve Felim Upland Forum

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Tipperary Mid-West. A mountain range located between the perimeter towns of Nenagh, Thurlas, Tipperary Town and east of Limerick. The regions highest peak is Slieve Ciamalta / Keeper Hill at 694m. In total the area comprises approximately 50k hectare. A network of small towns and villages provide personality to Slieve Felim these include Newport, Toor, Killoscully, Silvermines, Templederry, Borrisoleigh, Milestone, Hollyford, Cappawhite, Kilcommon, Curreeny, Rearcross and Murroe. The area has lush fertile plains and significant sitka afforestation ascending to raised and blanket bog and plateaus of deep moorland, mosses, sedges and rushes. The area has small lakes and Shandangan fens know as kettle-holes. The mountain range is rich in biodiversity including endangered species such as the Red Grouse. It is part designated SPA under the Birds Directive associated with the Hen Harrier with more than half the area afforested. There is National Heritage Area (NHA) X 4 in the greater area. Overall there is about 22k ha of designated SPA, SAC and NHA combined. (Note: From a recreational perspective the Slieve Felim Way is a long-distance trail (43km) from Murroe to Silvermines. It is a National Waymarked Trail designated by the National Trails Office.)

3 Founded

Slieve Felim Grouse & Conservation Project, 2011 / Tipperary Midwest Upland Forum, 2012. (Note: Other area based enabling bodies include: Slieve Felim Country Holidays; Mother Mountain Craft Group; Slieve Felim Vol. Comm. Dev. Co-op Soc. Ltd; Community Food Centre Rearcross; ARC (Aghnameadle Resource Centre), work in progress; Slieve Felim Conservation Trust: Failte Slieve Felim and; Beara Breifne Way (BBW) /Ormond Way/ O'Sullivan Beara Association.)

4 Genesis

The original formation of the group was motivated by a need to create employment given the demise of uplands agriculture, with a view to promoting and managing tourism / recreation interests while simultaneously helping to conserve and manage endangered species such as the Red Grouse and Hen Harrier. An umbrella community group immediately followed, the Tipperary Midwest Upland Forum. Other affiliated groups emerged shortly thereafter namely the Failte Slieve Felim (tourism) and Mother Mountain Craft Group. The model is 'Voluntary & Community in Action'. (Note: The ambitious and innovative North Tipperary Food Works initiative was supported through this community partnership see: www.facebook.com/NorthTipperaryFoodWorks.)

“We are doing not complaining.”

5 Vision

To facilitate, deliver and promote, sustain and improve the social, community, cultural and economic lives for all citizens through a partnership approach.

6 Key Objectives

Environmental: The introduction of a set of practical measures to reverse the decline in quality habitats based on good management practice to alter the catastrophic loss of biodiversity including upland and moorland birds. Economic: Promote, cultivate and promote economic growth to enhance the quality of life for all in the area. Community: To make Slieve Felim a place where all families, individuals and visitors can prosper.

7 Structure

A core management group of eight are drawn informally from the community, tourism, heritage and wildlife sectors. The overall management system works effectively, if under resourced. Strong leadership helps unify activity and avoids conflict or duplication. All the groups listed are formally constituted but not limited by guarantee or possess charitable status.

8 Operational Management

This is a purely voluntary community orientated enterprise. The Forum meets about 8 times per year. The other groups are more seasonal. They have done some training but identify governance, technical writing for funding applications, lobbying, recruiting and managing volunteers and fund raising as areas in which they need immediate support. The group have access of up to fifty volunteers. (Note: Equipment Training has been proposed e.g. chainsaws for the eradication and control of invasive species. This will likely have a resonance with other groups.)

9 Annual Core Budget

16k per annum.

10 Sample Programming

Local Guide Training – 24 local guides went through an accredited tour guide training programme at a cost of 37.5k but after the course there was no follow-up, commercial impact or support on the ground from those who undertook the initiative; The North Tipperary Food Works – Rearcross is a partnership with the County Enterprise Board delivering a facility with food production incubation units of approx. 250sq.m (4 units) offering a “plug n play” solution for local micro food start-up businesses; Beara Breifne / O'Sullivan Beara Route – continue to actively support the development of the 510km route from Bantry to Leitrim with nearly one

quarter of the route in Tipperary; Academic Research Support – to continue to support a variety of research projects that have / are being undertaken in the area by the likes of TCD, DCU and LIT; Special Work Programmes – delivery of the individual work programmes under themes such as Grouse & Conservation / Tourism / Crafts & Food. Currently, members are facilitating and supporting feasibility studies, research and testing of Biochar, Conservation of Peatland for/and carbon retention purposes; Preparing a Plan for the new locally led Environmental Scheme under SPA Hen Harrier Designation with the Stakeholders; Developing a Strategy to deliver an effective Heather Management model; Undertaking Evaluation of progress and how best to be a more proactive and redefining and helping to deliver the social, economic and environmentally sustainable initiatives around our biodiversity.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

We can easily get 25/30 people out on a mountain for a heather cut but Slieve Felim was and remains a 'fragmented place' where we have had Teagasc areas X 3 / FAS areas X 3 / LEADER X 3 / Councils X 3; We sometimes feel we are stuck in a black hole between Cashel and Lough Derg; We feel we have encountered prejudice and exclusion but we don't regard ourselves as victims; We have no funds, dedicated administration or coordination.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

We have identified that we can create up to 40 sustainable local jobs but continue to encounter unhelpful bureaucracy (Note: A number of these were in the realm of conservation and practically managing the uplands.);

How best to develop a positive on-going working relationship with local authorities and development agencies built on mutual respect and common achievable objectives; Managing debt – Food Works when there is little continuous public support, a poor community fund raising base and substantial establishment costs which were borrowed.

13 Lessons Learned

No jobs, no future for upland areas; We have deliberately targeted 20/30yrs old as a source of renewal for our groups with 30% of all those involved today under 40 years of age. The next Chair of the Forum is 25 years old and has been shadowing the current Chair for the last year in a Vice Chair role. Younger people need to be individually asked to become involved; We have learned much from visiting other related projects throughout Ireland e.g. the Kerry Craft Trail model; We are held back by politics and history; The community has become increasingly aware of the value of its carbon sink; People are proud overall to live in the mountains but it is at a significant financial sacrifice; You either accept the 'curse of the darkness' or you become pro-active in managing your own future as we are attempting to do; It is not possible to raise a family today with a reasonable quality of life on a 100 acre upland farm where profits will be between 16-20k per annum at best including single farm payments.

14 Work Profile

Special Projects 55%; Community Engagement 25%; Administration and Fund raising 15%; Communications and Events 5%.



9 Ballyhoura Development, Co Limerick

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2 Territory

The Ballyhoura area comprises, north east Cork and south and east Limerick, totaling 89 Electoral Divisions and a population of 78,191 (2011). The area covers 1,879 sq. km with much of the area occupied by a flat limestone plain. There are 13 towns and 41 smaller settlements within the area. The area is bordered on the east by the Galty Mountains reaching their highest point at Galtymore, the highest inland mountain in Ireland. The Ballyhoura Mountains cut across the area on the border of Cork and Limerick with Seefin Mountain (528m) being the highest peak.

3 Founded Ballyhoura Fáilte Society (1986)
Ballyhoura Development Ltd (1989).

4 Genesis

Communities within the Ballyhoura area first came together as a reaction to the continued decline of services and employment opportunities in the area. Ballyhoura Fáilte Society was set up as a tourism co-op closely followed by Ballyhoura Development which focused on infrastructure and services thus giving the community an integrated local development strategy. In 1992 Ballyhoura Development Ltd was incorporated (not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee with charitable status) and contracted with the Department of Agriculture to administer the LEADER I Programme. The company has designed and developed Local Development Strategies for each of the LEADER Programmes in the intervening years. (Note: Since 2007 the Ballyhoura LEADER / RDP programme has allocated over 15m euro to 549 local initiatives.)

5 Vision

An area with empowered inclusive communities and a diversified economy. Mission: To work in partnership to develop empowered and inclusive communities that inspire and embrace new opportunities, drive positive sustainable social and economic change and reduce inequalities thereby making the Ballyhoura area an attractive location in which to live, do business and visit.

“Local people taking control of their future with suitable supports and importantly resources will work but without consistently high standards all the work and promise will likely fail.”

6 Key Objectives

Ballyhoura Development have three main objectives:
1) Diversification and development of the economy,
2) Development of communities, equality and inclusion and 3) Protection and enhancement of the environment. The objectives are delivered through: Administration of Supports: Ballyhoura Development offers a number of supports around the areas of community development, enterprise, tourism, employment and the environment through successfully delivering multiple programmes and initiatives. Responding to Local Need & Opportunity: It plays different but complementary roles including researcher, identifier of needs/gaps/solutions, animator, deliverer, supporter, facilitator, encourager, implementer, project leader and project partner. Practical Partnership and Collaboration: Ballyhoura has developed strong networks, partnerships and collaborative projects at national and European levels to lever additional resources into the area. Retaining a Local Focus: The community remains at the centre of all activity.

7 Structure

Ballyhoura Development is structured as a Local Development Company partnership of Local Government, Social Partners, Community and Voluntary and Statutory agencies. The company operates a holistic delivery model, supported by outreach facilities, cross-functional staff and complementary core programmes. The service delivery model ensures engagement with individuals, communities and businesses on many levels, in connection with a range of initiatives, projects and programmes. The high levels of quality engagement improves awareness and participation in a range of local activities and increases participation in local decision making and in the process of designing, developing and implementing the local development strategy. The Board oversees the overall corporate governance and management of the Company and is supported by 7 issue specific Sub-Committees. The Sub-Committees facilitate and support in-depth discussions on issues and by presenting researched recommendations to the Board, There are 3 Corporate Sub-Committees: Audit, Finance & Governance (AFG); Human Resources; & Strategy. The 4 sectoral Sub-Committees cover: Economic (Enterprise & Employment); Community; Environment and Agriculture and Tourism.

8 Operational Management

The overall organisation employs in excess of 40 people working out of multiple offices across the area, many restored community spaces. The main office is in Kilfinane. As a sample the company administers the Rural Development Programme (LEADER), the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), The Rural Social Scheme (RSS), The Tús Scheme, Local Training Initiative's (LTI's), Job Club, and the Towards Occupation Programme. (Note: Ballyhoura Development Ltd adopted the Governance Code: a Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in 2013.)

9 Annual Core Budget

The SICAP and LEADER programmes are core multi annual programmes delivered though the company averaging, 2 million euro. (Note: There are a range of other programmes that are annual or shorter programmes.)

10 Sample Programming

Communications: 3/4 Newsletters go out per annum to Heritage, Tourism and Community interests; Heritage & Genealogy: The Ireland's Reaching Out project and the roll out of the Historic Graveyard Survey project linking communities in the area to the diaspora overseas; Recreation: The delivery of the Ballyhoura Active Series (12 road races for people of all abilities that takes place across the area from April to October each year); Route Development: 1,500 km of new walking trails developed over the last two decades, 2 X signposted driving routes; Mountain Biking: Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Park attracted 70k visitors in 2014 – Ireland's first purpose built mountain bike trail network comprising 92km with 3 x loops. Facilities include car park, toilet & showers and bike wash; Education & Outreach: The Ballyhoura Outdoor Classrooms, Discover Primary Science Centres (32 in RoI); Signage Programme: The roll out of an extensive signage programme for towns/villages together with heritage and cultural attractions in the area; Research: facilitated and supported environmental and socio-economic research projects with the likes of UL, LIT and UCC. Environment: Team Limerick Clean-up (TLC) Day – 15-20 communities in the area come together on Good Friday to clean-up their environments. All equipment is supplied free of charge and there is a central pick up of rubbish at the end of the day.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Path maintenance, erosion from off road vehicles, illegal dumping and antisocial behaviour, consistent marketing budgets and approaches; Walking festivals numbers are declining both in Ballyhoura and elsewhere; Constant prioritisation between the likes of managing gorse / heather and protecting the habitat of endangered species like the hen harrier; Ensuring participation from and regular communication with all communities;

Overcoming underinvestment in infrastructure, public transport and broadband.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

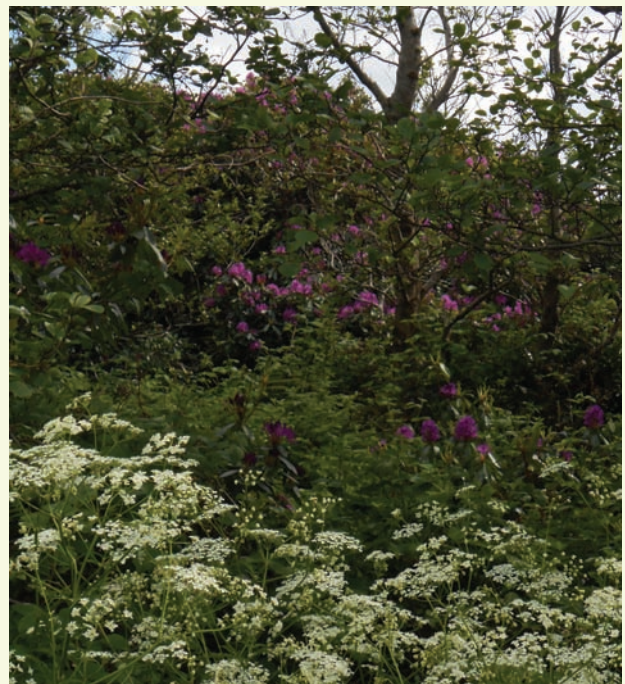
Consistency and longevity in systems of electronic counters to gather usage data; The length of time it takes for nature to reclaim a damaged trail and managing / maintaining routes accordingly “ ... we have witnessed significant human erosion problems over the last three years.”; the National Looped Walks are not being adequately promoted given the initial investment by the state; the threat of the National Trails Office pulling back from annual route inspections to be replaced by own inspection ... this raises question on training, supervision and quality control.

13 Lessons Learned

The importance of strong capacitated local groups with their own integrated social and economic plans to help drive economic, social and environment improvements; Importance of building and managing stakeholder engagement and collaboration; Building and maintaining personal relationships with all your necessary public partners; Festival and events play a significant role in promoting the brand externally and demonstrating the economic benefits of rural tourism / recreation to the community; The value of having two active and committed walking clubs in the area who work well together; There are always training needs.

14 Work Profile

Community Engagement, Animation, Capacity Building and Training, 50%; Supporting Community Led Local Development across economic development, community and the environment 50%.



10 Mountain Brandon Nature Reserve (Dexter Cattle Research Project)

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Mountain Brandon (951.7m). The Mountain Brandon Nature Reserve is a 462 hectare statutory nature reserve located 35km west of Tralee, Co Kerry. The fenced reserve was established in 1986.

3 Founded

The five year Dexter Cattle Research Project was established in 2011. 4 Genesis: The project is a collaboration between the Institute of Technology, Tralee, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and a local Dexter beef cattle farmer.

5 Vision

To understand how 'conservation grazing' (i.e. grazing with traditional breeds of domestic animals for the benefit of biodiversity in semi-natural habitats) impacts on protected upland habitats and; To compare parasite burdens and dung beetles between upland and lowland grazing regimes.

6 Key Objectives

A collaborative research project between a local organic beef farmer, a third level academic institution and the state agency responsible for nature conservation. - Studying the behaviour of free ranging Dexter cattle in a 462 hectare statutory nature reserve and assessing their impact on upland habitats. Developing specific, evidence-based management recommendations for land owners and managers of upland systems. - Studying parasite-cattle interactions in upland and lowland settings.

7 Structure & Staff

A Project team lead by Dr Therese Higgins and Dr Geraldine Twamley-Stein, with a PhD student (Kilian Kelly) and a masters by research student (Noel Dineen). An overall Project Team comprised the three representatives of ITT, two farmers and the NPWS. Seven undergraduate research projects were completed during the lifetime of the project. A total of seventeen volunteers also supported the project.

8 Operational Management

All administration for the project was delivered through ITT.

9 Annual Core Budget

100k pa for five years (Funded through: ITT, Institutes of Technology Ireland, NPWS and Shannon ABC Technology Gateway)

10 Sample Programming

The introduction of a herd of 30 Dexter cattle in 2011 into Mt Brandon Nature Reserve. The herd was grazed between July and October of each subsequent year to 2015; The creation of four 50 x 50 m animal enclosures in the primary habitats of the reserve (wet and dry heath, blanket bog and wet grassland) which serve as ungrazed control plots; The completion of comprehensive vegetation and invertebrate sampling over 4 seasons in order to assess the response of various elements of biodiversity to the grazing treatment. GPS tracking collars were deployed on three animals each year and data from these were used to examine the home range and habitat selection of the cattle and; Supporting research on parasite-cattle interaction. (Note: Ireland / UK have 85% of the 'wet heath' in Europe.)

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

The lack of primary data and related research models to begin with; The coexistence of a 'research area' with recreational walkers as Mount Brandon is on the Dingle Way; Perhaps a five year time frame for the project is just too short. (Note: significantly more research work being conducted on upland cattle grazing in Scotland / England, there is a 'funding deficit' in Ireland.)

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Is there a longer term impact on the uplands of the reintroduction of the cattle? Although baseline data now exists on the grazing pattern / impact of the Dexter's over a five year period on Mount Brandon opportunities exist to broaden the scope of the research possibly examining also other native breeds such as the Kerry's. (Note: Coastal and upland areas remain the most sensitive to climate change.)

13 Lessons Learned

All partners brought not just skills and experience but also financial support (in cash and in-kind) that enabled the research project to happen; the potential for greater linkage between a regional food 'product' such as the Dexter's with the landscape; the physical hardship / difficulties of uplands farming coupled with health and safety risks; the challenges, practicalities and economies of farming using traditional practices and; local government supported employment schemes, although very welcome, could be more effective in addressing the very real needs of the uplands.

14 Work Profile

Dedicated research 60%;
partner engagement 15%;
administration / fund raising 15%;
communications 10%.



11 MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Forum

1 Contact

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“We are not solving all our problems ...
our progress has been steady.”

2 Territory

The MacGillycuddy Reeks occupies about 100km² immediately west of the Killarney National Park in County Kerry. They stretch from the Gap of Dunloe in the east to Glencar in the west. The majority of the land in the MacGillycuddy Reeks area is either privately owned by individuals or held in commonages. Carrauntoohil is the highest peak on the island of Ireland at 1,038m and is the central peak of the Macgillycuddy's Reeks range. People counter readings from 2015 show over 75,000 accessing the Reeks from the three main access points from January to October.

3 Founded 2014

4 Genesis

The new Forum comprises local landowners, community groups and local businesses from the Glencar, Beaufort, Bridia Valley, The Black Valley and the Gap of Dunloe areas, as well as representatives from the DECLG, SKDP-local development company, the local authority Kerry County Council, an elected representative from KCC, Fáilte Ireland, NPWS, recreational users, a representative from the commercial guides who use the Reeks, and an independent chairperson. The Forum is one of two national pilots delivered under the Mountain Access Scheme (MAS). (Note: The aim of the MAS is to formally agree recreational access with landowners on a mountain/mountain range or in selected uplands area to facilitate recreational access. The second pilot is in Mount Gable, Connemara. See: Profile 4.)

5 Vision

The purpose of the Forum is to put in place a long term sustainable management plan for the MacGillycuddy Reeks under a permissive access model that is acceptable to all interested parties.

6 Key Objectives

The delivery of agreed actions within the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Developmental Assessment Report which contains defined and measurable targets, linked to broader conservation, development and land management principles; to offer a positive environment for all participants to air and resolve disputes; to provide recreational visitors to the Reeks with a responsible and memorable visit.

7 Structure

The forum was established by South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) through the INTER-REG Rural Alliance project, Fáilte Ireland and The Department of Environment, Community & Local Government. The Forum has representatives as listed above P.4.

8 Operational Management

The Forum is administratively supported on a part time basis by the Rural Recreation Officer with South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) in Killorglin.

9 Annual Core Budget

The forum was given support initially from DECLG, to carry out a number of actions (purchase people counters, install signage etc.) and have since applied for various streams of funding as they have become available. No annual core budget.

10 Sample Programming

Path Audit, indicative costings and recommended repairs; Path Repair – the delivery of a six month practical training programme for eight local landowners/local people during late 2015, into 2016 (building up local skills / expertise in this area, as recommended in the Path Audit report through REDZ funding); Detailed assessment of paths to planning standards, detailed costings with detailed recommendations on how to carry out the work. Development of the *Friends of the Reeks* initiative to help secure match funding; Enhanced integrated signage initiative; Honesty boxes placed in car parks to support trail repair works currently being carried out. Drafting and presenting policy papers to inform the national debate on upland issues; Engagement with RDP-LEADER, Community Support Funding etc.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Managing and helping overcome 'varied opinions' within the Forum on priorities and how best to move forward; The heavy and unsustainable workload of the RRO; Access to funding to enable the Forum plan into the medium term; the 'lack of appetite' to deal with critical upland issues in a joined up manner.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Continue to positively engage with the very small number of landowners who do not want people accessing their land, and addressing their concerns, the 'dogs issue' continues to present itself on a regular basis; Awaiting the announcement of a State Indemnity Scheme.

13 Lessons Learned

Local problems can be solved locally; Continue to challenge the national priorities which are contributing to the de-population / decline of upland areas ... permissive access is not the big issue now it is government policy towards the uplands; there is a huge amount of goodwill in the community for the Forum; A good working relationship with key officers in the Local Authority, National Parks and Fáilte Ireland is critical; Without an adequate level of support from an experienced day-to-day coordinator on the ground most groups will under perform and fade away.

14 Work Profile

Stakeholder engagement 50%; Policy 20%;
Administration & Fund Raising 20%;
Communications 10%



12 Leenane Development Association – Walking Sub Group

1 Contact

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2 Territory

The centre point of this iconic uplands area is the village of Leenane (pop: 284 /Census 2011) which bleeds out to include Mweelrea (814m) rising from the northern shores of Killary Harbour, Maumturk Mountains (702m), Twelve Bens (729m), the Sheefry Hills (772 m) and the Partry Mountains (645 m). (Note: The Western Way (179km), a National Waymarked Trail, bisects the territory.)

3 Founded

Leenane Development Association (1985) / Leenane Development Association: Walking Sub Group (2012)

4 Genesis

Leenane straddles counties Mayo and Galway and is often described as the 'Gateway to Connemara' with picturesque mountains rising on each side of the 16km long Killary Harbour, Ireland's only fjord. It is noted for its exceptional fishing and notable geology made up of sedimentary, volcanic and metamorphic rocks. The initial motivation for the overall group was to retain the local primary school, redress a declining population, and support local infrastructure and service enhancement. There was a significant capacity for walking but access issues were largely unaddressed. The development of two outdoor adventure centres of scale and capacity have been a major boost to the local economy and social fabric. Various development agencies were keen to support and facilitate progress. The formal addition of the Walking Sub Group and the immediate commissioning of a Feasibility Study (2013) examining outdoor recreation / developing an adventure hub in the area has put a spotlight on opportunities. Hill farming however remains in sharp decline with the migration, especially of the young, from the upland farms choosing lowland town jobs or emigration. (Note: The Leenane National School currently has 17 children and just retains its two teacher status. Not one of the children is from a farm family. The children of those working in the nearby outdoor adventure centres enable the school stay open.)

5 Vision

From a broad community perspective to stem the drift from the area by enhancing the local economy, improving services and facilitating greater community connection. From a recreational perspective it is to 'support sustainable community and tourism participation in countryside recreation ... and to maximise economic returns from these activities.'

“There are more examples of poor uplands management practice than good examples.”

6 Key Objectives

Recreational:- Secure designation as an adventure hub and pilot mountain access scheme; Drive the ambitious recreational work programme through a management group made up of all local stakeholders; Emphasis will be placed on sensitive and continuous local consultation; Design a robust plan and secure the necessary resources to see it implemented. (Note: the four proposed pillars of the strategy are – secure formal mountain access; provide additional outdoor recreational amenities; improve trail infrastructure and deliver a communications strategy.)

7 Structure

The core specialist group comprises farmers (X1); Rural Recreation Officers, Galway & Mayo (X2); Tourism & Recreation (X2). All work is on a voluntary basis, there is no designated administration. The financial and facilitative support of the two local LEADER companies has been significant. The sub group is formally constituted but is not a separate legal entity as of yet. (Note: This work in progress was formally presented to Comhairle Na Tuaithe, the Countryside Council in 2014.)

8 Operational Management

There are no staff. Formal meetings are based on need to meet. Other partners especially the farming / landowning community are met on a regular basis. The following training needs have been identified by the group: Trail Development – Best Practice; Formal Planning Issues & Procedures; Negotiating Skills. The group have (and work hard to maintain) a good working relationship with all public partners. The group have access to 20 experienced volunteers which is most evident at festivals / events.

9 Annual Core Budget

No designated budget – to date the specialist group has worked with the LEADER companies to draw down funding on an initiative by initiative basis.

10 Sample Programming

Communications:- The design and management by the overall group of the impressive village website which should inspire other upland destinations; Festivals: Local themes, well managed and sustainable and include Leenane Mountain Walking Festival (May) now into its 8th year which employs local walking guides, Leenane Autumnal Festival (September) celebrates and showcases crafts, heritage and food, Leenane 5 Mile Run (November) now in its 7th year, Leenane Blackface Sheep Show (June) now in its 45th year and, Leenane Ram Fair (October); Research and Planning: The sub group have commissioned the Leenane Killary Fjord Adventure Hub Feasibility Study (2013) and are now focusing on its implementation.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Presenting our case has taken up huge time for a voluntary group; In a time of scarce resources not all partners may agree with the prioritisation of all key actions; New planning regulations in designated areas are having a significant impact on the financial viability of some farms e.g. renew fencing with associated costs; The lack of dedicated resources to get things done ... we have galvanised the community, assembled a capable team, done a plan but we are stalling due to lack of funds to get substantive things done.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

The two major issues are – mountain access and de-population.

13 Lessons Learned

Keeping the core group small and focused has proved efficient; There is no joined up government policy relating to the Irish uplands; There are 80 local shareholders with only a handful farming, this is similar all over the country; In relation to overgrazing of sheep on upland areas the group have learned from the Owenduff / Nephin designated Natura 2000 site in County Mayo where a programme of de-stocking from the commonage was a significant step in reducing grazing pressure on habitats and was a win win for all parties; Farmers are concerned about the environment and want to 'do it right'; There is a growing problem with invasive species such as Rhododendrons and Wild Rhubarb; Although Leenane is in one of the highest rainfall areas of Ireland there has been no dramatic signs of the effects of climate change (e.g. increased precipitation); Upland sheep farming is a physically tough, time consuming and sometimes dangerous enterprise with marginal financial returns ... without a radical rethink and re prioritisation this traditional form of farming will continue to fade away until we are eventually left with history.

14 Work Profile

Community Engagement 40%; Access Issues 30%; Environmental Improvement 20%; Administration and Fund raising 10%.



13 Murrisk Development Association

1 Contact

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2 Territory

The area is defined by both the north and south entry signs to the village of Murrisk and immediately eastwards to the summit of Croagh Patrick (the Reek). The conical shaped mountain rises to 764m. It is an important site of pilgrimage for the last 1500 years and some project attracted up to 250k visitors in 2015 (up from 50k in 2000). It is 8km from Westport above the villages of Murrisk and Lecanvey overlooking Clew Bay. Murrisk also hosts the National Famine Memorial. (Note: There are 46 shareholders on the peak.)

3 Founded 1994

4 Genesis

The Development Association was born out a local charity fund raiser which raised 35k in six weeks. The organising group stayed together to respond to a number of critical gaps in local infrastructure, services, environment and visitor management on the Reek.

5 Vision

To act as the voice of the community and promotes community and village development.

6 Key Objectives

Develop a range of community facilities; Maintain Murrisk as a beautiful, clean and tidy village and environs; Develop tourism especially to the Reek in a sensible and sensitive manner and; To improve and enhance the roads and supporting infrastructure into and through the village.

7 Structure

The group is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. At any time there are a 5/6 on the Management Committee. All are informal community representatives. Established Action Groups include:- Community; Environment; Heritage & Local Economy; Roads & Infrastructure with the Reek cross cutting all activity. There are also a number of specific working committees under the Association including – Community Cafe Committee; Lotto Committee; Pattern & Heritage Committee and; Tidy Towns Committee.

“Before I got involved in the Association I only met people briefly at the school gate.”

8 Operational Management

The Murrisk Development Association are currently implementing their third Community Plan (2012 – 2017). Over 20 meetings per annum cover the spectrum of activity. Staff and workers total 10 supported through a variety of government employment schemes e.g. CE & RSS. There has been a commitment to on-going management training for the Association since its inception facilitated through a good working relationship with the local LEADER company. A community owned Cafe is adjacent to the car park at the foot of the Reek – it generates a steady all year round income stream as well as providing a central meeting space for all village related community activities. (Note: There is a privately owned purpose built Visitor Centre off the car park.)

9 Annual Core Budget

50k per annum. (Note: Over 80% of all income comes from the Cafe; weekly lotto and a percentage of income from the Council run car park. The percentage of funding from the car park has to be allocated to a specific village enhancement project annually and agreed with the Council. In 2013 and 2014 for example the car park funds were used to install village lighting while in 2011 and 2012 the allocation was used for installing a section of footpaths.)

10 Sample Programming Path Erosion

Worked closely with Mountaineering Ireland and Failte Ireland in commissioning a detailed report in (2012) from Elfyn Jones on an assessment of erosion on the pilgrim route. It is estimated remedial work will cost in the region of 1.5m euro; Strategic Planning: Developed with the support of South West Mayo Development Company a Community Plan: 2012-2017 providing the association with a clear forward going direction; Income Generation: Continue to manage and promote the popular Saturday night lotto while continuously striving to ensure the Cafe provides the visitors with the necessary pre / post Reek climb services; National Famine Memorial: A once-off project (1997) secured the hosting of this important bronze sculpture by John Behan depicting the 'Coffin Ship'; Reek Sunday – the community has over 80 vounteers assisting pilgrims on the day.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Managing and responding to the community 'backlash' to the imposition of a mandatory 3e car parking charges in the car park at the foot of the Reek; Getting the local authority to work effectively with the community takes time; We need more consistent data (e.g. counters) on those climbing the Reek; The often rapid change in public bodies / agencies systems and personnel so as a community group we are often faced with repeating information and attempting to build a new relationship which takes time; Securing the National Famine Monument was 'a big ordeal' but we would go through it all again; Water and sewage infrastructure and lack of future planning; The Mayo Greenway extension south to Louisburg passes through the village but there was no consultation; We currently don't formally comment on local planning issues but in certain circumstances it would be to the communities' advantage if we did; Despite the numbers of visitors there still remains a lack of quality promotional / educational material relating to the Reek and the surrounding area. (Note: Through a partnership initiative called 'Helping the Hills' Mountaineering Ireland has worked with groups like Murrisk to develop a set of principles to guide the management of path erosion in Ireland's upland areas.)

12 Some Unresolved Issues

In 2015 Reek Sunday (end July) was cancelled for the first time, the ensuing confusion illustrates the lack of management coordination on the mountain and consequently the potential threat to visitors given the unpredictability of the weather and path deterioration; How best to manage succession planning ... we have had the experience of seasoned members retiring and with them went knowledge/experience and contacts ... so how best to bring in new community volunteers to the committees?; There are still serious local unresolved environmental issues like water and sewage and; Road safety remains a concern.

13 Lessons Learned

Projects bring people together not committees; As a group be broad-minded, tolerant and open to new opinions / ideas; Teenagers are a great voluntary resource but they don't do meetings / committees; In the past a direct approach to an elected representative usually worked but it is now better to go straight to a senior official of the Council and; We have now got the confidence and goodwill of the community ... this takes time.

14 Work Profile

Community Engagement 50%; Administration and Fund raising 30%; Environmental Improvement 10%; Route Development 10%



14 Binn Shléibhe Access Scheme (Incorporating the Joyce Country Geopark concept)

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Binn Shléibhe (also referred to as Mount Gable) is defined by Loughs Mask to the north and Corrib to the south. The area is a Gaeltacht designated area. The highest peak is the mountain of the same name at 417m. There are two significant communities in the area, Clonbur / Clochbreac and Corr na Mona all with populations of under 1k inhabitants. There are in excess of 120 upland commonage shareholders who have engaged in the whole access process. The mountain is part SAC. From a heritage perspective the old Seanbhothar (green road) on the south side was recently refurbished, resurfaced and has new interpretation. There is Coillte forest on the south west and north east lowlands. (Note: Four new car parks for recreational users are positioned across the area and they come with information panels with a map of the area, a brief description of the mountain plus safety and practice tips for recreational users. It is anticipated the design template can be rolled out elsewhere as part of the Mountain Access Scheme.)

3 Founded 2009 (project commenced)

4 Genesis

In 2009 Comhairle na Tuaithe created a Mountain Access Scheme (MAS) pilot programme comprising two destinations including Binn Shléibh. The aim was to establish a formal process enabling the acknowledgment of local land ownership while meeting the reasonable expectations of walkers with regard to upland access. Access to the Binn Shléibhe uplands had not been a particular issue but the numbers of recreational users had begun to increase. Local community and tourism interests also wanted to look at the options of walking festivals and other promotional opportunities for walking/outdoor recreation. Coinciding with this was the recognition of the potential of securing Geopark status for the whole locality of Joyce Country which is home to the project. The root of this approach is the recognition of the formal geopark as a model for rural development. It was felt that there had to be a proven system for dealing with the issue of access with local landowners and this work has evolved into a formal application seeking Geopark status for Joyce Country. If the Geopark is to succeed then access to locations for geology, botany, archaeology had to be available freely and with goodwill.

“ Talking to local upland farmers about access issues early on has saved us from potential trouble further down the road.”

5 Vision

To allow for rural access to take place with landowners, rural landscape and recreational users co-existing in a mutually beneficial way.

6 Key Objectives

Provide a forum for discussion of access issues; Provide a farmers liaison officer as a point of contact and; Open up alternative farming enterprises by increasing the number of visits to the area; To achieve Geopark status.

7 Structure

The informal local group comprises representatives of community X 3; recreational users X 4; farmers X 1; tourism interests X 1; heritage X 2; wildlife and ecology X 1 and; statutory bodies / agencies X 1. Although informal there are strong links and support from the local Co-operative. (Note: As a pilot MAS there is regular reporting to Comhairle na Tuath at a national level.)

8 Operational Management

The voluntary group is serviced in a part time capacity by the Co-operative Manager who also embraces community development and promotion of the Irish language. There are also government employment scheme support through the RRS with 4-6 posts. However a key support and innovative solution is a Farm Liaison Officer (voluntary) who comes from a local farming background and is the point person for all access related issues. The role includes:- Bringing to the table the farming perspective in any negotiations on access issues; Contacting farmers if any issues arise; Helping mediate where there are problems; Ongoing advice and support to farmers on access issues and; Promoting Leave no Trace in the farming community; Helping disseminate the positive message of opening access to upland areas. Training needs identified include trail building, wall building and alternative farming enterprises. (Note: It is hoped to replicate the role of the Farm Liaison Officer into other MAS areas in the future as part of a common integrated partnership approach to managing upland access.)

9 Annual Core Budget

8k average annual budget (Note: Varies due to nature and frequency of sporadic grants. This figure does not include in kind contributions from partners including the community. The Department of Rural Affairs has been a key benefactor.)

10 Sample Programming

Mountain Access Scheme – the delivery of one of the two national pilot projects which has gained the area a national profile ... a significant byproduct of the pilot scheme has been the preparation of a practical Toolkit to assist local partners which is awaiting launch; Production and distribution of a Binn Shléibhe Mountain Access Project, Information Sheet for Landowners; Walking Festival – pilot festival delivered / lessons learned; Research - partnership with GMIT for baseline survey prior to usage / profile of recreation users; Fund Raising - occasional 'fork supper' fundraisers for local tourism initiatives which also act as good networking / information dispensing opportunities. (Note: The launch of the Toolkit above is now awaiting agreement of the indemnity arrangement for landowners in Mountain Access Areas. The State Claims Agency has agreed to the indemnity, the details of how it will be implemented are currently being worked out by the State Claims Agency and the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (Rural Recreation Section).

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Continuity of personnel – some of our key partners have a high staff / officer turnover; Length of time it has taken for a national indemnity scheme to become active; Need for education and enhanced communication - that recreation users are made aware of the work, volunteer time and cooperation that takes place to enable their recreation.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Track upgrade and ongoing maintenance; Investment to date has been parliamentary in route infrastructure with little resources going into interpretation and marketing exposing the whole sustainability of the project; Lack of a designated material budget for various government employment schemes; Loss of population from rural upland areas and; Change in farm / off farm employment.

13 Lessons Learned

A pro-active approach was taken from the beginning rather than waiting on problems occurring. This has been a successful way of dealing with this thorny issue; Simplicity of the scheme; The valuable role played by a farmers liaison officer; Rural upland areas badly need investment and support for access schemes to work and; The need for designated Rural Development Officers in vulnerable communities.

14 Work Profile

Community engagement 50%; Route development & access issues, land use, farming, heritage and environmental improvements 20%; Administration and fundraising 20% and; Communications & events 10%.



15 The Old Irish Goat Society

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Based in Mulranny / Nephin Mountain Range, but this is an all-Ireland Project, with ongoing field work in Mayo, Galway, Longford, Waterford and Donegal. Nephin at 806m is the second highest peak in Connacht (after Mweelrea).

3 Founded Founded in the Burren in 2007, revived in Mulranny Mayo in 2011.

4 Genesis

The initial establishment came from indiscriminate culling of feral goats in the Burren; the revival was caused by an article carried by the Heritage Council Heritage Outlook Magazine in 2011, which connected the community of Mulranny to the society in the Burren.

5 Vision

To preserve and promote the Old Irish Goat.

6 Key Objectives

Maintain the national herd of Old Irish Goats in Mayo; Conserve the breed characteristics and 12 distinct colour patterns and; Establish tourism based sustainable social enterprise to support the Old Irish Goat.

7 Structure

A Project team leader Seán Carolan with a lead researcher (Ray Werner) and Assistant Researcher Maeve Foran. Two Part time goat Keepers one paid and one on Rural Social Scheme. An overall Project Team comprised 8 volunteers in Mulranny, One in Waterford, One in Galway, One in Longford and One in Kildare. In total 13 volunteers supported the project.

8 Operational Management

All administration for the project was delivered by the Society.

9 Annual Core Budget

15-20K per annum, approximately 1/3 from adhoc annual application basis, made up from several entities including the Dept of Agriculture and Agenda 21. The remainder coming from philanthropic donations and self generation through the likes of the guided walks in search of the Old Irish Goat.



“Take a guided walk in search of these rare animals on one of the most beautiful short walks on this Island.”

10 Sample Programming

Commissioned the first Livestock Study to use historic samples / collected 60 DNA samples from primitive live feral goats from across Ireland and the UK; First measurement of an Old Irish Goat; Delivered detailed DNA profile of the Old Irish Goat which allows for analysis for sought after traits and; Submission for Rare Breed Status in draft.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

There is no legal protection for Irish Rare Breeds; The current strategy for the protection of rare breeds in Ireland is substandard; There is no strategy or support mechanism to save a breed by re-domestication in Ireland and; One department (Agriculture) with little or no track record in conservation left in charge of the entire Irish Rare Breed family.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

The Old Irish Goat is not yet recognised as a rare breed; A population of 1000 is the minimum ‘safe’ population, it’s currently officially zero. (There are no registered Old Irish Goats in Ireland); The very limited national conservation funds divide approximately €65,000 per annum amongst 8 sectors, or approx. a pro rata of €8000 for conservation of Irish Rare Breeds.

13 Lessons Learned

No joined up thinking for Rare Breeds in Ireland, compare to the Wildlife; We are trying to save something with no legal protection, no official recognition and that is commercially valueless and; Our living heritage as in our Irish Rare Breeds is not on the heritage radar; Community groups need access to interns; While Agenda 21 speaks strongly to the conservation of rare breeds experience has confirmed that nationally this is a very limited fund source; We believe the original FAS Scheme model that put community’s in charge of supervisors and budgets needs to be opened on a case by case basis; Were we attempting to save a wildlife species, we might get LIFE support but it’s not available for Rare Breeds or Agricultural Genetic Resources and; This is a pioneering project, the first attempt to save a breed from a feral state. There are no templates or structures in Ireland to do so.

14 Work Profile

Dedicated research 40%; partner engagement 15%; administration / fund raising 45%; communications 10%.

16 Ballinrillick Environmental Group (Incorporating the Glens to Sea)

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Ballinrillick Environmental Group are located in the shadow of Benwiskin Mountain (514m) close to the Gleniff Horseshoe, part of the Dartry Mountain range which includes the only tabletop mountain in Europe, Benbulbin (526m) immediately to the west. Truskmore (647m) is the highest peak on a large plateau stretching across northeast Sligo and northwest Leitrim. The nearest centres of population are Mullaghmore and Kinlough. Glens to Sea: The region comprises a rectangle from Manorhamilton through Glenade and Melvin to Tullaghan (all County Leitrim) and along the coast south through Mullaghmore and Cliffony down to Drumcliff (County Sligo) back eastwards to Glencar (County Leitrim).

3 Founded

Ballinrillick Environmental Group -1992
Glens to Sea – 2014. (Note: The Benwiskin Centre incorporating a 28 bed community owned hostel and community centre was opened in 2000.)

4 Genesis

The Group emerged out of local concerns for the high levels of illegal dumping coupled with poor road access to the mountains in the scenic area of Ballinrillick, north Sligo. A clean up day was organised which has subsequently become an annual clean up event. The Group was thus born comprising community, farming / landowning, heritage, tourism and wildlife representatives. They focused initially on acquiring from Coillte and developing the overgrown Barytes Mill site at the base of The Gleniff Horseshoe. In 2000 the Benwiskin Centre was opened by the Group providing much needed hostel accommodation, a community resource centre and employment. The Centre is today a dynamic and multifaceted community enterprise driven by a strong community and environmental ethos. The Glens to Sea was a local response to de-population which aims to bring together to positively influence their own future a number of separated communities divided by the mountains, tradition and county boundaries. (Note: The population in 40 representative townlands researched through the 1901 census was 3 times the numbers listed in the 2011 census. This statistic has been seen as a local wake up call by community leaders.)

“A man recently went on a motorbike from Kinlough to Kiltyclogher and counted 72 occupied houses while also calculating 70% of these housed individuals or couples over 70 years of age.”

5 Vision

Ballinrillick Environmental Group:- To enhance the local community, generate and sustain local employment while preserving the environment.
Glens to Sea:- Strives to unite the distinct and unconnected communities in the region to discuss, plan and deliver an enhanced quality of life and a more sustainable future for all who live, work and visit.

6 Key Objectives

Ballinrillick Environmental Group:- To preserve and enhance the local community; To promote economic development within the area; To provide social amenities and activities; Preserve and enhance the local environment and; To generate community goodwill, community spirit and to create economic development.
Glens to Sea:- The Group are currently at the discussion / getting to know each other phase having delivered an ambitious autumn / winter series of themed conversations (2014 / 2015) about the communities future. The outcome of which has been - enhanced community connections across the whole 8 communities that make up the territory; the collection of solid community data and feedback to aid / justify future planning; Relationship building with development agencies, local authorities and other strategic partners; Greater community appreciation for what it has currently and what it can strive together to achieve; Event management skills embedded into the community; Positive public profile to counter legacy issues associated with the area and; Recognition of all that is positive about the community.

7 Structure

Ballinrillick Environmental Group:- became a limited company with a Board of 11 directors in 1994 and acquired valuable charitable status in 1999.
The Glens to Sea remains an informal community forum with no formal structure as of yet. (Note: A Glens to Sea Report – Sustaining our Community came out of the conversations and is being employed as a roadmap on the way forward. It was unanimously accepted at a public meeting of over 70 in October 2015.)

8 Operational Management & Staff

Ballinrillick Environmental Group:- currently employs 3 full time and 2 part-time staff including a Manager, Office Assistant, 2 X Housekeepers and a Caretaker. They have also secured a TUS worker under Sligo

Leader. The Group provide ad-hoc employment to around 13 tutors per year. There is a strong reliance on voluntary help from members of the Group and the wider community. The Centre is located roughly at the mid point of the Glens to Sea areas and has provided not just a welcome neutral meeting space but valuable practical assistance in helping its sister project gain traction. The Glens to Sea is a fully voluntary initiative.

9 Annual Core Budget

Ballinrillock Environmental Group:- €55k pa (excluding employment subsidies) / Glens to Sea – 1k (Note: As a consequence of cash flow / funding payment uncertainty the Group financially manage the enterprise with a minimum of a 13 week cash reserve.)

10 Sample Programming & Services

Ballinrillock Environmental Group:- Environmental Projects & Targets include the practical delivery of the following - Reduction in the use of non-renewable resources; Reduce reliance on energy produced from non renewable resources; Reduce, re-use and recycle waste wherever possible which is a core philosophy of the Group; Prevent and minimise pollution through education and active clean-ups; Increase the use of recycled materials and materials from renewable sources; Promote environmentally friendly practices with staff, guests and the public through practical actions; Continue to hold the EU Flower Ecolabel certification; 5% Reduction on oil consumption in the next 12 months; 5% reduction on electricity consumption in the next 12 months; 10% reduction in waste in the next 12 months and; 10% reduction in water consumption over next 12 months. Community & Visitor Services – Continue to provide high quality hostel accommodation for individuals, families, groups including special packages for youth /student groups and recreational visitors; Design and produce suitable on-line / off-line promotional material (see: www.benwiskincentre.com); Hall / room hire; Variety of popular day / evening classes i.e. Yoga, Art, Card Games, Scouts, Basket Making, Photography; Regular festival and events e.g. Harvest and Christmas time; The Benwiskin Centre is registered for the solemnisation of civil marriages; Office services to local micro businesses; Community laundry services; Furniture hire; Community Chiropody Clinic; Mobile Library and; Bicycle Hire Service. The Glens to Sea delivered 5 half day sessions addressing 5 distinct themes using 5 venues across the territory hosted by the community for the community. In excess of 400 people attending the events out of a population of just over 14k and; The generation of a follow-up Report (2015) on the process and programme delivery plots the future direction of the initiative. They have also delivered through voluntary effort and a zero budget a new driving/walking/cycling route of the Gleniff Horseshoe. This pilot employs a GIS platform with supporting maps and signage. A second route is now in planning.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

How archaeology is undervalued as an educational / tourism resource in the uplands ... there should be a 'National Heritage Scheme' similar to the National Walks Scheme; The unpredictability of the local planning process; Given some local access issues which received national publicity over the last decade the Group are acutely aware of the need to 'keep talking', they believe their 'softly softly' approach helped neutralise some of the tension; In scattered upland communities today neighbour may very well not know neighbour ... upland community groups have an important role to play in practically addressing isolation especially in the single occupancy rural dwelling and ensuring new arrivals feel connected.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Some access issues locally remain unresolved, however they are improving e.g. Aroo Mountain access route (2016) in Glenade Valley; Parochialism; Fund raising is a constant challenge; The threat of the area being planted with trees that will only benefit 'the pinstriped suits in Dublin'; De-population – the Gleniff Horseshoe had 56 houses listed on the 1911 census, there was 5 listed in 2011 ... without concrete facts like this it is hard to make your case to government, agencies and local authorities; Poor and expensive broadband coverage.

13 Lessons Learned

How hard it is to make a living / keep a family together in an upland area today; Quality publicity matters - the Benwiskin Centre in 2012 was listed at number 1 in the 'Top Five Green Hostels in Europe' in an article written by Catherine Mack for the National Geographic's Traveller Magazine; New upland groups need mentoring especially on core issues like 'making the connections' and 'fund raising'; The importance of local competent research to help with case making; There remains a high level of ignorance of the basic facts surrounding upland living from both sides, community and public sector; The active support of elected local representative has been valuable; Without integrity a group will rapidly lose the support of the community ... good and ongoing communication through all channels is essential; If you want a solution for upland communities in Leitrim, find a use for rushes!

14 Work Profile

The Ballinrillock Environmental Group – Administration and Fund raising 70%; Programme management 10%; Communications 10%; Property management 10%. Glens to Sea – Communications & Event Management 50%; Administration 50%.

17 Boleybrack Red Grouse and Upland Conservation Group

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Boleybrack Mountain lies to the north of Lough Allen in Co Leitrim and Cavan. The area is defined by the towns of Drumkeeran, Manorhamilton and Blacklion (in west Cavan). The mountain is horseshoe shaped with steep sides rising to an extensive plateau summit. The project site covers 1800 hectares mostly unfenced commonage. The townlands of Glenfarne are the key community. From a broader communities perspective it should be viewed as a triangle taking in Manorhamilton, Balcklion and Dowra embracing Glenfarne. The highest peak is Lackagh at 546m. The area is a designated SAC. Coillte manage some of the peripheral planting on the edges of the commonage. (Note: It is hoped to expand the area to include the whole of Boleybrack Mountain in the near future.)

3 Founded 2007 (Steering Group formed)

4 Genesis

The project came from an initiative of Glenfarne Gun Club which focused on the endangered Red Grouse and related conservation issues. The National Parks and Wildlife Service were essential supporters of the project from the outset. As the territory is primarily upland commonage it was important that the farming community were on board. Over time the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) came in behind the project.

5 Vision

The Boleybrack Mountain Upland Conservation Project aims to enhance, monitor and demonstrate a set of modern, practical and sustainable management policies for an Irish mountain commonage, based on traditional farming methods and its associated wildlife richness.

6 Key Objectives

To ensure that the potential benefits of hill farming practices on mountain commonages, on Boleybrack Mountain and elsewhere, are better understood, recognised and rewarded by society and decision makers nationally; To restore a greater balance of management influences on the mountain, in order to help re-invigorate or re-establish many of its former key upland species, in particular ground nesting birds such as Red Grouse, Breeding Waders and Hen Harriers and; To increase the landscape value of our locality in order to enhance the welfare of our community in general. The Golden Eagle Trust was involved from the outset as they were tasked with writing the initial Habitat Management Plan.

"Three local gun club members wanted to ensure their children knew what a red grouse looked like.

A project of European importance sprang from that wish."

7 Structure & Staff

The key partners on the Steering Group fall into three categories namely community, NGO's / special interest groups and government department / agencies. They include:- Glenfarne Gun Club, the NARGC, Golden Eagle Trust, NPWS, IT Sligo, Department of Agriculture, Coillte, and the Glenfarne Commonage Farmers. The Steering Group operates successfully without a Chair. A second Habitat Management Plan was drafted and accepted in 2014. In terms of evolution the project can be seen as Yr1-5 / local people and partners working hard on a small number of specific tasks, Yr 5-8 the project went national involving more partners and more controls / administration and Yr 9 and beyond the project is now recognised on the EU stage as being one of eight EU wide good conservation practice through hunting communities projects. Employment of a full time Gamekeeper/Project Manager in 2012.

8 Operational Management

This is a project and geography specific informally constituted group. They have a full time Project Manager who initially joined the project as a gamekeeper following many years experience in England and Scotland. He is the only upland grouse gamekeeper in Ireland. The partners also offer agreed administration and other practical supports. The manager has formal bi-weekly meetings with representatives of the Gun Club. By way of anecdote in the early days of the project it used to take the Project Manager up to 90mins to get to work, a journey of 15mins, owing to the number of conversations he would have with local people. The Steering Group meets about 3 times per year. (Note: the Project Manager post is co-funded by the NPWS and the NARGC who also provide the contract of employment.)

9 Annual Core Budget

50k (Note: Additional funding come in through project specific activity e.g Heritage Council support for a television documentary currently being produced.)

10 Sample Programming

Heather Management - Preparation for burning / controlled burning; Fox Control - Middens, Snaring and Lamping; Corvid Control - Larsen traps, Cage traps, Nest shooting and Roost shooting; Monitoring Red Grouse and other upland species - Use GPS to record species of flora and fauna present on Boleybrack Mountain, Red grouse pair counts with dogs (April), Red grouse pair counts with tape lure, Red grouse brood counts with dogs, Establish red grouse territories, survey

Golden Plover, monitor all birds of prey sightings and identify nest sites; Site Patrolling - Minimise human disturbance by patrolling Boleyrack & access routes; Background Red Grouse Research - Establish extent of Heather Beetle damage, Establish the health of Grouse by collection and analysis of faecal droppings, Pinpoint grouse nests and establish clutch, Establish and provision a lattice work of Grit Station across the mountain; Public Relations & Education - Maintain strong liaison with local people and commonage shareholders, Glenfarne Gala Weekend, national school visits, Promote the project at regional / national levels and through events such as National Game Fairs, Issue and facilitate regular media updates and; Advocacy - Project open days, Facilitate and initiate Red Grouse consultation visits and reports nationally, Promotion of best practice in Red Grouse and upland wildlife management, Promote best practice re: predator, pest and parasite control, Promote best practice re: habitat management especially muirburn.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Lack of manpower and resources ... one person is 'doing the work of 2.5 people'; Year on year funding makes planning difficult; Migration from the upland and loss of the upland way of life; We have no web site and a poorly managed FB page, this needs to become a higher priority.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

We need more good science, we need to know more about the biodiversity to better understand the risks that lie ahead; We need to re-learn old traditional skills relating to the mountains for if they are lost by this generation they are likely lost forever.

13 Lessons Learned

The mountain is such a loved place, local people have so many different names for it; In the 8 years the project has been running we have 'only come across good people, there are no bad apples'; Remain open minded to new ideas and problem solving; Keeping good people on board; The need for open / transparent communication is essential; Everything in Ireland takes 'time'; How useful the drip drip effect can be in terms of influencing people e.g good habitat management through evolving controlled burning; Don't forget your core constituency e.g. annual visits to the local national school.

14 Work Profile

Conservation Management 50%; Engagement and Communications 35%; Administration 15%



18 Drimarone Development Group, Bluestacks, Donegal

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“The Centre has become the
hub of the community ...”

2 Territory

The Bluestack Mountains are in south Donegal and begin at the village of Pettigo on the Donegal/Fermanagh border. They then run northwards to Barnes Mór Gap and then westwards to Killybegs. The mountains act as a natural barrier between the southern and northern parts of the county. The highest peak in the range is Croaghgorm at 674 metres. Drimarone is located 8km from Donegal town (pop: 2607 / Census 2011). In relation to land form and cover the high mountainous upland hard rock area has an underlying geology of quartzite along the north, granite to the east and a schist band through the centre. Breccia, a composition unique to the area, underlies the southern area of the Bluestacks. Ecologically the Bluestacks are an important landscape containing 5,827ha of Natura 2000 sites (SAC & SPA) and 200.9ha of NHA sites. Part of the range is within the Gaeltacht. The Bluestacks are on the Wild Atlantic Way. (Note: The Bluestacks Way is a National Waymarked Trail (65km) with trailheads at Donegal town and Ardara on the west coast.)

3 Founded

1964 – the community development association. (Note: The Bluestack Way opened in 1995 and the Drimarone Centre in 2004.)

4 Genesis

The initial motivation for the community coming together in the mid 1960's was to 'keep the local hall going'. In the 1970s the group formed an agricultural store and farmers co-op which was eventually leased out giving a steady income stream back to the community. The group helped secure a group water scheme in the 1970's. Tourism and recreation potential to create local employment led to the development of the Bluestacks Way in the 1990's and a decade later the Drimarone Centre came full circle by incorporating a 28 bed hostel in the old hall. The group have also delivered on a variety of social programmes, an ambitious festivals programme and supporting infrastructure like creche, astroturf and community football field (Carnaween Pitch) home to local club Letterbarrow F.C.

5 Vision

To enhance the quality of life in our rural community whilst at the same time providing visitors to our area with quality facilities from which they can explore and enjoy the experience of this unspoilt natural wilderness that is 'The Bluestack Mountains'.

6 Key Objectives

To always be here for the community; To be commercially viable and progressive; To bring more visitors into the Bluestacks.

7 Structure

A company limited by guarantee (the company) and there is also the informal local grouping known as the association which tends to operate more as the day to day overseer of activity. The company addresses planning, business and fund raising primarily. Between the two groupings there are meetings every two weeks with 18 people in total spread between the two groups. There are representatives informally from the community, farming / landowners, tourism interests and sporting clubs. Importantly the RRO for Donegal is located in the Centre and she has responsibility for the Bluestacks Way among other countywide projects.

8 Operational Management

A manager and three full time (Pobal supported) posts. There are also RSS X 1 and TUS X 3 posts currently. The group identified primary training needs as fund raising followed by marketing especially for the community hostel. (Note: Bluestacks Way - There are 57 farmers on the National Walks Scheme from Donegal to Ardara.)

9 Annual Core Budget

140k per annum (Note: Funding through Pobal, RDP/LEADER and Self Generated Income including a Membership fee of 5e per annum.)

10 Sample Programming

Hostel Accommodation - Managing and promoting a dedicated community hostel in the Bluestacks with 28 beds; Supporting the local walking club – The Bluestack Ramblers founded in 1995 (see: [www.http://bluestackramblers.com](http://bluestackramblers.com)); Packaging - Developed the educational and tourism tool Walking Through Time which links the natural & cultural landscapes through a series of self guiding color coded information points supported by online and resource pack material; Bi-Annual Bluestacks Challenge – Up to 400 participants who walk 40km, they are serviced by 40 volunteers locally with the event starting and ending in the Drimarone Centre; Training – the Centre organises on an on-going basis special training / classes for local people e.g social media (10wks X 3hrs); Providing Community Services – from cradle to senior age; Bluestacks Way – Facilitate, promote and service the Bluestacks Ways.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Not enough visitors ... it is difficult to sustain a hostel in such a remote location that is prone to be seasonal in nature; Poor broadband connectivity, must improve as business is being undermined; Getting new members to join the group; No public transport – have looked at private sector 'model' to respond to this need but its currently unsustainable; Constant need for fund raising e.g weekly bingo, concerts and dances throughout the year, private parties and catering, special events and festivals all take time, experience and human resources; We lost a lucrative tour operator contract because of inflexible regulation over 'door space'.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

How best to capitalise on being the first European landfall for the International Appalachian Trail, from its origins in Georgia the 3500km trail eventually reaches land again at Slieve League and into the Bluestacks and onwards to the Ulster Way; Lack of Co-operation - we would be keen to co-operate with other community facilities in upland areas; Massive and corrosive de-population ... currently there are only 16 occupied homesteads on the Bluestacks Way from Lough Eske (outside Donegal town) to Ardara, two generations ago there was 16 in one named hamlet. Local planning regulations currently make it extremely difficult to get planning for one off houses adjacent to the Bluestack Way which has caused some local disquiet.

13 Lessons Learned

Reach for the stars; Don't take no for an answer; Make it clear, 'when the meeting is over it is over' ... no disagreements are allowed to fester; Keep local elected representatives out as directors, only community reps should be allowed; Our rural location is both a bonus and a drawback; The Bluestacks Way is one of the most sustainable waymarked way in Ireland as it employs old roads and existing infrastructure; Local people don't realise these facilities are not paid for by the government but by themselves; Strive to always have as balanced a group as is possible; We benefited publicity wise from taking part in the likes of RTE TV show 'At Your Service' (Feb, 2016); Environment – it could be said that with few visitors we experience little damage or erosion compared to some ... our Recycle Day has proved very popular especially the free pick up of scrap around peoples houses; There is literally gold in the Bluestacks, something we are keen to develop as an attraction and window on to the past.

14 Work Profile

Administration and Fund raising 30%; Community engagement 25%; Communications and Events 25%; Property / Hostel Management 20%.



19 Sliabh Sneacht Centre, Innishowen

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2 Territory

Larger catchment – Innishowen peninsula; Sliabh Snacht (678m) / 3700 hectares of commonage.

3 Founded

1996 original local development company; Centre opened in 2014 (Note: The Centre is situated on the site of St Patrick's National School built in 1838 (prior to this there was a hedge school on the same site) and was one of the first school's to be built in Innishowen following the abolition of the Penal Laws. The ethos and community memory remains of it being a place of learning.)

4 Genesis

Broad economic development and environmental management through sustainable recreational tourism on Sliabh Sneacht and surrounds.

5 Vision

To generate a practical response to the real threat to the very fabric of the community from emigration, de-population of the upland areas and lack of employment coupled with the opportunity to match the unspoilt natural beauty of the uplands with a growing recreational market and the local social need for a shared space.

6 Objectives

To deliver a readily accessible resource for everyone in the community; To remain totally guided by the local community ... no external influences; Any revenue generated remains in the local economy and; To recognise the environmental sensitivities of the area which we have protected for generations and ensure this continues bearing in mind changing agricultural practices.

7 Structure & Staffing

A company limited by guarantee who have applied for charitable status. There is an annually elected Management Committee of seven directors out of a pool of twenty. There is a staff complement of seven (mix PT/FT) including a manager and administration.

8 Operational Management

There are monthly Management Committee meetings plus an AGM with on average five out of the seven directors in attendance. Early stage Code of Governance training has proved invaluable as being an employer and managing public funding carries new responsibilities. In excess of forty local volunteers could be mobilised at short notice.

“A Base Camp for Walkers & Cyclists”

9 Annual Core Budget

90k (2016) (Pobal 65%; Self Generation 20%; RDP/LEADER 15%)

10 Sample Programming

The Sliabh Sneacht Centre is one of the most impressive public buildings on Innishowen peninsula. It was built largely through “sweat equity” from local people who contributed over 200k in kind contribution over a two and a half year period. The community embraced the Chuck Feeney concept of 'giving while living'. The current chairman project managed the whole construction phase. The total cost was 640k (with 385k coming from RDP/LEADER). The Centre is insured for 900k and is debt free from the day of opening. The degree of 'community pride' in this achievement should not be underestimated. An on-going set of ambitious training programmes are being delivered by the Centre to ensure footfall / generate income; these are especially designed for the farming community they include 'IT for Farmers' and 'The Internet of Things'. Currently designing programmes on Controlled Burning and Guide & Environmental Training. In addition the local ETB run rolling courses in the Centre and it also hosts a part-time HSE clinic. It is home to the peninsula wide Athletics Club and to the eighty strong North Pole Cycling Club. There is currently a significant programme for farming and the environment being designed. Prior to building the Centre the group focused on refurbishing 6km of mountain bog roads originally built during the second world war, these trails from the Centre are 'safe, traffic free environments for families' to get them into the mountains. Recently the group helped part facilitate a large Rail to Trail scoping Study of the old Londonderry Lough Swilly Railway – Derry to Carndonagh Line which passes immediately behind the Centre. The group has been awarded the Tipp O'Neill Irish Diaspora Award for their work reaching out to Innishowen natives overseas, the Centre hosts the only dedicated exhibition space in the country to Tipp O'Neill. This community work in an upland area was acknowledged recently with a 'Pride of Place' national final nomination.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Volunteers want to 'do things' not go to meetings or be directors of the company; Engaging effectively with agencies and public bodies; Parochialism and; extremely poor broadband infrastructure, slow speed making it difficult to conduct business.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Up-scaling the 'professionalism' of the Management Committee to manage staff and commercially sustain the operation; upland environmental and habitat management issues; local renewable energy solutions and; assisting in the preservation of the upland farming culture, traditions and practice.

13 Lessons Learned

Do it ourselves ... a team of 6/7 like minded people can move mountains!; Employ proper channels to get things done, don't use or depend on local politicians; Design a balanced work programme so that some of the more commercial activities can subsidise the more desirable and important but less commercial initiatives; Don't underestimate the corrosive power of sub parish / inter-parish rivalry; Have a clear vision to communicate to the whole community and; Of critical importance is a good leader with the ability to get things done.

14 Work Profile

Community Engagement 50%; Communications 15%;
Route Development & Special Projects 20%;
Administration & Fund Raising 10% and; Property Management 5%



20 Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT)

1 Contact

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2 Territory

The territory embraces two new Council areas and including three designated AONB's. The Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust is devoted to protecting and enhancing the unique heritage of the Causeway Coast and Glens area, including but not limited to the Binevenagh (16,594ha of land), Causeway Coast (4,200ha of land) and Antrim Coast and Glens (72,489ha of land) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site (WHS). Trostan is the highest peak on the Antrim Plateau reaching a height of 550m. The Garron Plateau has been designated as a RAMSAR site which recognises it as a wetland of international importance. The blanket bog habitat is particularly important for a range of rare breeding birds. Some of the larger communities include Ballycastle in the north, Larne in the south also Ballymoney, Cushendun and Bushmills.

3 Founded 2002 (Note: AONB designation 1988.)

The Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust is a public/private/voluntary sector partnership.

4 Genesis

The Trust emerged from two distinct needs namely a requirement to set up management structures for the 3 AONBs coupled with the local demand for a more integrated approach to sustainable tourism development.

5 Vision

To raise awareness of the special qualities of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Causeway Coast & Glens area including the Antrim Coast & Glens, Causeway Coast and Binevenagh Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and; promoting environmental management and sustainable development that aims to conserve and enhance the unique heritage of the area for the benefit of all.

6 Key Objectives

To develop sustainable and effective partnerships; To raise awareness of the unique and special qualities/character, in both landscape and heritage terms (natural, built and cultural) of the 3 AONBs and their surrounding area; To deliver an excellent protected area management provision for the CCGHT geographical area; To ensure best practice in sustainable development principles throughout the CCGHT geographical area and; To deliver a sustainable, efficient and effective core of activities and management for the CCGHT.

“Relationship building is primarily what we do.”

7 Structure

The Board comprises 13 members drawn from: Community X 2; Farming / landowning X 3; Heritage X 1; Wildlife / ecology X 1; Statutory / public reps X 6. This figure is supported by official observers from NIEA X 1 and Tourism NI X 1 and advisers from the 2 councils giving four in total. The Chair comes from an education and agricultural background. The Trust is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

8 Operational Management

There are 8 full-time and 2 part-time staff comprising a CEO with a manager for the Landscape Partnership Scheme, each of the three AONB's has a manager plus a Corporate Services manager. Formal Board meetings occur about four times a year. There is a special Finance & Governance Sub Committee which meets when required. Each of the AONB's meet about four times in the year. (Note: Relationships are good with the local Councils and engagement tends to be under the following themes Health, Tourism, Recreation and the Environment.)

9 Annual Core Budget

£600k per annum for the Trust (including £250k for the Glens of Antrim Landscape Partnership Scheme). (Note: Funding comes from four primary sources: Heritage Lottery Funding; Central Government through principally NIEA; Local Government and; EU funding.)

10 Sample Programming

Community Engagement: There are between 10/12 formal information sessions with community groups throughout the year; Education and Research: Ongoing with the likes of QUB and the UU including student placements. There is significant time placed on working with local national schools. The online 'Learning Zone' is a valuable resource for primary / secondary schools; Technological Innovation: The 3D recording of geological features ie making 3D models of many sites that are difficult to access; Festivals & Events: Delivering new events on a regular basis e.g. 10 Nights of Music in a Week – the promotion of traditional music and culture which has been embraced by all at a total cost of £300 for a simple brochure widely distributed ; Online Communications: Management of the portal web site www.ccght.org. Publications: An extensive range of publications from a regular Newsletter to specialist Bulletins across all AONB areas. Management Planning and coordinating: development of management plans for

AONBs, WHS... and coordination of their implementation. Interpretation: Development of opportunities for interpretation in the Causeway Coast and Glens and along the Causeway Coastal Route.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Lack of long term planning resulting in the longevity of the project often called into question; We find ourselves working across silos which often inhibits progress and ultimately is a loss to the whole community.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

With changes in Government Departments and local councils (reduction of staff and merging of departments/councils) there is a risk points of contact being lost and a reduction in momentum; It is hard to get city based people with the required skills to move to the rural countryside to work on the project; Perpetual uncertainty in relation to the future.

13 Lessons Learned

Address peoples needs not their wants; You learn over time to adapt your language to best suit the community or stakeholder you are speaking to; You have to speak regularly to local people about the project, the importance of locally available information on the project should not be underestimated; We do many Farmers Talks throughout the year where we talk to people not representative bodies; We have achieved 'balance' in our programming and the allocation of resources.

14 Work Profile

Community and partner engagement 30%; Communications and events 30%; Land management and access 20%; Administration 20%.



21 Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP)

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“Caring for the Belfast hills,
their wildlife and people.”

2 Territory

The Belfast Hills area takes in Carnmoney Hill and Cave Hill to the north and Colin Glen, Divis and Black Mountain and Slievenacloy to the south and west. The operational boundary encompasses approximately 5,500 hectares (13,500 acres); Divis is 478m making it the highest of the Belfast Hills. Belfast has an urban population of over 280k (2012). It is estimated there are at least 75 distinct community 'groups' within the catchment. The territory attracts in excess of 600k visitors per annum.

3 Founded 2004 (formal foundation).

4 Genesis

In 1992 there was a call for a Belfast Hills Regional Park in order to address concerns about the exploitation and degeneration of the Belfast Hills landscapes combined with threats to both communities and habitats. A subsequent Study (1998) revealed there was a lack of public support for such a move especially from landowners but there was however considerable support for a stronger, more joined up approach to the management and protection of the Belfast Hills. Core support was secured from the Department of the Environment and four local councils to create the Belfast Hills Partnership which comprises local councils, government departments, community groups, nature conservation organisations, businesses, recreation and a team of staff. In 2011 the BHP was augmented by a Heritage Lottery funded Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme (Stage 1&2) which has substantially increased its capacity and profile.

5 Vision

That the BHP care for the hills, its wildlife and people. We will restore – physically and in the minds of our people – the Belfast Hills as a vital, living asset for Belfast and beyond; an asset to actively enjoy, gain inspiration from and protect as a living part of our Belfast and Lagan Valley region. It is time to reconnect our people to this great landscape after many years of political strife, which left many feeling afraid to visit our surrounding hills. The Belfast Hills will be improved, restored and more fully appreciated through managing the landscape in positive ways – ways which integrate with and add skills to the work of all of our statutory, farming, community, commercial, recreational

and environmental partners who live and work in and around the Belfast Hills. We will ensure unique opportunities offered by having uplands and city so close together, are understood and taken in order to positively better this landscape, its people, heritage and wildlife, providing an inspirational model of how to sustainably manage urban fringe landscapes.

6 Key Objectives

Strive to protect the wildlife of the Belfast Hills; Combat invasive species that threaten our native plants and animals; Record wildlife and protect habitats; Improve access and develop routes; Produce leaflets, provide information and facilitate volunteering opportunities; Commission environmental research; Organise events, produce newsletters and manage website; Support local agriculture and communities; Scrutinise planning applications that may affect the Belfast Hills; Make sure government departments consider the Belfast Hills when making decisions and ; Encourage healthy walking. (Note: Landscape threats include physical loss of landscape features, built heritage and habitats and secondly the decline in quality of landscape features, built heritage and habitats.)

7 Structure

Company limited by guarantee with Trust status (Charity Commission NI). Board members, including company directors and charity trustees number 13. The BHP has a fixed Board structure in line with its constitution which divides into three sectors and up to 5 representatives from each : Landowning (e.g farm representative bodies X 2; commercial waste operators; quarry operators; site owning environmental organisations) / Communities / Users (community representatives X 2; environmental community organisations X 2; recreational users representative) / Statutory (Councils X 3; DoE X 1). There is an independent chair who has been in place since 2009.

8 Operational Management

There is currently a staff complement of 8 including a manager, special project staff (LPS) X 4 including a manager, administration, outreach, volunteer coordination, BHP special projects, and communications (PT).

9 Annual Core Budget

Between £500-600k per annum over last three years.
(Note: The BHP has up to 20 separate funders.)

10 Sample Programming

The BHP Core Business Plan (2013-18) falls under four distinct themes – Environmental, Economic, Social & Commercial and Corporate. Environmental includes: Protection and management of Belfast Hills biodiversity; Invasive species work; Wildfire management work; Brownfield site restoration; Minimise impact of waste on biodiversity, access and recreation; Fringe community wildlife sites; Biodiversity monitoring and survey work; Biodiversity research work; Community recording project; Increased awareness of Belfast Hills biodiversity; Events and publicity; Wildfire awareness and ; Fringe community wildlife sites. Economic includes: Better planning in Belfast Hills - Monitoring of and positive input into planning processes. Social & Commercial includes: Improved Access and Opportunities - New paths, greenways, infrastructure and impact assessment; Raise awareness, interest and participation in access; Encourage and facilitate development of recreation infrastructure in keeping with BHP recreation plan; Liaise with key partners such as Outdoor Recreation NI and SportNI on recreation development opportunities; Visitor services development in Belfast Hills; Installation of new brown tourism signage in the hills; Drafting of a visitor services development plan until 2018; Further development opportunities through enhanced working relationships with partners especially in tourism and ; Waste management in Belfast Hills. Corporate includes: Greater co-ordination to maintain and develop a partnership approach; Improve awareness of value of hills for heritage and visitor potential; Facilitate non-biodiversity research in the hills; Seek additional funding, manage and deliver key projects e.g. LPS, Challenge Fund and visitor infrastructural projects.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

How best to manage the 'cuckoo in the nest', two separately funded programmes under the one umbrella i.e. BHP & LP Scheme; Unpredictability of funding and knock-on pressures on cash flow (funding pinch in 2009-10); The BHP doesn't own any land; we often feel we are working in relative isolation from other upland focused groups, we could benefit from more co-operation and joint working on shared problems; Partners needing to be aware of speaking positively of others; Need to constantly gather data (cost/time/expertise) and conduct research in numerous areas of the operation often at the behest of funders and; One of the next big strategic challenges will be to further integrate the BHP into the greater Health & Wellness offering for Greater Belfast.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

The Belfast Hills face a wide range of ongoing problems. These include fly-tipping and illegal landfill, pressures for local agriculture including undergrazing, wild fires, access to the hills and quality of life issues for local people. The BHP aims to address these in practical ways through:- Increasing people's appreciation of the value of the Belfast Hills through the likes of public information and training; Plan and carry out work programmes to protect and enhance biodiversity on the hills; Help people enjoy the hills through a range of well-managed public sites; Improve the quality of life for local people and; Promote sustainable local agriculture and industry including tourism.

13 Lessons Learned

Experience teaches you how to prioritise e.g three volunteers shook their tins for two days and got £120 in donations, whereas the team combined their skills and applied for a special fund and got £700k; The bigger the project the greater the 'soft skills' that are required to manage it successfully; There is a significant requirement to keep your core team together at all cost; As the scale of the operation increases there is a need / expectation for enhanced public relations; A formal volunteer corps needs to be constantly managed in order to be of material value; The farming community in upland areas need more supports, they must see real benefits such as subsidies; Managing the workload when staff numbers fluctuate; Effective community and partner communications at all times and; Partnership is the start and end of our success.

14 Work Profile

Community engagement 20%; Administration and Fund raising 15%; Access issues & projects 15%; Education and outreach 15%; Biodiversity 15%, Planning issues 10%; Agriculture issues 10%



22 Sperrins Outdoor Recreation Forum (SORF)

1 Contact

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2 Territory

The Sperrins stretch through counties Tyrone and Derry from south of Strabane eastwards to Slieve Gallion and north towards Limavady. Other principle towns are Maghera, Omagh and Cookstown. The region has a population of some 150k. The Sperrins are a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The highest peak is Sawel Mountain at 678m. The area is marked by remote bog land, mountainous valleys and has a distinctive glaciated landscape. (Note: The scale of the Sperrins can be gauged by a north to south drive time = 90mins / east to west drive time = 45mins.)

3 Founded The SORF was formed in 2013.

4 Genesis

The most significant historical obstacle holding back development of the Sperrins is the absence of one coordinating and suitably resourced management body with responsibility for the development, management and promotion of the region as a whole. The AONB area of the Sperrins currently has no dedicated AONB Officer or AONB Management Plan and is the only AONB not to have such in place. The area formally was governed by up to 7 different Councils (now 4). Sport NI facilitated the newly established broadly representative SORF to help develop an action plan with 21 overarching principles and provides them with much needed strategic and practical guidance in their formative years. (Note: While the SORF is chiefly concerned with sustainable recreational development and is the only body with a pan-Sperrins approach, it is not a suitable vehicle to oversee a coordinated management approach to the Sperrins but rather has lobbied for the councils and the Department of Environment to put one in place.)

5 Vision

The sustainable development, management and promotion of future outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities within the Sperrins region, accommodating both the needs of the local community and those visiting the area.

“The creeping success of the Sperrins”.

6 Key Objectives

The SORF's primary structural objective is in the short to medium term establish a 'Sperrins Partnership' like other landscape management bodies such as the Mourne Heritage Trust or Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership to be responsible for an area wide approach to the management, protection and development of the AONB; In product development walking and cycling route development are to the fore as is raising awareness of the heritage and environmental richness of the area through some innovative programmes; Marketing and communications will focus on developing and implementing a distinct Sperrins brand delivered through new and traditional media. Old and new festivals and events will be promoted. Integrated signage is also a key objective. (Note: Funding for projects completed / in-progress come through individual programmes on a project by project basis delivered through a number of public agencies / bodies.)

7 Structure

The Forum comprises 15 members drawn from all relevant stakeholders, there are also 15 observers who can attend meetings. Representatives are drawn from Community, Recreation, Farming / Landowning, Tourism, Heritage, Wildlife & Ecology and Statutory Bodies / Agencies.

8 Operational Management

The SORF has no staff in any capacity. Sport NI provides the services of its Outdoor Recreation Development Officer for 1/1.5 days per month basis. (Note: Sport NI funded the development of the SORF Action Plan.)

9 Annual Core Budget

The SORF has no formal budget but Sport NI covers the costs associated with meetings and any relevant outputs within a small and constrained budget. All members are voluntary.

10 Sample Programming

Design and delivery of 'Sense of the Sperrins' (with QUB teaching staff) which was delivered locally for local people. This tailored certified course was over subscribed running one day per week for eight weeks; Sperrins Heritage Trail (14 sites) – involved supporting farmers improve access to these sites. It has proved successful and provides a useful template; Helped develop a dedicated web site for outdoor recreation in the Sperrins with a private sector operator see: www.cycleni.cyclesperrins.com ; Developing recreational 'hubs' focusing on clusters of activities and visitor services to cater for locals and visitors - Glenelly Valley / Gortin Glen / An Creagan and Lough Macrory / An Carn, Dungiven, Banagher, Moneyneena and Draperstown / Lough Fea and Davagh / Learmount, Park and Claudy / Mourne and Derg Valleys; Walking development – ongoing creation of new walks, linking existing walks, creating strategic cross-country links between hubs, promote wild walking and hosting events. (Note: All of the above are / will be delivered in partnership.)

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

The significant changes / reorganisation of Councils in NI coupled with the lack of Access Officers (Council posts / similar to RRO in RoI) on the ground in the Sperrins has resulted in some disconnection; The scarcity and unpredictability of core funding; Raising expectations at the beginning of the process within the community; The need for a 20 year strategy (with 4 X 5 yearly 'action plans') however public funding / strategic planning tends not to think on this time frame; The universities / research institutions tend not to know the Sperrins.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

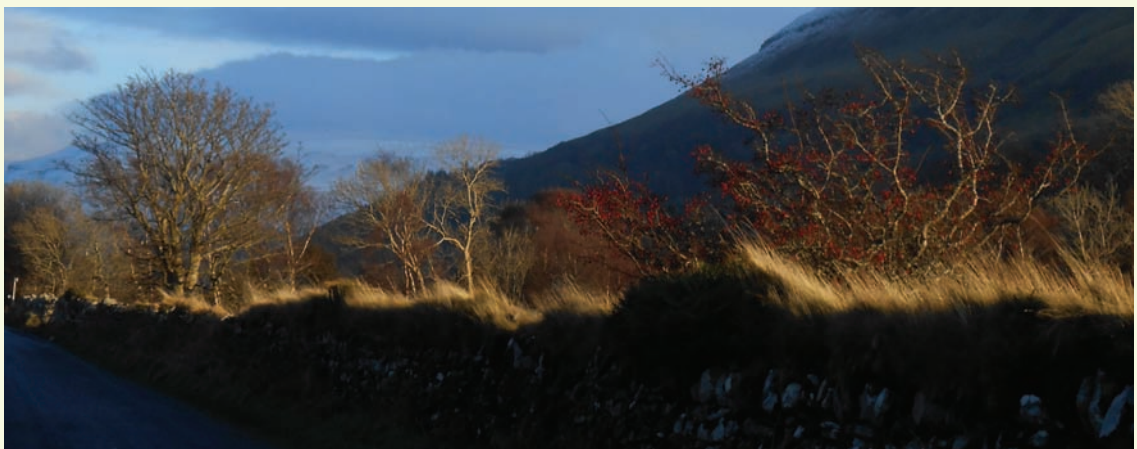
The first modern day gold mine in Britain or Ireland has been developed at the Cavanacaw deposit in the Sperrins; Water course / drainage management, especially with climate change, remains a significant threat; Building and managing a solid relationship with the farming community; there is a poor road network into and through the Sperrins; How can you best develop a great big marshie bog that is little more than a name on a map; Many ancient monuments are being neglected; The need for appropriate planting in the uplands going forward; How best to influence the Councils as they do their required Village Plans.

13 Lessons Learned

The need to take as many learnings as possible from previous uplands programmes / initiatives; The Sperrins has no 'centre'; Improving broadband promotes people home working especially in more remote areas; Access – generally few people know where the walks are in the Sperrins; Be mindful of the mining of our resources; The Sperrins is one of the oldest recorded habitable areas of Ireland (over 8000yrs) which in time past claimed its own distinct 'language'. The Sperrins continues to view itself as an 'island within an island'; The SORF are aware of the required 'balance' between running funding programmes and helping local groups / communities up their game and; There are significant community concerns in the Sperrins about the industrialisation of what is meant to be a protected landscape ie. potential for a major gold mining development to have a significant negative impact on the AONB .

14 Work Profile

Building relationships and credibility 25%;
Communications 25% Advice and guidance 25%;
Administration and planning 25%.



23 Knockatallon Development Company, Sliabh Beagh, Monaghan

1 Contact

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2 Territory

Sliabh Beagh (380m) straddles north Co Monaghan and counties Fermanagh and Tyrone in Northern Ireland. The upland area is marked by blanket bog and numerous lakes. Due to its geology and the peatland flora and fauna, part of the remote rolling moorland has been designated as a natural heritage area and an SAC. Sliabh Beagh Mountain covers over 3000ha and contains a number of internationally important habitats listed under the European Habitats Directive. The main recreational offering is a series of 36 interconnecting loop walks throughout Sliagh Beagh (also called Bragan locally) region which are way-marked and vary in length from 4km to 15km. The area lies 15km from Monaghan town. (Note: Sliabh Beagh Partnership is a wider cross border group made-up of 13 community organisations from Clones to Clougher who reside within or near the mountain. This PEACE 111 funded project has used the mountain as a 'peace building tool' including addressing the social, economic, cultural, environmental and the good relations needs of the area. See: www.sliabhbeagh.org).

3 Founded 1996

4 Genesis

The area was severely disadvantaged as a result of the troubles. There was significant de-population, border road closures and image problems to address. There was no tourism or recreation tradition. It was calculated there were over 100 derelict houses in the area. The mountain divided communities. The Development Company were starting from a 'zero base' but with multiple ambitions. One of the groups first actions was to organise 6-8 site visits to firmly established community enterprises around the country, the idea of the 'community hotel' grew out of these fact finding visits. (Note: All the 100+ derelict houses have been replaced through the efforts of the community. There is today a vibrant two teacher school with 35 children.)

5 Vision

To regenerate the Knockatallon area economically and socially.

"We have come along way in twenty years."

6 Key Objectives

Tourism and recreational infrastructure development; protection and promotion of the unique uplands environment; improving local social services especially for the more vulnerable; creating employment; improving cross border relations; saving the local school and improving the virtually non-existent public transport service.

7 Structure

Knockatallon Development Company Ltd is a company limited by guarantee not having share capital. There are 13 voluntary directors responsible for generating new ideas and the strategic development of the company. The executive officers form a Staff Management Group who oversees the operations of the Centre and related activities with the day to day running of the Centre delegated to Manager and staff. There are a number of sub committees who report to the Board e.g. Women's Group and Youth Group. The company is currently examining acquiring charitable status falling under the Type B organisations. There is a separate Knockatallon Community Development group who focus on organising festivals, events and fund raisers. The average age of this group is under 30yrs. The Development Company then will draw from this pool of younger people to replenish itself as its average age is over 50yrs. The group have access to 60 experienced volunteers. (Note: The Knockatallon Development Company Ltd have been the recipients of the Co. Monaghan People of the Year Award, National Rural Tourism Awards and Community Business Award Winners.)

8 Operational Management

The group are the second largest 'employer' in the area with a Manager plus 6 fulltime and 10 part time staff. These posts are supported through a variety of on-going Pobal managed employment support programmes such as RSS, TUS and the Community Services Programme (CSP). The administration of Knockatallon Development Company is based in the Sliabh Beagh Hotel and Tourism Centre. The group operate on 3 yearly Business Plans.

9 Annual Core Budget

500k per annum (Note: From the beginning the whole enterprise has sustained itself on a 'cocktail of funding' from the HSE to LEADER, from PEACE to the local authority. However the two primary sources of income are from a) delivering of elements of the Community

Services Programme and b) running functions, offering accommodation and catering for the needs of the community through the Sliabh Beagh Hotel & Tourism Centre. The local community have raised in the region of 600k in match funding over the years from a core of 160 families.)

10 Sample Programming

Knockatallon Walking Club – establishment and support for the 100+ strong club who organise walking festivals / weekly walks for all; The Centre provides accommodation, licensed restaurant, community functions, meeting and conference facilities and houses a once a week medical dispensary. The group have just opened a new state of the art astro turf facility adjacent to the Centre. The company also manage a childcare service which is based at the local national school. Investment in Training – from the outset the company have invested in the ongoing training of key officers including Cert in Community Development (UU) X 4, Degree in Business Enterprise + Community Development (AIT) X 1, Social Enterprise Diploma (UU) X 1 with a variety of other less demanding courses being completed from Trails Development to Social Media; Sliabh Beagh Way is a National Waymarked Way with all the accompanying signage, maps, guiding service largely masterminded out of the Centre.; Elderly Provision – The Centre runs a Services to the Elderly Programme with over 90 senior citizens on their register and currently provides between 60-65 subsidised meals on a weekly basis. They also host fortnightly social dances and weekly bowling sessions; Environment, Conservation and Education – the moorland is a significant home to the endangered Hen Harrier and Red Grouse and the group assisted with the creation of the cross bordered Sliabh Beagh Conservation Management Plan (2011) which was launched in the Centre. The group produced the Hills, Heather & Hope - Wildlife on Sliabh Beagh book for use in local primary schools on both sides of the border which was Peace III funded; Communication – the design and management of www.knockatallon.com.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

Securing match funding at the outset and lack of available credit; Lack of experience in tourism and the hospitality industry; Changing peoples fixed negative perceptions of the area (both internally and externally); The local authority had previously said Knockatallon was 'too high' to build any community housing on ... the community persisted and today 27 new houses are built that are all occupied and are helping in turn sustain the village; Recruiting and managing volunteers.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

It is so difficult to get good publicity especially from the national media; Broadband coverage and cost; Lack of public transport; Ensuring a steady predictable stream of public funding when required to dovetail with income generated and local fund raising.

13 Lessons Learned

Between the 2006 and 2011 Census the population of Knockatallon and hinterland increased by 18%; The Manager gets on with the job, he is not micro-managed ... even through this is the only community owned hotel in Ireland (2* Star / FI Approved / 28 beds) it has to be run as a business; In the hotel the food bring in more revenue but the bar is more profitable; Be brave - the community took the risk to build the hotel because there was no conceivable way the private sector would step in; Not being charged rates by the local authority for the first few years was a great boost (currently 10k pa); The Development Company has always had an excellent working relationship with the CEO of the local authority; Good signage has been important for such a remote area which was supported by the local authority and funded through LEADER; Build up a good relationship with all your local media; There is an annual formal meeting with the local authority (senior executives + elected reps) where the agenda can include roads, hedge cutting, winter salt on roads, speed reductions, tidy town's needs, tourism and festivals / events; After a certain time aim to get on the Boards of related projects / enterprises.

14 Work Profile

Provision of community services and facilities 40%; Community Engagement 25%; Administration and Fund raising 25%; Route Development 10%.



1 Contact

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2 Territory

The Ring of Gullion is a unique geological landform lying on the south of County Armagh and extending into County Louth (the AONB designation goes to the border). The ring of low, rugged hills forms a ‘rampart’ around the heather-clad Slieve Gullion mountain. Rich semi-wild habitats of heath, bog and woodland contrast with the neatly patterned fields and ladder farms. It is defined topographically by the hills of the impressive volcanic ring dyke. The boundary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) generally includes these hills and their outer slopes. Slieve Gullion is rich in mythology arising from its associations with legends and the wider area’s archaeological heritage. It covers an area of 15,353ha. Slieve Gullion in the centre of the Ring Dyke and SAC is approximately half is owned by approx. 50 landowners / farmers and the other half by the NI Forest Service. Less than 6% of the Ring of Gullion being woodland. South Armagh is a highly populated rural area with the larger communities in the area include Crossmaglen, Newtownhamilton and Bessbrook with Forkhill, Mullaghbane and Jonesborough being inside the AONB designation. Camlough sits just outside the AONB designation

3 Founded In 1966 it was designated as an AONB.

4 Genesis

The partners required to oversee the management of an AONB cover a wide spectrum of expertise from geology, built heritage, biodiversity, tourism, agriculture, forestry, and recreation, to everything that makes up a community. The lead partner, Newry and Mourne District Council, has made the Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) a top priority in their future planning. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has also contributes through its Environment Fund. The city of Newry bounds the AONB to the North East.

5 Vision

“To raise awareness and encourage a focus on the landscape - the beauty and distinctiveness of its natural features and cultural heritage, the opportunities to derive benefit from this landscape and its capacity to accommodate change. The Ring of Gullion landscape will be improved, restored and more fully appreciated through positive landscape management. To achieve our vision

management will work with and commit to engage with our statutory, farming, community, commercial, recreational and environmental partners who live and work in and around the Ring of Gullion.”

6 Key Objectives

Conserve, enhance and restore the natural and built heritage that gives the Ring of Gullion LPS area its unique sense of place; Increase community participation in local heritage to make its conservation more sustainable, including developing new audiences and involving hard-to reach groups; Increase understanding about the importance of the landscape heritage and the role it plays in people’s lives to make its conservation more viable; Increase the skills and knowledge of local communities and partners to help them to conserve and promote the landscape heritage and to provide a legacy to the scheme.

7 Structure

As with the other AONB's in NI a steering group has been convened for the Ring of Gullion comprising statutory, community, recreation and environment sectoral interests in order to raise awareness of the need for management of the AONB and to facilitate inter agency co-operation. The two main drivers of this are Newry and Mourne Council and the NI Environmental Agency. The Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) has a 16 person Board meeting every two months comprises. They include:- Voluntary / community sector X 5; Recreation X 1; Tourism X 3; Heritage X 1; Wildlife X 1 and Statutory / Agencies X 5. It should be acknowledged that many of these representatives straddle a number of different categories. This Board is supported by up to six informal and task orientated themed sub groups:- Conservation Volunteers; Oral History Working Group; Ring Dyke Working Group; Lunasa Festival Working Group; Arts and Craft Working Group and the Red Squirrel Working Group. (Note: Farmers are represented on all the Working Groups. Special forums and training events held to engage with the farming community.)

8 Operational Management

The LPS has a full time manager with three project related staff. Projects Officers deal mainly with capital works. A Volunteer and Outreach officer deals mainly

with volunteers, outreach to communities, training and the annual Lúnasa Festival. There is also a part time administrator. The AONB has a dedicated Officer. There is a good productive working relationship between the two entities. The backend administration, procurement, and financial support from Newry and Mourne Council is a significant asset to the project.

9 Annual Core Budget

Approximately £300k pa (The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme is made up of 24 projects and has a budget of approx £1.4m 2014/2018 which includes project costs, salaries and associated costs, in-kind contribution and volunteer time.)

10 Sample Programming

The Community Walking Leader and Heritage Ambassador Project - The aim of this project was to create a pool of up to 48 people able to lead groups of walkers and visitors around the area over the LPS life. It also aimed to increase the knowledge base for current and future tour guides, accommodation providers and tour operators. Provide Workspace and Outlet for Local Artists – this aims to provide a workspace and outlet for local artists at Slieve Gullion Courtyard and exposure on the Ring of Gullion website which has in excess of 130k visits pa. Communications – management of the portal www.ringofgullion.org – there is a monthly email shot to 3k+ subscribers – Newsletter 6k in spring, 6k in winter distributed through the schools and 18k in the summer to all households in BT35 - there is a growing social media following on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Trip Advisor. Know Your Townlands - The project aims to raise awareness about the townlands in South Armagh, their history, their meaning and why they are important. It aims to regain the oral tradition with a new activity book being printed for each school. There will be school visits throughout 2016. Each townland will have a 30 second audio clip from some one from that townland to capture their accent as an historical record. Each townland will be marked with boundary markers on roads that intersect them. Volunteering and Youth Ranger Programme - this project aims to build capacity in the local population to carry out conservation work together with inspiring and build capacity in the area's young people to manage protected areas. Natural History & Traditional Countryside Skills Training - aims to provide participants with the skills necessary to identify, record and report the species found within the Ring of Gullion, as well as the skills required to encourage biodiversity to thrive by employing traditional countryside skills. Historic Coach Tours – the delivery every Saturday / July & August of a single day guided coach tours of the area employing local guides. Training Delivery – the LPS is responsible for delivering a variety of bespoke training including GPS / Navigation Skills / Wildfire Management / and Natural Heritage.

11 Some Practical challenges Encountered

There tends to be a lot of paper work involved with Planning applications, and working with statutory partners; Another challenge is finding out information on landowners, if they haven't their land registered on Landweb then its resource heavy having to write out to locals, contacting community groups etc.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Its challenging to get in touch with key landowners in order to progress projects. After checking with Landweb, local communities, advertsing in local media and checking with our partners – sometimes we have to go to plan B and move the project to a different site.

13 Lessons Learned

Relationship building – as the LPS Manager is a Council officer there is an immediate 'point person' into the Council at all levels enabling an excellent relationship develop with the likes of the access, biodiversity, rural development and tourism teams. The relationship with the Council enables the accelerated flow of information on EU funded programmes and cross border programming opportunities; Good projects don't always require funding; People interested in the red squirrel and pine marten don't need to go to meetings on mountain biking that is why we developed the specialist sub groups; Resilient Landscape: Tree planting – we never employ more than 60% of one species, they are all native and importantly sourced and grown locally.

14 Work Profile

Natural heritage 20%; Community engagement 25%; Training 20%; Route development 15%; Communications & information 10%. Funding applications and funding claims 10%



25 Mourne Heritage Trust

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2 Territory

Mourne is one of the eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which together cover a fifth of the land area in Northern Ireland. They span over 570 square kilometres in the south east of Northern Ireland rising from sea level to 850 metres at the peak of Slieve Donard, Northern Ireland's highest point. The territory includes the Mourne mountains, a significant coastline, and the ancient uplands of Slieve Croob together with the foothills and drumlin country in between. The Mourne AONB is the most heavily used area of Northern Ireland for outdoor recreation.

3 Founded The AONB was first designated in 1966 and extended in 1986.

4 Genesis

The Mourne Heritage Trust was established in 1997 to meet an identified need for locally based strategic management of the area. The model of a Trust-based partnership was agreed by the Environment and Heritage Service (now Northern Ireland Environment Agency) and Northern Ireland Tourist Board, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the then three local authorities of Banbridge, Down and Newry & Mourne, now replaced by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. All these public partners at present remain committed to the partnership, although each has at times explored the possibility of withdrawal, most recently NIEA terminating funding in 2015 before reinstating under a new grant fund. At the outset the prominent local issues were control of erosion in the uplands, traditional stone wall maintenance, sustainable tourism promotion and the need to get a balance between development and conservation.

5 Vision

'To sustain and enhance the environment, rural regeneration, cultural heritage and visitor opportunities of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and contribute to the well-being of Mournes communities.'

"We feel we are a benchmark for integrated and sustainable upland management in Ireland."

6 Key Objectives

A comprehensive 5 Year Management Plan is structured around four interconnecting themes:- Mountain, Countryside and Coast; Historic Environment; Sustainable Communities and Enjoying, Appreciating and Understanding the Mourne AONB. A significant element of the Trust's functions across all the work areas outlined above is informing public policy and related programmes. (Note: The Mourne (AONB) are not marketed as a tourism brand however a wider Mourne Mountains and Ring of Gullion tourism brand has been established by the local authority.)

7 Structure

There is a 21 strong formal and broadly representative Board comprising Community Organisations (4), Recreational Users (4/5), Farmers / Landowners (4/5), Tourism (5), Heritage (2), Wildlife & Ecology (6). There is a staff complement of 18 both full time and part time staff including those employed in casual posts and on time limited projects. A managed corps of over 50 regular trained volunteers is a valuable additional resource. There are in excess of 120 members of the 'Friends of the Mourne'. The Trust also facilitates the Mourne Outdoor Recreation Forum with its 2 Working Groups (Strategic Path Review Group and Best Practice for Waymarking Upland Event Group). The Mourne Mountains Landscape Partnership (Heritage Lottery Funded) is a £3m programme to conserve and enhance some of the UK's most important landscapes and it operates within the apparatus of the Trust. An ambitious programme is underway aiming to engage with local people on conservation and enhancement projects in the Mourne AONB. Actions range from path construction to storytelling and from the history of granite quarrying to conservation of the prized upland heath habitats.

8 Operational Management

The CEO is supported by three key managers namely Countryside Services Manager, Mourne Mountains Landscape Partnership Manager and Office Manager. The Trust Rangers are an important and highly skilled asset comprising an Area Ranger, Access Ranger, Mountain Bike Trail Ranger, two Countryside Officers and three casual support staff. A Sustainable Tourism Manager works with and supports the other officers to maximise the tourism benefits of the various activities and liaises with tourism enterprises to promote awareness of the special landscape qualities of the area.

(Note: The MHT manages the mountain bike trails, controls litter and undertakes trail and related maintenance work for the Councils and, by aligning these services with its broader environmental management work, does so in a cost effective manner.)

9 Annual Core Budget

£400k pa (Note: Additional projects normally take the annual budget to over £1m).

10 Recent Sample Programming

Natural Environment Enhancement and Protection e.g. Wildfire Control including a series of trial controlled burns on a 5 hectare site; A 'Healthy Heathland' project aiming to restore habitat through the development of habitat management plans and implementation of practical restoration tasks for selected key sites; Active Lifestyles Volunteer Programme providing 1217 work days for all volunteers in 2014/'15; Coordination of the Annual Mourne Natural Heritage Awards. Visitor Management and Services e.g. Data collection - network of electronic pedestrian counters at strategic locations in and around the uplands showed 225k (2014/'15) annual recorded visitors at five portals sites to the hills with in the region of 20% of visitors assumed to come from the RoI; The successful completion of a major Upland Path Repair Programme at a cost over £700k; Regular repair and improvement of visitor infrastructure at 13 key upland car parks and amenity sites; Enhanced ranger service on Mourne Mountain Bike Trailsites (X 2). Sustainable Tourism e.g. The development of tangible focal points for interpretation and celebration of key 'Living Legends' stories including restoration of fifteen historic stone structures – bridges, gates, follies, obelisk – in Tollymore Forest Park, interpretation centre in Annalong Cornmill and a number of 'Trails with Tales, including the Narnia Walk in Rostrevor.

11 Some Practical Problems Encountered

How to bring people with you when there are conflicting agendas and emotions are high; The continuity of funding is a significant challenge; Practically overcoming the decade long contention over the Mourne in relation to structure and identity; Programming prioritisation; Working effectively with multiple funders / public partners including three Councils.

12 Some Unresolved Issues

Need for improved visitor management planning (measuring impact and ensuring sustainability) and visitor infrastructure (notably car parking and sustainable transport); Convincing farmers to take a High Nature Value farming approach in the uplands; Addressing and educating visitors on anti-social behaviour, litter and wild camping; Controlling dogs and helping resolve disputes is an ever present challenge on the hills.

13 Lessons Learned

Local bespoke solutions work best i.e. learning from best practice elsewhere and adapting appropriately through implementation (in other words adaptive management); Environmentally preserving and enhancing what is valued requires management not rewilding; Embedding an experienced ranger with any external path development contractors has resulted in higher standards and a transfer of knowledge; The most practical way to engage with all the communities / community groups within the territory is to meet them through events / activities and not formal public meetings; A strong, experienced and passionate officer corps is essential in order to get the job done in an area as important as the Mourne and with so many factors impacting on it; The Trust's work has evolved over recent years to focus more towards practical conservation interventions alongside monitoring and awareness raising and influencing. As a result it is having a deeper and more discernible impact across a more focussed area, notably publicly owned lands.

14 Work Profile

Visitor infrastructure development and maintenance 20%; Habitat management (conservation) 20%; Communications 20%; Built heritage restoration 20%; Volunteer engagement and management 10%; Influencing policy and public debate 10%.



- 1 HOWTH SPECIAL AREA AMENITY ORDER (SAAO) MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**
Contact Helen Lahert. **Email** helenlahert53@gm ail.com **Participants** Helen Lahert, Ann, Thornton, Debbie Tiernan. **Location** Dublin
- 2 DUBLIN MOUNTAINS PARTNERSHIP (DMP)**
Contact Jesper Petersen **Email** Jesper.Petersen@c oillte.ie **Participants** Jesper Peterson **Location** Dublin
- 3 WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL (WUC)**
Contact Cara Heraty **Email** cdoyle@wicklowu plands.ie **Participants** Sean Byrne, Cara Heraty **Location** Wicklow
- 4 SLIEVE BLOOM RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY**
Contact Frank Bergin **Email** fbergin1@gmail.com **Participants** Frank Bergin **Location** Laois / Offaly
- 5 BLACKSTAIRS FARMING GROUP**
Contact Helena Fitzgerald **Email** info@helenafitzger aldarchitects.com **Participants** Martin Shannon, Tomás McCarthy, Helena Fitzgerald **Location** Wexford / Carlow
- 6 MUNSTER VALES (INCLUDING KNOCKMEALDOWN ACTIVE)**
Contact Marie Phelan **Email** marie.phelan@tipp erarycoco.ie **Participants** Mark Rylands, Kevin O'Donnell, Marie Phelan **Location** Tipperary
- 7 GALTEES STEERING GROUP**
Contact John Egan **Email** info@stdc.ie **Participants** John Egan **Location** Tipperary
- 8 SLIEVE FELIM UPLAND FORUM**
Contact Matt Ryan **Email** mattryanccouncillor @hotmail.com **Participants** Matt Ryan, Edel Grace, Mary Ryan **Location** Tipperary
- 9 BALLYHOURA DEVELOPMENT, CO LIMERICK**
Contact Pádraig Casey **Email** pcasey@ballyhoura .org **Participants** Pádraig Casey, Aidan Gleeson, Jim Flynn, Pat Lombard, Pat Casey **Location** Limerick / Cork
- 10 MOUNT BRANDON NATURE RESERVE (DEXTER CATTLE RESEARCH PROJECT)**
Contact Therese Higgins **Email** therese.higgins@st aff.ittralee.ie **Participants** Therese Higgins, Killian Kelly, Noel Dineen, Geraldine Twamley-Stein. **Location** Kerry
- 11 MACGILLYCUDDY REEKS MOUNTAIN FORUM**
Contact Patricia Deane **Email** pdeane@skdp.net **Participants** Patricia Deane, Stewart Stevens, Donnie Foley **Location** Kerry
- 12 LEENANE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION – WALKING SUB GROUP**
Contact Martin Gavin **Email** martingavinifa@g mail.com **Participants** Martin Gavin, Brid Gavin **Location** Galway
- 13 MURRISK DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION**
Contact Breda Hyland **Email** hyland.breda@gm ail.com **Participants** Breda Hyland, Frank McCarrick, John Gavin, Chris Grady **Location** Mayo

14 BINN SHLÉIBHE ACCESS SCHEME, Co GALWAY

Contact Trish Walsh **Email** info@petersburg.ie **Participant** Trish Walsh **Location** Galway

15 THE OLD IRISH GOAT SOCIETY

Contact Seán Carolan **Email** Carolan.sean1@gm ail.com **Participant** Seán Carolan **Location** Mayo **Note:** Participation from across Ireland

16 BALLINTRILICK ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP (Incorporating the Glens to Sea, Co. Sligo / Leitrim)

Contact Jackie Warnock **Email** info@benwiskince ntre.com **Participants** Jackie Warnock, Aileen Connolly, Jim Brennan,
Deirdre Kennedy, Noreen Duignan **Location** Leitrim / Sligo

17 BOLEYBRACK RED GROUSE AND UPLAND CONSERVATION GROUP, Co LEITRIM

Contact John Carslake **Email** johncarslake@gma il.com **Participant** John Carslake **Location** Leitrim

18 DRIMARONE DEVELOPMENT GROUP, BLUESTACKS, Co. DONEGAL

Contact Rose Mary Ward **Email** info@donegalblues tacks.com **Participants** Rose Mary Ward, James Mc Groary , Joey Meehan, Billy Kennedy,
Pauline Mc Naughton, John Burke, Inga Bock. **Location** Donegal

19 SLIABH SNEACHT CENTRE, INNISHOWEN, Co. DONEGAL

Contact Kevin Doherty **Email** kevinwodoc@gmai l.com **Participants** Kevin Doherty, Henry O'Donnell **Location** Donegal

20 CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS HERITAGE TRUST

Contact Reamai Mathers **Email** reamai@lps.ceght. org **Participants** Maxime Sizaret, Reamai Mathers **Location** Antrim

21 BELFAST HILLS PARTNERSHIP (BHP)

Contact Jim Bradley **Email** jim.bradley@belfas thills.org **Participants** Jim Bradley, Lizzy Pinkerton **Location** Greater Belfast

22 SPERRINS OUTDOOR RECREATION FORUM (SORF)

Contact Mike McClure **Email** mikemcclure@spor tni.net **Participants** Sean Clarke, Ronnie Irvine, Jonathan Park, Philomena McDermott,
Angela O'Brian, Fiona Bryant, Mike McClure **Location** Tyrone / Derry

23 KNOCKATALLON DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, SLIABH BEACH, Co. MONAGHAN

Contact Mary Mullen **Email** knockatallon@eir c om.net **Participants** John Moyna, Mary Mullen **Location** Monaghan

24 RING OF GULLION, SOUTH ARMAGH

Contact Darren Rice **Email** darren.rice@newry andmourne.gov.uk **Participants** Darren Rice, Una Walsh **Location** Armagh

25 MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST

Contact Martin Carey **Email** martin.carey@mo urne.co.uk **Participants** Martin Carey, Mike McClure, Niall McAleenan, Dave Farnan **Location** Down

IUF SURVEY
IRISH UPLAND COMMUNITY GROUPS STUDY (2015)

- 1 Name of Group**
 - 2 Key Contact Person**
 - 3 Geographic Area / Address**
 - 4 Genesis** – Reason for initial formation (specify particular rationale/ motivation). Tick
Local Development Response
Game Management
Recreation /
Walking trail development
Agri Environmental Scheme
Rural Economic Opportunity
Sustainable Tourism
Mountain Access Issue
Other local challenge/initiative
 - 5 What Stakeholder Groups are represented:**
Community Organisations (list)
Heritage interests (list)
Recreational users (profile)
Wildlife and ecology (list)
Farmers and landowners (list)
Statutory agencies (list)
Service providers (list)
Local authorities (list with link person)
Tourism interests (list)
Other
 - 6 Structure – Incorporation Status.**
Tick and expand upon if necessary:-
Informal Local grouping / Formally constituted /
Company Limited by Guarantee / Other e.g Co-op /
Charity
 - 7 Management Co-ordination.** Tick.
Volunteers only / Project staffing / Permanent
staffing / Part-time staffing / Other e.g government
employment schemes
 - 8 Management Practice & Finance**
Regularity of meetings / Formal documentation
issued e.g agenda / minutes / On average how many
people attend each meeting? / Has the Group written
protocols / management systems including the
control of all money in / out? Has the Group
received any management or related training?
What training would be helpful? Expand.
 - 9 Outline the means used of raising awareness of
the Group on key issues as they unfold** e.g new
government policy, relevant research findings,
examples of national good upland management
practice?
 - 10 Practical problems encountered by the Group?**
 - 11 Lessons learned?**
 - 12 Annual Budget** (if applicable / expand)
 - 13 Sources of Funding**
 - 14 Self Generating Income** (including private sector
sponsorship)
 - 15 Statutory Agency support and general engagement?**
 - 16 Local Authority support and general
engagement (financial / in kind)?**
 - 17 Community Partnership / LEADER RDP
and specialist engagement incl Academia?**
 - 18 Membership Fees (if applicable)?**
 - 19 Benefactors / Local Fund Raising**
(if applicable including in kind supports)?
 - 20 Any stand out examples of *innovation* employed
by the Group?**
 - 21 Other income generated (specify)?**
 - 22 List any previous issues or challenges addressed
(management / partnerships / projects)?**
 - 23 List any 'special projects' undertaken / about to
be undertaken by the Group?**
 - 24 List current unresolved local issues/challenges?**
 - 25 What is the *agreed vision* of the Group?** [one line]
 - 26 List the primary objectives of the Group?**
 - 27 Is the Group affiliated to other groups nationally
or internationally?** Please outline & list.
 - 28 Has the Group participated in uplands related joint
projects – please outline** (e.g. InterReg, Cross
Border, Interterritorial RDP)
 - 29 Is the Group interested in being involved in an
Island Wide Network of like-minded bodies?**
Yes / No / Possibly. Also what do you believe as a
Group are the main issues facing Upland Communities
across the island today?
 - 30 What role / support would the Group see being
offered by the Irish Upland Forum into the future?**
Expand.
 - 31 Please identify as a % out of 100 the top four or
five areas of activity for your Group?**
e.g community engagement 25%;
route development & access issues; land use /
farming / heritage / environmental improvements
25%; communications & events 25%;
administration and fundraising 25%.
 - 32 How many active volunteers do you have access to?**
 - 33 Is climate change a tangible consideration in
future work planning? Yes/No. Expand**
 - 34 Contact Name and Information**
Name of prime movers and official contacts
Postal Address
3E-mail
Phone/ Mobile Phone
Website address if any
- Final Thoughts / Suggestions / Comments**

End/IUF/November 2015

NOTES

The author on behalf of the Irish Uplands Forum would like to thank all the communities and participants who contributed generously and with great insight to this Study.

Photography by Frank Nugent, Aideen Connolly, Alan Hill, Phillip Wells, Bruno Jensen and the 25 communities.



FURTHER INFORMATION

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