



WicklowUplands COUNCIL

Consensus

Community
Participation

Partnership &
Collaboration



Review & Strategic Plan (2021- 2023)

October 2020



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



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Chairperson Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Wicklow Uplands Council's three year Strategic Plan for 2021-2023. This plan aims to build and develop on our impressive record of achievement of previous plans and brings renewed focus to our work throughout the next plan period.

While 2020 will be remembered as the year that brought significant challenges due to Covid 19, it provided our organisation with an opportunity to slow down, reflect and review previous activities. This external review process facilitated a very valuable mechanism of self-evaluation. We examined our many successes and achievements to date, highlighted future challenges, and opportunities and reviewed our current structure from a governance perspective. The results of which form our new strategic plan.

The plan sets out a series of ambitious objectives for the next three years. Central to this will be building on the successes of our current key projects, while at the same time, investigating new initiatives and policy developments in line with our mission to support those who live, work, and recreate in the uplands. A key strength of Wicklow Uplands Council is our ability to establish and develop effective partnerships with a wide range of groups including, individuals, communities, statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to achieve collaborative projects and initiatives.

It cannot be denied that the current management structure of the Council has served extremely well which is thanks to the attentive commitment and voluntary input of our dedicated Board of Directors. However, in line with good governance procedure, we have considered change and examined what an alternative structure might look like. Hence, there is a proposal for change included within the strategy which requires further detailed discussion and consideration.

We are extremely grateful to our existing funders who have supported us and given the Council the opportunity to develop into a successful organisation. Despite our proven success, the Directors are acutely aware of our future funding constraints and have identified the need for new and sustainable sources of core funding as a top priority within the new strategic plan.

I feel it appropriate to take this opportunity to pay our respect to Colin Murphy who sadly passed away on October 15th, 2020. It is poignant that it was Colin who developed the very first Wicklow Uplands Council three year strategy when we first established in 1999. He was subsequently employed to put the plan into action and continued to work with the Council until his retirement in 2011. Colin was a remarkable man and his wise counsel, commitment to consensus and community participation, laid the very solid and successful foundations that Wicklow Uplands Council still operates.

I wish to thank all those who participated in the review and future planning process, directors, members, and of course our dedicated staff. I would also like to acknowledge funding support for this process under the LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme, County Wicklow Partnership and the Local Community Development Committee. I am confident that we have the commitment and enthusiasm to put this plan into action and look forward to working towards its implementation.

Tom Byrne

Chairman

Introduction to the Organisation

Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC) is an independent, voluntary organisation which represents the shared interests of over 30 diverse member groups and individuals in the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands. The organisation was first established in 1999. It takes a partnership approach to sustainable development and promotes projects which bring value to the people who live and work in the Wicklow Uplands and to those who use the area for recreational activities in line with its core mission.

‘To support the sustainable use of the Wicklow Uplands in consensus and partnership with those who live, work and recreate there’

Wicklow Uplands Council is a strong reference point and community forum for the Wicklow and Dublin Upland region. The organisation aims to build consensus and understanding between stakeholder groups. It does this by bringing together the views of those stakeholders and representing the shared interests of upland communities. Challenges that arise are responded to with innovative projects and partnerships. Wicklow Uplands Council leads policy from the bottom up, presents balanced views on upland issues and has often led the way nationally due to its grassroots and collaborative approach.

The Wicklow and Dublin Uplands contain some of our largest expanses of semi-natural habitats and are a huge natural asset. These areas are an intrinsic part of our natural heritage and their management and enjoyment play an important role in our cultural heritage. These areas deliver a wide range of important functions including food, energy and drinking water for adjacent urban populations. They have distinct biodiversity and are often associated with high nature value farmland. The upland landscape is also hugely important for a wide range of recreational activities and a popular visitor destination.

While ‘uplands’ are often considered to be open mountain areas above the 300m contour, Wicklow Uplands Council recognises the importance of the surrounding areas, the network of small towns & villages, the communities and the people who live, work and enjoy these areas as playing a crucial role in the wider upland landscape. Wicklow Uplands Council aims to support these communities and the unique and cherished landscape that they inhabit. Therefore, it is generally considered that the Uplands Council represents a broad area from Marlay Park in the north, to Tinahely in the south, and from the N11 in the east to the N81 in the west of the county.

Wicklow Uplands Council is supported by, The Heritage Council, Wicklow County Council and Corporate Sponsorship.

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



newstalk



Guiding Values

Wicklow Uplands Council operates within the following core values:

Consensus: The process of consensus building is central to the work of the Upland Council. Since inception, all decisions made by the Board of Directors have been made by consensus. By its nature this requires the resolution or mitigation of all minority concerns and objections.

Community Participation: Wicklow Uplands Council believes that the people who live, work and recreate in the uplands must be provided with opportunities to participate in the various local, regional and national decision making processes affecting the area. The organisation represents the views of the local people and presents their case to the statutory decision makers.

Partnership & Collaboration: Wicklow Uplands Council is committed to working for the sustainable use of the uplands area in partnership with statutory stakeholders in the spirit of Local Agenda 21. It recognises the necessity for, and benefits of, collaboration and partnership.

Priority Themes

Wicklow Uplands Council has identified the following priority themes through the review process and in response to the challenges and objectives identified for this plan period.

- To obtain relevant funding to ensure future sustainability
- To encourage best sustainable management of our natural heritage, habitats, and landscapes
- To continue to develop opportunities for sustainable recreation
- To encourage rural employment
- To support the retention of the rural population
- To represent shared interests
- To improve communications and to raise awareness of the identity of Wicklow Uplands Council and its work
- To promote the Wicklow Uplands by collectively promoting towns and villages which act as 'gateways' to the area

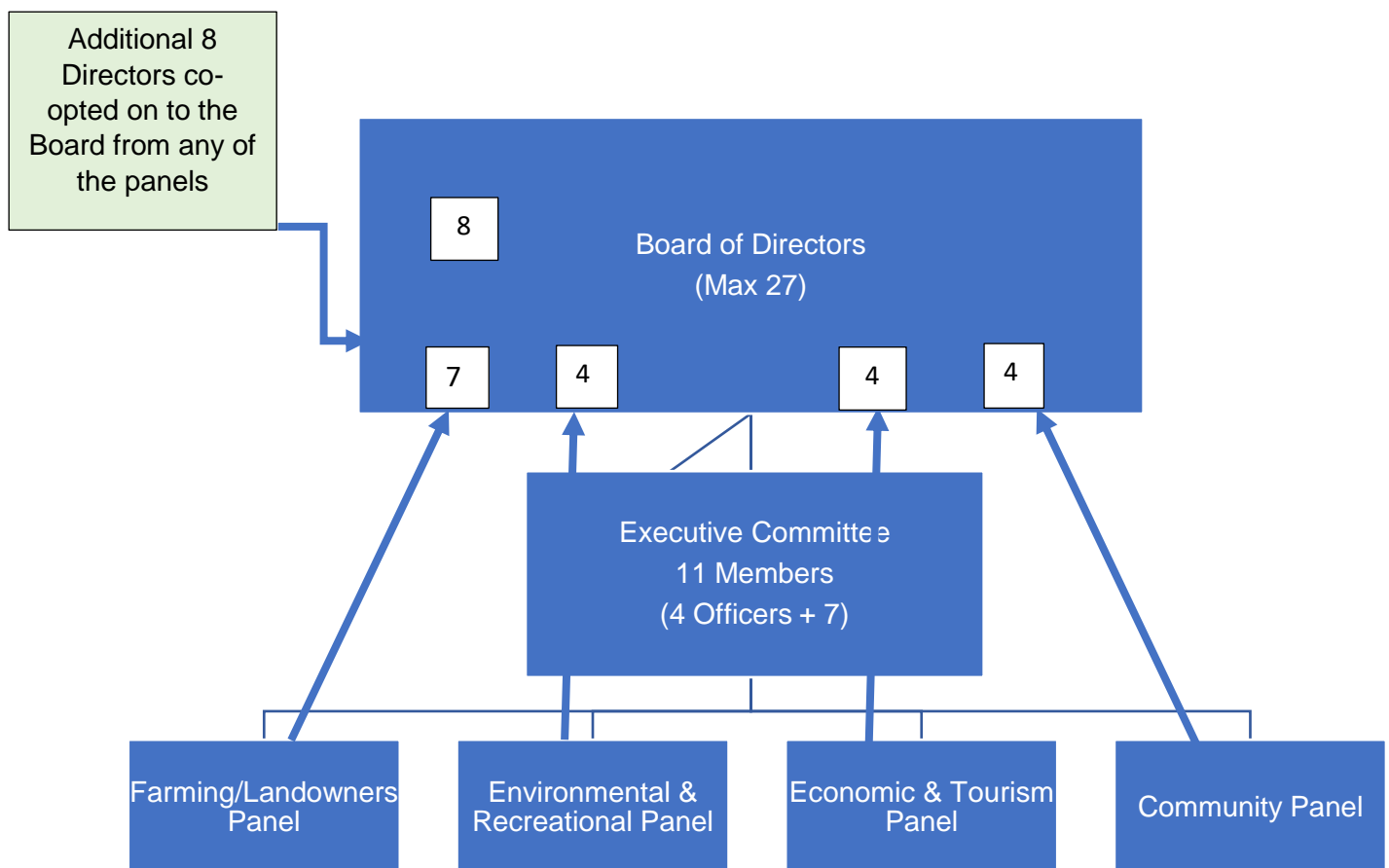
Current Structure of the Organisation

WUC is a membership organisation, a limited company, and a registered charity. Membership is divided between four Panels based on primary interest and each of these panels nominate the following number of candidates to sit on the Board of Directors at the AGM.

- Farming/Landowning Panel 7 Candidates
- Environmental & Recreational Panel 4 Candidates
- Economic & Tourism Panel 4 Candidates
- Community Panel 4 Candidates

The nineteen elected can then co-opt an additional eight Directors on to the Board. Co-options may be elected from any of the panels based on additional expertise needed to support the organisations priorities for the year ahead. Currently, the total number of Directors that can sit on the Board is 27. There is also an Executive Committee, comprised of the four officers and an additional 7 representatives from the Board, bringing the total number on the Executive to 11. In addition, sub-committees are formed periodically to focus on specific issues and projects and to make recommendations to the Board for consideration and decision.

Diagram 1. Current Structure



Appendix 1. Current Board Member listing following AGM held in October 2020.

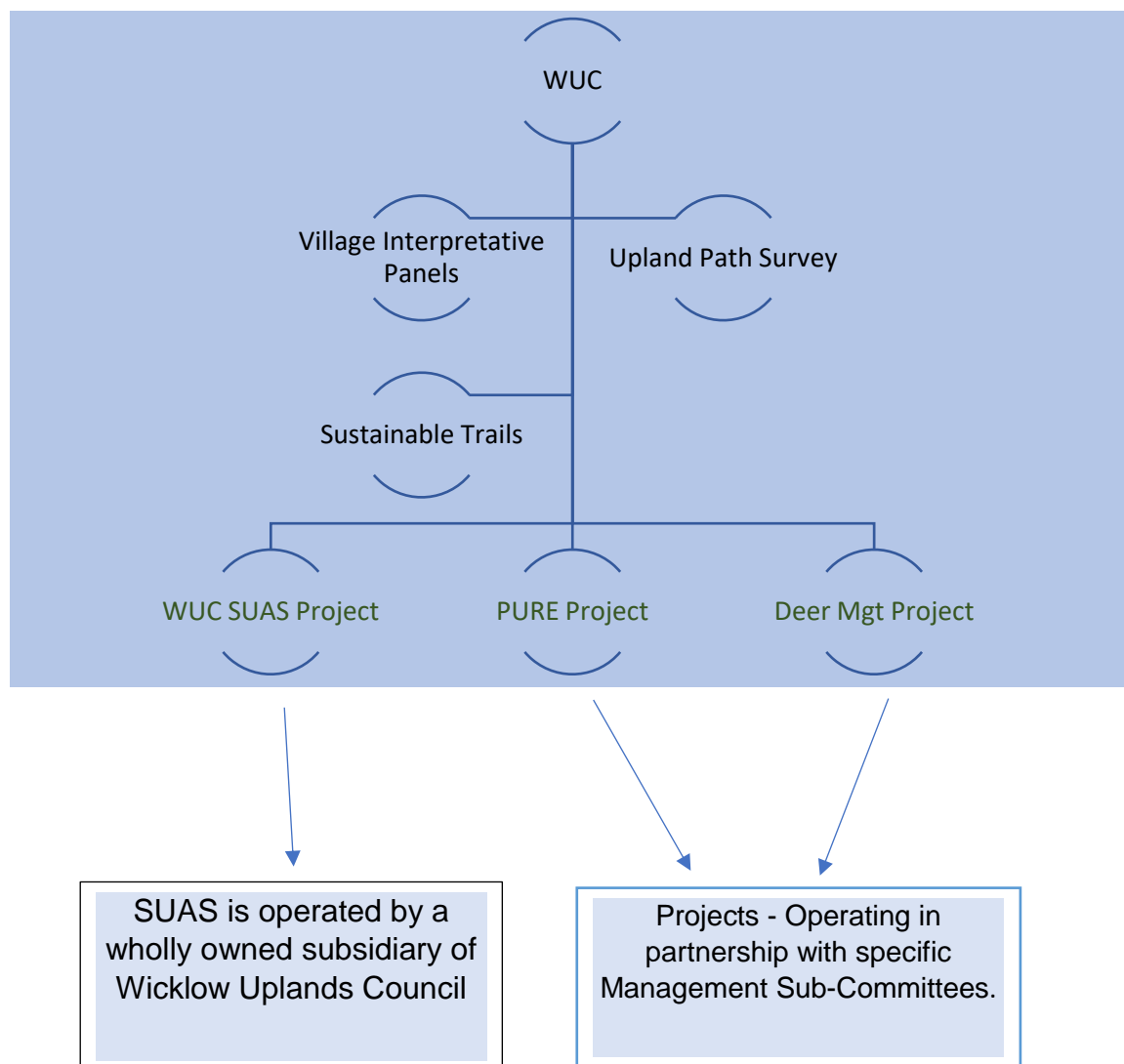
Current Membership Category Fees

Membership is divided across three categories. (1) Individuals, (2) Community Groups & (3) Larger National Organisations. Membership fees are modest at (1) €10, (2) €30 & (3) €70, respectively.

WUC Projects

The following diagram illustrates the projects that WUC is involved in delivering currently.

Diagram 2. Current Projects



Brief Overview of Current Projects & Activities

Since inception, Wicklow Uplands Council has responded to the challenges and issues that arise at a local level through the initiation and delivery of innovative projects and partnerships. All projects are operated in partnership with various relevant stakeholders and support the sustainable management of the upland landscape. While certain projects are managed directly by Wicklow Uplands Council e.g., Village Interpretative Panels, Sustainable Trail Developments, other projects including SUAS, PURE and the Deer Management Project are operated in association with partner/stakeholder Management Sub-Committees as detailed below.

Sustainable Trail Developments

Wicklow Uplands Council's approach to achieving agreed access on private land was recommended as a model template by Comhairle na Tuaithe. While Wicklow Uplands Council has long been involved in facilitating dialogue with local landowners in the development of agreed access routes, in more recent years it has taken a more active role in the sustainable development and the subsequent management of a number of walking trails. These trails have been developed in a strategic manner with a long term vision of a long distance off road route linking Bray Station in the North of county to Woodenbridge in the south. This long distance trail would connect the towns and villages and communities along the way, connecting with public transport services and supporting local economies.

In line with this vision, Wicklow Uplands Council was responsible for the development of the Avonmore Way, Sugar Loaf Way and most recently the Bray Head Loop and Belmont Way. The combination of the Bray Head Loop, Belmont Way and Sugar Loaf Way provide walkers an opportunity to walk from Bray to the Sugar Loaf, a route of almost fifteen kilometres. The route featured in the 2020 series of RTE's 'Tracks and Trails'.

Village Interpretative Panels

Since 2007, Wicklow Uplands Council has led a community-based initiative to develop a network of interpretative panels in towns and villages across County Wicklow. The village interpretative panels highlight heritage sites and points of interest found in the various localities. The panels each have a consistent style and format which includes a bird's eye artistic impression of the village and or the surrounding landscape along with short descriptors on the various points of interest. This consistent approach is important in developing the network. The initiative relies on strong community participation as it is the local community groups who carry out the research and are responsible for choosing the aspect of the artwork along with the points of interest for inclusion. This established collaborative initiative represents an important opportunity for community groups to promote their local natural and built heritage features. The panels are installed in central locations and have become an important focal information point for both locals and visitors.

The 'Village Interpretative Panel' initiative is carried out in partnership with local community groups, County Wicklow Partnership and Wicklow County Council. 2020 saw the completion of new panels in Lacken, Shillelagh and Ashford. Currently, there are sixteen panels in the network including: Ashford, Aughrim, Baltinglass, Blessington, Dunlavin, Enniskerry, Kilmacanogue, Lacken, Laragh, Newcastle, Newtownmountkenedy, Rathdangan, Rathdrum, Roundwood, Shillelagh and Tinahely.

Upland Path Survey

Given the proximity to Dublin, upland paths in the Wicklow Mountains experience very high levels of footfall compared with other areas of Ireland. Unfortunately, this high-level usage has led to noticeable erosion of the most popular paths, many of which traverse 'Special Areas of Conservation' (SACs) and sensitive habitats. These informal paths have evolved over decades and their growing popularity has resulted in the trampling and loss of vegetation and consequent soil erosion.

A key issue for landowners and managers is the ability to effectively evaluate how these paths are changing over time. Therefore, specific surveys are required to make accurate and scientific judgements on the rate and scale of such changes. The last detailed assessment of upland paths across the Wicklow Mountains region was carried out during the summers of 2002 and 2003 by Mountain Meitheal.

Wicklow Uplands Council and Wicklow Mountains National Park along with Coillte, County Wicklow Partnership, Mountaineering Ireland, and Mountain Meitheal are currently working together to secure funding to survey over 100km of upland paths in Wicklow. The envisaged survey will access the paths originally surveyed along with additional paths where erosion is evident. It will identify and prioritise paths most in need of remedial action and provide indicative costing for the work.

Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS)

Wicklow Uplands Council was responsible for the development and is responsible for the ongoing implementation of the five-year pilot project 'Sustainable Uplands Agri-Environment Scheme' (SUAS). SUAS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Wicklow Uplands Council with an operational period of 2018-2022. The project is a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The project was developed following several years of extensive research on upland vegetation management, declining upland farming activity and the associated decline in biodiversity. It is designed to support farmers in the sustainable management of environmentally significant habitats that they farm in the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands. There are ten sites across the Wicklow and Dublin uplands which are participating in the project. Farmers on these sites are receiving remuneration for activities which support the improvement of the condition of their farmed habitats. These activities are set out in agreed ecological management plans and reviewed each year. Activities carried out under the project include: Cutting and swiping of vegetation to create firebreaks, controlled burning, active shepherding, reintroduction of cattle grazing to trample and graze heavy vegetation, spraying of bracken in heavily infested areas, fencing and restoration of old bog roadways. The project aims to create the blueprint for future upland agri-environment schemes and is managed by an operational group including representatives from WUC, Teagasc, UCD, LAWCO, NPWS and independent experts.

Deer Management Project

In 2018, Wicklow Uplands Council signed a three-year contract for the provision of sustainable 'Deer Management' services in Co. Wicklow. The project is jointly funded by The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and The Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, and is managed in conjunction with Wicklow Deer Management Partnership. Initially the aim of this project was to establish three new Deer Management Units (DMU's) throughout the county. A DMU is an area of land where landowners, hunters and other interested parties come together to manage deer within agreed objectives. Each DMU will assess and monitor the adverse impacts of deer in those areas and make recommendations towards reducing those impacts in a sustainable manner. There has been considerable interest in the project and five DMU's have now been established. The Project Management Committee comprised of representatives from WUC and Wicklow Deer Management Partnership.

PURE Project

The PURE Project (Protecting Upland and Rural Environments) was established in 2006 to tackle illegal dumping and fly-tipping in the Wicklow and Dublin uplands. PURE is a partnership project involving statutory and non-statutory organisations including Wicklow County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte and Wicklow Uplands Council. The project account is administered by Wicklow Uplands Council which employs the project manager on behalf of the project partners. This project is funded by the Department of Climate Action, Communication Networks and Transport. A lo-call-phone-line 1850 365

121 operates 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and allows any member of the public to report incidents of illegal dumping, or individuals who are responsible for such activities. A dedicated clean up truck ensures the timely removal of all waste material.

Since inception, the project has removed over 3500 tonnes of illegally dumped waste from the rural landscape. It has also witnessed a 63% reduction in illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands. The project is also responsible for initiation of the hugely successful 'PURE Mile' competition. This community/environmental initiative encourages communities to keep a mile stretch of road and the immediate environment litter free while simultaneously considering the preservation and careful maintenance of the flora and fauna, ditches, hedgerows, and any other natural or man-made features of the area. The Project Management Committee comprises all the partners detailed above.

Heritage Week

Heritage Week is a great opportunity to celebrate the rich and diverse heritage associated with the uplands. Every year, Wicklow Uplands Council celebrates Heritage Week with an event or numerous activities. These events promote both the Uplands and the work of the Wicklow Uplands Council and have included guided walks and heritage talks, workshops, photography competitions, exhibitions, open days etc. Heritage Week 2020 was celebrated with the production of a video promoting the recently completed Lacken Village Heritage Interpretative Panel along with a number of guided walks and heritage talks in the area which brought the rich historical story of Lacken alive across all media platforms.

Dog Control

Over the last few years, dog control has become a major issue for upland sheep farmers as increased recreational use of the hills clashes with the historic use of the hills for sheep farming. Wicklow has been at the forefront of opening up private land for recreational use but the growing presence of uncontrolled dogs has the potential to threaten existing access agreements. In general, private landowners welcome responsible recreational use of the Wicklow hills and central to this is responsible dog ownership. Wicklow Uplands Council has been working with the stakeholders to address this escalating problem. In 2013, as the result of months of debate, Wicklow Uplands Council, Wicklow IFA and Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association agreed to support the use of signage to prohibit dogs on private land where livestock are present. The signs are located in hotspot areas. A consistent message is promoted and requests recreational users to respect grazing animals, wildlife and other recreational users and leave their dogs at home. A PR campaign is organised each year to bring attention to this important issue. Wicklow Uplands Council's full policy on dog control is available to view on the website www.wicklowuplands.ie.

Other Activities

In addition to key projects, Wicklow Uplands Council undertakes activities each year which are designed to promote the uplands and the work of the Council. For example, the annual roadside litter pick in remote areas of the uplands in conjunction with the PURE Project and National Spring Clean. In addition, members represent the uplands at various events and conferences throughout the year.

Policy Development and Submissions

Aside from project work, Wicklow Uplands Council develops its own policies and submissions on relevant upland matters. It leads policy from the bottom up, presents balanced views on upland issues and often leads the way nationally due to its successful grassroots and collaborative approach. Policies have included, Dog Control in the Uplands, Controlled Burning, Renewable Energy, sale of Coillte

Harvesting Rights etc. Balanced observations and submissions and are made on relevant local and national developments, plans and policy reviews. Recent submissions include, The Heritage Bill, Wicklow County Development Plan, Wicklow Climate Adaption Strategy, Dog Control Legislation Review etc. Upcoming plans of note include; the Visitor Masterplan for Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park and the ongoing development of the Wicklow County Development Plan. The development of policies and submissions ensure that the voices and concerns of local people are represented.

Representation

Representing shared upland interests is key to Wicklow Uplands Council's overall objectives. The organisation is very active in this area and is currently represented on the following county, regional, national and European Committees.

Table 1

County
County Wicklow Public Participatory Network (current rep on LCDC from PPN)
Wicklow County Tourism
Wicklow Heritage Forum
St Kevin's Way Management Committee
Wicklow Local Sports Partnership
Wicklow Multi-Agency Animal Welfare Committee
Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee
Regional
Dublin Mountains Partnership (Consultative Forum)
National
Irish Uplands Forum
National Upland Network Partnership
Member of Leave No Trace Ireland
European
EUROPARC Federation (Sustainable Agriculture)

Wicklow Uplands Council Staffing

Wicklow Uplands Council currently employs 3 staff in the following positions.

Position	Timeframe
Coordinator	Full time
Administrative Officer	Part Time
PURE Project Manager	Full Time

Wicklow Uplands Council also contracts the services of a part-time Project Manager for the Deer Management Project and a Communications Officer.

Current Sources of Funding

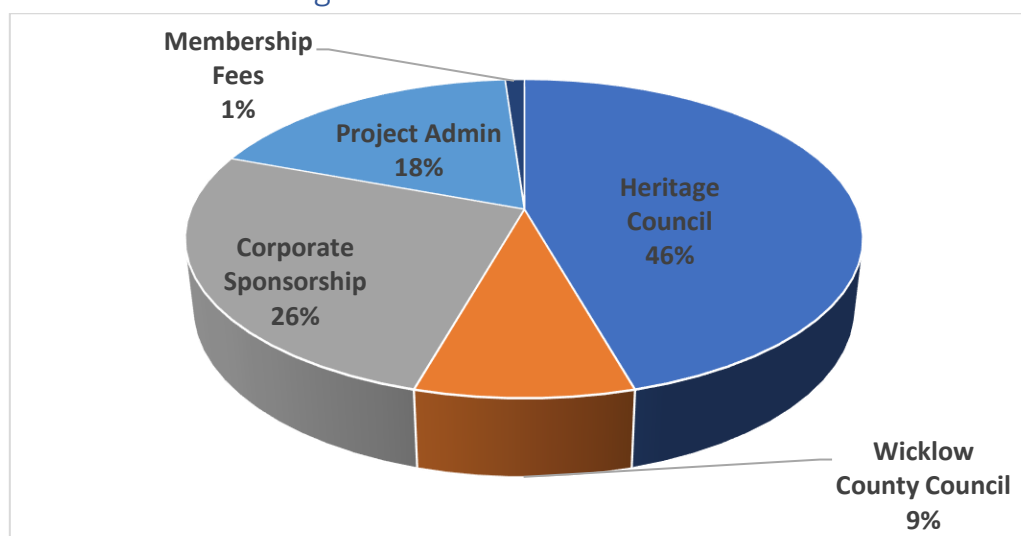


Diagram 3 Current Funding

As is evident from the diagram above, Wicklow Uplands Council is highly dependent on core funding from statutory sources. Currently the Heritage Council and Wicklow County Council account for over half of WUC's annual core funding at 55%. This core funding is not guaranteed and must be applied for each year. Private sources account for 27% of which 26% is due to expire in 2022. The balance of 18% is derived from Projects administration funds. Project administration is becoming a more important source of core funding to the organisation. This amount varies each year depending on project involvement however it has increased substantially in recent years and is an essential funding source for staffing, administration, project expenditure and the operation of Wicklow Uplands Council's office in Roundwood, Co Wicklow.

Funding Source	Amount
Heritage Council	€52,000
Wicklow County Council	€10,000
Corporate Sponsorship (due to expire in 2022)	€30,000
Project Admin	€20,750
Membership Fees	€1,250
Total	€114,000

Review and Development of Strategic Plan Brief (2021- 2023)

Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC) contracted an external consultancy company (Siobhán Geoghegan Consulting Ltd) to carry out the following scope of work between August and October 2020.

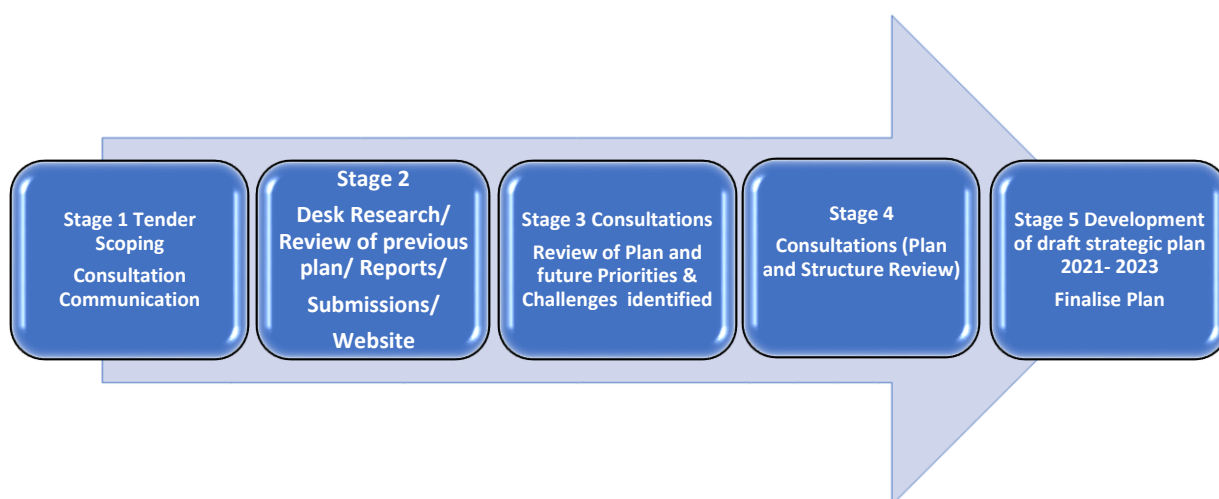
- ☐ Review of previous Wicklow Uplands Council Strategic Plan
- ☐ Review of the current organisational structure
- ☐ Development of Strategic Plan (2021- 2023)

Tender Specifications & Requirements

- Design and deliver a focused consultation process with members, directors, and staff in relation to the review of the previous plan and the organisations structure
- Produce clear recommendations on where improvements might be made to improve the structure of the organisation in line with good governance procedure
- Design and deliver a focused consultation process with members, directors, stakeholders, and key funders to inform the development of the new strategic plan
- Compile a SWOT analysis
- Assist in identifying the key priorities which will guide the work of Wicklow Uplands Council throughout the next period
- Facilitate and draft an effective forward looking Wicklow Uplands Council 2021-2023 Strategic Plan
- Include any additional recommendations in their submission which might add to this process

Methodology

The following methodology was adopted to meet the objectives of the tender specifications.



Consultation Process

Originally planned as a number of group face to face consultation sessions, this approach was subsequently cancelled in line with Covid 19 Guidelines and safety concerns for staff and members. Hence a detailed questionnaire was designed and circulated which centered around the objectives of the previous plan. This stakeholder questionnaire also contained open-ended questions focused on current and future challenges and opportunities facing the organisation. The design of this consultation process sought to obtain maximum engagement from the membership. This initial consultation stage was live for 4 weeks. Overall, there was a high level of engagement, with members choosing to input via email, telephone, and post. **See Questionnaire in Appendix 2.**

Based on feedback from the initial consultation phase and as a mechanism to deepen the consultative process and seek further input, three draft summary documents were circulated.

1. Structure - Feedback Proposal for further consultation
2. Draft SWOT Analysis
3. Draft Objectives for 2021 - 2023 Strategic Plan

Based on feedback a 'Proposed New Structure Model & Rationale Document' was circulated for further consideration and input. Following further input, a one page 'Proposed Structure' and an invitation for members comments and observations was circulated.

In addition, WUC Staff, contractors and current funders were also given an opportunity to feed into the consultation process. Finally, Panel notes from the most recent AGM in October 2020 were included.

Summary of Review Findings

The following is a summary of the responses received. Feedback is collated under the objectives of the previous plan, facilitating the presenting of a self-evaluation process. Tangible outputs as detailed in the WUC 2019 Annual Report are also included where relevant.

Organisational Development

Objective: Ensure that the structures, procedures, and policies of the Uplands Council are adequate to deliver this strategic plan.

FINANCE

Despite reduced funding in recent years, the organisation has managed well within its core funding budget. Additional funds leveraged through project activity e.g., SUAS, PURE, Village Panels and the Deer Management Project, which fluctuates depending on project activity, is significant and helps to sustain operations. However, the organisation is seriously concerned about its future financial sustainability, resulting from reductions in funding levels from both private and statutory sources. Coupled with this is the potential threat of further reductions resulting from Covid 19 Pandemic and the knowledge that WUC's arrangement with its main private funder will expire in 2022. Securing core funding for the organisation continues to be the most difficult problem to solve, therefore it is paramount that new and alternative sources of secure funds are identified. The organisation has a proven track record in delivering successful stand alone and partnership projects and initiatives, resulting in positive benefits and outputs for Wicklow and Dublin uplands areas. Given increased visitor numbers and issues surrounding Covid 19 practices in the uplands, WUC's role will be more

significant and integral to addressing the needs of all stakeholders. This process identified the need to secure future funding for the organisation as a key priority.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The present Board structure has served the organisation well and reflects the commitment to achieve consensus between various interest groups, as a decision has never been made by a majority. However, the review process yielded mixed viewpoints in relation to the appropriateness of the organisation's structure for today and the future. Some members indicated that the structure is effective and appropriate, others indicated that while the structure has served the organisation well to date, it is timely to review it. Others highlighted that they were open to discussions around changes to the current structure. Those in favour of no change to the current structure, highlighted, although the board is large, there is strong commitment and expertise, and attendance is excellent. Representation across the various interest groups is strong which allows for good engagement and debate among members, leading to consensus eventually.

Those in favour of making changes to the board structure highlighted that they consider it to be too large and potentially not adhering to best practice guidelines for the non-profit sector contained in the Charities Governance Code. This Code is the instrument that sets down the minimum requirements for charities to adhere to. 2021 will be the first year that WUC must adhere and submit a report under the principles set down in the Code. The importance of maintaining adequate director's oversight, ensuring all directors have the necessary level of detail and full awareness of their legal roles and responsibilities was highlighted. The size of the board means that this liability is spread widely, and some directors may not be fully aware of their legal responsibilities.

Respondents acknowledged the importance of stakeholder engagement as a guiding principle for the organisation, indicating that any new structure model must have this build in as a core value. Equally the importance of retaining relevant skills and expertise was highlighted as being paramount to the future success of the organisation. It was also highlighted that the size of the Executive Committee has increased over the years and now stands at 11 members which is considered very large.

The desk research element of this review highlighted previous recommendations in relation to amendments to the structure, contained in the following reports

- ☐ 2008 – 2010 Strategic Plan
- ☐ Recommendation in review carried out by Dr Kathy Walsh (2011)
- ☐ 2014 – 2016 Strategic Plan

STAFF & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

The organisation greatly values its staff and acknowledges the heavy workload carried out. Staff have demonstrated a strong work ethic and dedication to the objectives of the organisation. The decision to extend the hours of the admin position and to appoint a communications officer is a welcomed development, which will assist in sharing the workload. Members acknowledged that there had been several volunteering opportunities, however some members expressed an interest in the creation of more opportunities for voluntary engagement.

BROADENING THE MEMBERSHIP BASE

Current membership is broad and highly representative, comprising a wide range of groups and individuals who work, live, and recreate in the upland area. However, membership numbers are declining. The largest membership base is currently within the 'Environment and Recreational Panel'. The organisation acknowledges the need to increase its membership numbers. Expanding on the

current skills and knowledge base and involvement of younger people is very much desired. Members also noted the need to increase engagement at community level.

Overall, it is a priority to create greater awareness about the role and work of the organisation, both within Wicklow and beyond,. The membership feel that it is paramount that the public fully perceive and understand the objectives and work of the organisation. The review process highlighted that there is a misconception in the public domain around the role and work of the Uplands Council. The appointment of a 'Communications Officer' will greatly assist in overall communication and messaging.

SENSE OF PURPOSE AMONG MEMBERS

The organisation has successfully nurtured a shared sense of purpose among its members. There is mutual respect and a good working relationship between the Panels and Board. Although interests are varied, there is respect for all viewpoints leading to consensus. Each year the Directors and members have opportunities to participate at events in a representative capacity. Some recent examples include:

2019

- 2018 Uplands Study Visit Review Meetings with Upland Network Coordinator
- DAFM EIP Workshops in relation to the SUAS Project
- Launch of Wicklow walking Maps, organised by WUC
- Irish Uplands Forum AGM, Co Antrim
- National Ploughing Championships, representing SUAS
- Visit of EU Delegation to SUAS in Laragh, Co Wicklow
- Launch of East Wicklow Rivers Trust
- Invited by Wicklow County Council to attend visit of HRH Prince Charles to Wicklow
- Irish Rural Link Climate Conference
- Mountain Awareness Day, Co –hosted between WUC and Mountaineering Ireland
- Presentation of WUC projects to Wicklow Rotary Club
- SUAS Open Day and Heritage Week Event
- Glenasmole Heritage Week Event
- Update Meeting with members of INHFA in Newport, Co Mayo

- EUROPARC Annual Conference, Latvia
- IUF EIP Networking Meeting, Glencree, Co Wicklow
- Burren Winterage Festival
- Launch of IUF Socio-Economic Report

2020

- Members Panel Meetings February 2020
- Irish Rural Link Sustain it online workshops
- IUF Virtual AGM
- Unveiling of village interpretative panels
- East Wicklow Rivers Trust River Detective training
- Heritage Week Walks – Lacken
- Members Panel Meetings September 2020
- Full participation in the Review and Strategic Planning process
- Burren Winterage Virtual Conference
- Numerous Webinars
- Online discussion meeting re Natural Capital and INCASE Project on Dargle Catchment

Communication and Engagement

Objective: To engage with and support consensus building among the people, groups and communities who live, work, and recreate in the Uplands and to increase public awareness of Wicklow Uplands Council and its work among member groups, individuals and the general public.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The organisations internal communication systems and processes works well across a variety of platforms and channels. Email, online, ezine and written communication serves to keep the membership up to date on all issues and activities. The importance of the Board of Directors having appropriate levels of information and oversight, enabling them to carry put their legal responsibilities was highlighted as integral.

WIDER PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

WUC's objective is to implement and develop a wider promotion and communications strategy. External communication is viewed as 'a 'work in progress' and while the organisation has been effective in this area, there is room for increased visibility and clear messaging. The engagement of a 'Communication Officer' position has improved visibility and will continue to do so. Paramount to all communications is to highlight the broad role of WUC, ensuring that the public fully perceive and understand the diverse work of the organisation.

WUC continues to grow its online presence through its website and through the steady growth of social media pages, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. WUC's website www.wicklowuplands.ie is the main source of information, highlighting the work and projects carried out by the organisation. It has a steady audience with over 10k new users from the period Jan – Nov 20 and over 12,500-page sessions.

Social media has become an important platform for messaging and bringing attention to upland issues. WUC's Facebook page has over 4000 followers with a growth in followers of 54% in 2020. WUC's Twitter page has almost 2000 followers while a more recently created WUC Instagram page has gained 1,371 followers to-date.

The most recent version of WUC's newsletter, 'Wicklow Mountain Views', was published in August '19. The publication contains news articles, features, and photographs, on a broad range of topics such as recreation and community developments, historical accounts, heritage awareness, project updates and matters that affect the upland communities. 1500 copies were printed and distributed to members, local politicians, local libraries, community centres etc. An e-zine version of the newsletter is also circulated to a large mailing list. A standalone e-zine, due for production in December 2020 will replace the hardcopy version of the newsletter.

WUC gains considerable media coverage in both local and national media (radio interviews and newspaper articles). **See Appendix 4 - WUC 2020 Media Engagement Activities**

Development of Innovative Projects to Support Uplands Sustainability

Objective: To test and promote the use of innovative initiatives and responses to address gaps in services and/or provide increased access to opportunities and/or address unforeseen events to support the sustainability of the uplands, or to address a particular issue affecting the uplands

IDENTIFYING PROJECTS & OBTAINING FUNDING TO DELIVER

Overall, the organisation has performed well, identifying, and agreeing relevant projects. The multi-stakeholder composition of the Board & Panels greatly assists in identifying relevant issues and devising possible solutions. Projects undertaken by WUC to date clearly demonstrate the organisations ability to identify and implement both stand alone and partnership projects. Successful funding proposals have been developed by staff to support such initiatives. However, the level of administration, Board time and resources required at project initiation stage can put a strain on current resources. It is important that the organisation ensures project initiation and development is managed in line with available resources. Significant work has been achieved in the following projects,

- Avonmore Way
- Sugarloaf Way
- Vartry Walk
- Bray Head
- Belmont Trails
- Uplands Path Survey (LEADER Application)

IMPLEMENTING AND MANAGING PROJECTS

There is a high level of satisfaction among the membership with the organisation's operational performance in project management and implementation. The development of effective partnerships was identified as key to success in this area. Project deliverables and associated funding criteria are been met. However, it was highlighted that adequate director's oversight of all projects is of paramount importance to the organisation from a governance perspective.

Representation

Objective: To influence policy formulation, development and implementation through engagement with decision makers and decision making structures to ensure the views and diverse needs of upland communities are highlighted and addressed.

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

WUC is well represented on various committee's and participates in key decision-making processes. The organisation is active, constructive and a respected contributor on these Forums. In addition, relationships established, and the opening up of effective dialogue and communication processes between various partners was highlighted as a distinct advantage for the organisation. Disappointment was expressed regarding the loss of representation on the Joint Policing Committee, particularly given the levels of rural crime, increased traffic management, drone usage, dog control and many other issues relating to the uplands. While it is noted that previously WUC represented the PPN on the JPC Committee, it was highlighted that a strong case exists to warrant WUC being represented in own right on the JPC.

FEEDING INTO POLICY FORMATION

WUC actively engages and makes submissions on relevant policies within the community, agriculture, environment, recreation, and tourism sectors. WUC voices the concerns of people, who live, work, and recreate in the uplands, feeding into and influencing policy formation and decision making. Members feel that the good standing of the organisation adds weight to policy engagement and serves to raise the profile of the organisation. The importance of appropriate lobbying on relevant issues and priority areas is viewed as an important process for the organisation. WUC is registered with the Register of Lobbying and makes returns on lobbying activities. In 2019, a substantial submission was made in response to the Department of Rural and Community Development's Public Consultation on 'A review of measures relating to the control of dogs in Ireland'. There has been no feedback to date and members are keen that this is followed up. A detailed submission was also made to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2021 -2027. The development of an appropriate 'Climate Change & Biodiversity Policy' for WUC was identified as a priority area for action through the consultation review process.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

WUC is keenly aware that endeavours to sustain and manage upland areas requires involvement and serious commitment from several partners and stakeholders. Working in association with other alliances and partnerships is fundamental to WUC's history and collaborative way of working. The organisation has developed strong skills in this area and plays a central role in inspiring and promoting a 'partnership' model. The organisation has a good track record of delivering projects in partnership with multiple stakeholders and partners, a factor that contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is undertaken to highlight key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The following analysis has been compiled from the consultation process. To identify key priority areas, individual SWOT analysis is presented under the following headings

- ☐ WUC – The Organisation
- ☐ Farming & Landowning in the Uplands
- ☐ Environment & Recreation in the Uplands
- ☐ Economy and Tourism in the Uplands
- ☐ Communities in the Uplands

SWOT – WUC Organisation

As part of the review process a SWOT Analysis was compiled, specifically on the organisation. The following table highlights the key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the organisation.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Boards experience and level of engagement is a key strength <input type="checkbox"/> Process of adopting an integrated approach between all relevant interests is a key strength <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing <input type="checkbox"/> Grassroots approach supporting sustainable policy development <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to deliver on innovative projects as stand-alone and partnership projects <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom-Up Projects responding to needs identified at a local level <input type="checkbox"/> Consensus basis is key organisational strength <input type="checkbox"/> Representation and influencing role <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to adapt and coordinate local initiatives (schools, community projects, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to form partnerships with key organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Registered as a lobbying organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Representation on various committees and fora e.g., Wicklow's Outdoor Recreation Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Financial sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Size of Board can be a perceived weakness from a governance perspective <input type="checkbox"/> No Rotation Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate level of Directors oversight (legal/financial) <input type="checkbox"/> Can be mistaken as a farming only organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Wider awareness about the organisation and its work/role <input type="checkbox"/> Declining membership numbers <input type="checkbox"/> Low level of involvement from the community sector <input type="checkbox"/> No agreed Climate Change Policy <input type="checkbox"/> No agreed policy on Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adherence to Charities Governance Code <input type="checkbox"/> Retention of skills and experience on Panels/Council <input type="checkbox"/> Source new private funding/local employers/etc <input type="checkbox"/> Avail of National/EU Programmes for upland partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain new project funding <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to present WUC's work at national/EU level as model of best practice <input type="checkbox"/> Develop an agreed evidence-based policy on Climate Change and Biodiversity and sustainable Tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Expand membership numbers <input type="checkbox"/> Increase awareness of the work of WUC among wider community through awareness campaign <input type="checkbox"/> Regular open Panel/Council meetings around the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Covid 19 funding cutbacks (Heritage Council/Wicklow Co Co, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Not adhering to the Charities Governance Code <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of skills and experience on the Board <input type="checkbox"/> Pure Project – future funding <input type="checkbox"/> Deer Management and SUAS Projects are pilot projects with limited project life span <input type="checkbox"/> Being unsuccessful in securing new project/initiative funds <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring relevance for both members and funders in future

SWOT Analysis - FARMING & LANDOWNING IN THE UPLANDS

The following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified through the consultation process.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Wicklow Uplands unique natural environment ❑ Farming in the uplands an important part of our cultural heritage ❑ Wicklow Pilot Deer Management Project ❑ SUAS Project ❑ PURE Project ❑ Representation and Partnership approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Falling Farm Incomes ❑ Maintaining upland farming as a mainstream livelihood ❑ Cost of production verses subsidising 'cheap food policy' ❑ Lack of Abattoir facilities - Wicklow Lamb ❑ Age Profile and reducing number of farmers ❑ Obtaining planning permission to build on family farm ❑ Impact of lack of adequate facilities for visitors ❑ Poor boundary fencing with statutory organisations in some areas ❑ Loss of representation on Wicklow's Joint Policing Liaison Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Advisory/Training to help farm families develop viable on- farm enterprises ❑ Research available adequately funded environmental schemes (beyond commonages) ❑ Support alternatives to encourage young farmers to farm sustainably ❑ Delivery of economic benefits to landowners resulting for Upland Carbon Sink ❑ Future Climate Change Policy & Supports from National and EU sources ❑ High Nature Farming Supports (CAP 2021- 2027) ❑ Suitability of land mass for planting diverse tree species ❑ Native Woodland Scheme ❑ Upland payment for management of visitors (Covid 19) ❑ Provision of facilities, amenities, and attractions for visitors as on-farm enterprises ❑ On farm Solar Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Poor economic return impacting on sustaining upland farm families ❑ Future support levels from EU ❑ Govt. desire to reduce national suckler herd to meet climate targets ❑ Climate Change ❑ Erosion of walking trails and bare peat areas in the hills ❑ Abandonment of hill farming practices ❑ Afforestation grants encouraging planting (conifer) of areas that are important sites for biodiversity ❑ Deer Numbers ❑ Risk of TB ❑ Uncontrolled Burning – environmental damage ❑ Negative effect of Dept's criteria for 'Single Farm Payment' ❑ Farmyard Security ❑ Pressures from increased visitors to key places (existing and Covid 19) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inconsiderate car parking - Increased traffic - Litter and dumping - Dog Control - Poor signage - Irresponsible Camping - Fires - Gates left unsecured - Anti-social behaviour - Trespassing ❑ Obtaining planning permission to convert for buildings for on-farm enterprises

SWOT Analysis - ENVIRONMENT AND RECREATION IN THE UPLANDS

The following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified through the consultation process.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Unique landscape and environment integral to our natural heritage ❑ Provides a range of important functions e.g., drinking water, food, energy, recreation space etc. ❑ Unique biodiversity ❑ PURE Project tackling illegal dumping and creating awareness of same ❑ Deer Mgt Project ❑ SUAS – promotion of good farming practice which supports and improves upland biodiversity – a model of best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Decline in active management of much hill land. ❑ Clearing scrub, drainage, liming to make fields ❑ Currently no incentive to produce electricity through microgeneration ❑ Inadequate visitor facilities ❑ Littering and dumping ❑ Erosion of upland paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Improve condition of upland environments so that resilience to climate change is improved enabling these important landscapes to provide a host of ecosystem services, including opportunities for recreation ❑ Work with hill farming community to dissuade bad burning and other practices which diminish the quality of the natural environment and the upland landscape. ❑ Changes in national policy – greening agenda and support programmes for such initiatives ❑ Introduction of an overall Climate Change/Environmental policy position for WUC ❑ Learning from the SUAS and Burren Life projects, to bring sustainable regeneration of hill farming in the area ❑ Promotion of broadleaf planting, and conservation of existing broadleaf woodland ❑ A comprehensive national deer management plan to ensure better control of native woodland planting ❑ Work with key stakeholders (WCC/etc) to influence provision of visitor facilities and appropriate policies to cater for tourism, recreation, and the environment in the Uplands (potential study research) ❑ Increase profile and awareness of WUC through promotion of responsible usage of the uplands. ❑ Carry out study into evidence-based issues and solutions to better management of recreation in the uplands to inform policy ❑ Research into viability of car parks owned/operated by farm families ❑ Promote Fáilte Ireland's 'Welcome Standard' accommodation as low financial entry to the market ❑ Opportunity to lobby/present to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen & Ireland's European Commissioner Mairead McGuinness (Environmental focus) when it is possible for site visit ❑ Seek biodiversity and climate related projects with associated funding ❑ Survey the erosion of upland paths and securing funding for repair and future protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Future funding of WUC's Projects ❑ Vegetation Management ❑ Climate Change - Ireland not on target to meet 2020 climate change targets ❑ The destructive effect of uncontrolled burning on the natural environment undermining the productive potential of the uplands in terms of carbon sequestration and storage, water supply, effects recreation opportunities and ecosystems ❑ Proximity to largest urban centre ❑ 'Wild Camping' – anti-social behaviour ❑ Littering and dumping ❑ Increasing number of visitor & cars ❑ Covid 19 - impact on increased staycation/travel within Ireland is a growing problem ❑ Policy to lower carbon footprint – reduce travel distance for recreational purposes will result in further increases ❑ Parking inappropriately, blocking roads and gateways ❑ and anti-social behaviour ❑ Cost of waste disposal ❑ Litter Warden hours of working

SWOT Analysis - ECONOMY AND TOURISM IN THE UPLANDS

The following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified through the consultation process.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Proximity to largest urban centre presents economic opportunities ❑ <i>'people are coming anyway, management is key'</i> ❑ WUC's partnership approach between Landowners and other Upland users ❑ Wicklow's unique natural landscape and natural capital ❑ Growing trend in a variety of outdoor recreation activities ❑ The network of upland towns and villages with vibrant communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Lack of investment by statutory bodies into Dublin's playground ❑ Not generating income from day trip visitors ❑ Limited opportunities to spend in upland economy ❑ Safety issues and concerns for all ❑ Different levels of responsible use of the road by cyclists & motorists ❑ Planning regulations can make it hard to develop new businesses ❑ Condition of some paths and trails is ❑ More space needed for mountain biking, equestrian etc. ❑ Lack of connectivity between trails etc and public transport ❑ Lots of way-marked trails in East Wicklow but very few in West Wicklow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Maximising opportunities from sustainable tourism e.g. farm accommodation, glamping, eco barns, guided walking tours (flora and fauna) and other low impact recreational pursuits ❑ Product development will encourage visitors to stay over, or support local shops, cafés, and other businesses on day trips ❑ Potential to research potential of car parks, dog parks, etc. ❑ Potential of heritage tourism ancestry, historical visits, folklore and social history, big house and garden tours and interpreting our natural landscape to create memorable visitor experiences (IAE) ❑ Local job creation will sustain and potentially re-populate areas ❑ Potential to develop a cycling plan for Wicklow, reviewing and learning from best practice guidance from other EU countries ❑ Proactively lobby for additional visitor infrastructure and resources based on sound evidence centred proposals ❑ Potential for new signage/branding of the uplands ❑ Develop sustainable tourism experience businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Increasing number of cyclists on narrow dangerous roads ❑ How to increase economic benefits from tourism in a sustainable manner ❑ Erosion of walking trails and bare Peat areas in the hills ❑ Increase in levels of irresponsible use of the the uplands by 'casual users' ❑ Lack of a plan and resources to combat irresponsible use

SWOT Analysis - COMMUNITIES IN THE UPLANDS

The following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified through the consultation process.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Vibrant villages and towns in the uplands, each with distinct character ❑ A range of diverse heritage features associated with the uplands ❑ High incidence of volunteerism ❑ WUC's current involvement in community initiatives i.e., Trails and Village Interpretative Panels ❑ WUC's ability to deliver on innovative community projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Engagement with communities outside of upland areas ❑ Poor Broadband Connectivity & Phone signal in some areas can impede business development ❑ Closure of services e.g., post offices, bank opening hours, garda stations etc. ❑ Closure of smaller shops and independent retailers ❑ Difficulties in getting planning in the countryside is forcing local people away from their communities ❑ House Prices are high as much of Wicklow is seen as commutable to Dublin ❑ New residents and those with long commutes not engaging in local community – Commuter towns/villages ❑ Lack or poor public transport ❑ Limited WUC activity in west and south of the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Increased incidence of 'working from home' may result in more time for community involvement ❑ Community Trails Development ❑ Heritage Village Panels ❑ WUC- Identify new community projects ❑ WUC- Increase geographical Panel Meetings /Discussion Groups ❑ Support/Advise Groups – Best Practice in Walks Development ❑ Create awareness of upland environments as a living managed landscape (story scaping) ❑ Awareness campaign on social media – raise profile at low cost – blogs/photography/advice ❑ Covid 19 Advice – information and educational role for WUC ❑ WUC's brand association with the PURE Project represents an opportunity to engage with wider geographical communities ❑ Potential of 'Hot Desks' and Co-working spaces for remote workers where Broadband and phone signal are poor ❑ Opportunity for community led social enterprises (learn from existing enterprises) ❑ Currently two Ministers in North Wicklow ❑ Máiréad McGuinness (EU Commissioner) ❑ Opportunity to raise awareness through entities that WUC is represented on e.g., PPN ❑ Extend the reach of WUC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Increase in daytime recreational usage on country roads raises safety concerns ❑ Reduced sources of funding because of Covid 19 ❑ Reduced opportunities for community engagement because of Covid 19 guidelines ❑ Reduced opportunities for communities to fundraise for local initiatives ❑ Reduced opportunities for voluntary engagement leading to further isolation ❑ Rural isolation –for all age cohorts particularly apparent in Covid restrictions

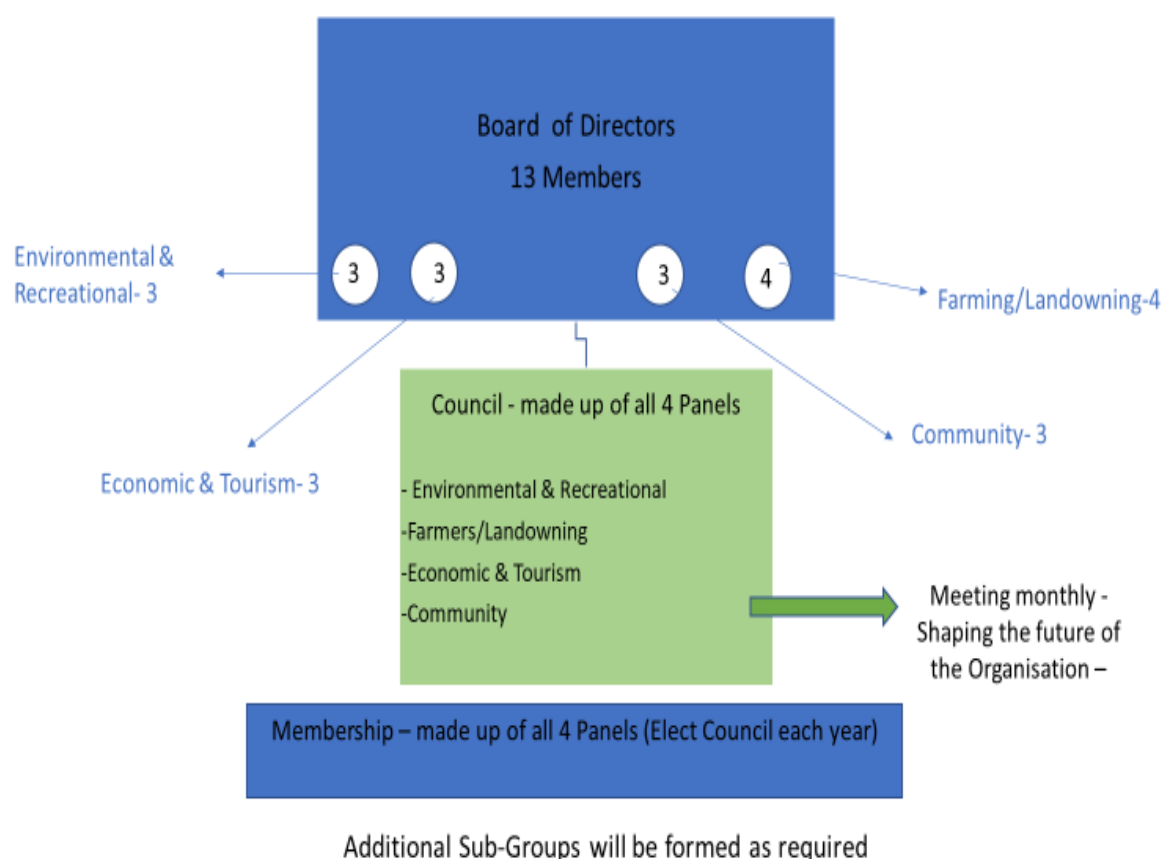
Strategic Plan Recommendations/Objectives 2021- 2023

Based on the findings from the consultation process and SWOT Analyses, the following recommendations and objectives have been identified for delivery in WUC's Strategic Plan (2021 – 2023)

Objective 1. Organisational Structure Recommendation

Organisational Structure	Ensure the most appropriate organisational structure, procedures, and policies are in place to manage and sustain the organisation and deliver on its objectives and strategies.
Overall Recommendation	Taking account of the consultation feedback, re-visit the structure of the organisation in line with the 8 recommendations below.

As highlighted earlier in this report, there is mixed opinion among the membership in relation to the current structure and the need for change. However, to fully comply with the prevailing guidelines within the Charities Governance Code, particularly in relation to the need for 'term limits' and 'succession planning', the following model and recommendations are put forward for further engagement and consultation with the membership. This model and associated recommendations will form the basis of future discussions and decisions.



Recommendation 1

Size Board of Directors

- ☐ Maintain representation across the panels
- ☐ Reduce Board size from 27 to 13 Directors
- ☐ Board representation numbers as follows.

Farming & Landowning	4 Reps
Environmental & Recreational	3 Reps
Economic & Tourism	3 Reps
Community	3 Reps
Total	13 Directors

Recommendation 2

Co-Options

The practice of co- options will not be required as the 'Constitution' will detail and ensure that the requisite skills and experience is met through the reduced Board membership. If WUC requires additional advisory from time to time, this can be obtained from the membership if available or alternatively from external sources.

Recommendation 3

Rotation of Directors

Code 5 of the Governance Code highlights the need for a good mix of skills, experience, and background among the charity trustees/directors and that these are refreshed on an ongoing basis. The Code recommends term limits for trustees, with a suggested maximum of nine years in total. In addition, the Code recommends that boards review how they operate from time to time and make necessary changes.

- ☐ Suggested maximum three terms of three-year service with total possible service of nine years which may not necessarily run consecutively
- ☐ Given the importance of continuity the Organisation to seek advice and make decision on when this period commences

Recommendation 4

Succession Planning

The Code also highlights the importance of ensuring that an organisation has a trustee succession plan in place and considers how to maximise diversity among trustees. Succession reporting will form part of Charities Governance Code compliance reporting in 2021.

- ☐ Development of an appropriate 'Succession Plan' for the Organisation

Recommendation 5

Directors Training

The Code highlights, by law, charity trustees have both individual and joint responsibility for what happens within their charity. This means that if their charity does not meet its legal duties, they are responsible both as individuals and together as a board.

- ☐ Relevant training for the Board of Directors as required

Recommendation 6

Executive Committee

- ☐ No requirement for an Executive Committee, however a number of Directors, to be decided would be selected following the AGM to form a sub-group to consider relevant matters in greater detail such as HR/Recruitment/etc for further discussion and decision by the board as required.

Recommendation 7

Council made up of all four Panels

- ☐ Retain WUC ethos of bringing together all the various interest groups for discussion
- ☐ Potential to rename this sub- group/s, e.g., Councils/Working Groups/Expert Groups/ Interest Groups/etc.
- ☐ Meets monthly
- ☐ Ability to meet as individual sub-groups and collaboratively as required
- ☐ Tasked with relevant policy and project development recommendations to the Board
- ☐ Practical in nature and operate under a clearly defined Terms of Reference.
- ☐ If deemed necessary, a tailored training programme will be devised to help this sub-group develop and settle into its important role

Arising from the consultation process, future discussion and consideration should be given to the potential of merging/amalgamating a community element/representation across all Panels rather than a specific standalone Community Panel. See following rational put forward by the Community Panel (AGM 2020)

- There is considerable overlap with the community panel and the other panels
- The other three panels combined essentially form the upland community
- There is great difficulty getting buy in from community groups and retaining them
- It is the same individuals who have been elected to the Board each year as it is difficult to find new members for the panel
-

Recommendation 8

Sub-Groups

Task sub-groups may be formed as required.

Advantages of Recommendations

Governance

- Continue to be representative
- Ensures retention of experience and expertise to guide and shape future direction
- Sends out a clear message to current and potential funders in relation to adherence with Charities Governance Code
- Demonstrates strong 'self-evaluation principles' and learnings, arising from external review process
- Provides adequate detail and legal oversight for Board Members
- Ensures 'rotation' and 'succession' planning through capacity building among members
- Works in tandem with panels/expert council to shape the organisation

Active Engagement

- Supports a 'bottom up approach' through active involvement in development
- Supports collaboration
- Strengthens each of the individual sub- groups
- Facilitates in-depth debate and communication between all stakeholders
- Facilitates greater communication and understanding between various interest groups
- Fosters greater interaction among the wider membership and communities
- Makes considered policy/project/activities/issues/etc recommendations to the Board
- Provides an environment for all to adequately have their 'voice' heard

Awareness and Increased Membership

- Increases awareness and actively encourages new members
- Ensures relevance for the organisation
- Presents an opportunity to increase engagement, awareness, and membership within the wider community and county

Objective 2 – Financing the Organisation

Finance	Ensure the organisation is financed adequately to deliver on its objectives, policies, and strategies, achieving long term sustainability.
Number of Actions	3

Action 2.1	Core Finance
Description	Work to ensure that existing and new sources of core funding from Irish/EU sources are researched and secured for the future sustainability of the organisation.
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wicklow County Council ○ Heritage Council ○ South Dublin County Council ○ Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council ○ Dublin City County Council ○ EU Programmes (Biodiversity and Climate Change) ○ Wicklow LCDC, ETC
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Plan 2021- 2023 - Proposals, Plans, Presentations, Reports & Site Visits - Funding Support
Timeframe	On-going beginning in 2020/21
Outcome/Benefits	Financial sustainability of the organisation to ensure objectives are met

Action 2.2	Private Finance Sources
Description	Leverage additional core funding through private and philanthropic sources
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Philanthropic Benefactors ○ Private Companies - Corporate Social Responsibility Policy (CSR) ○ Crowd Funding Opportunities ○ Membership Fees/ETC
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Plan 2021- 2023 - Applications, Plans, Presentations, Site Visits and Reports
Timeframe	On-going beginning in 2020
Outcome/Benefits	Financial sustainability of the organisation to ensure objectives are met

Action 2.3	Project Finance
Description	Leverage project funding from existing and new project activity that enhances the objectives of the organisation
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Government Departments ○ EU Funding Streams ○ Local Authorities (Covid 19 response) ○ LCDC Committee/etc
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Plan 2021- 2023 - On-going research - Applications, Proposals, Plans, Presentations, Site Visits and Reports
Timeframe	On-going beginning in 2020
Outcome/Benefits	Financial sustainability of the organisation to ensure objectives are met

See Appendix 3. Potential Sources of Finance

Objective 3 – Management and Development of the Organisation

Management and Development	Ensure the development of appropriate HR/Management procedures, good governance practices, stakeholder engagement and the formulation of relevant policies.
Number of Actions	7

Action 3.1	Management of Staff & Operations
Description	Maintain professional and efficient management, oversight and development of staff, ensuring adequate resources and capacity to deliver on staff progression, project promotion appropriate governance, organisational objectives, policies, and strategies.
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board/Staff ○ Funders
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funders - Board Staff Liaison/Sub-Committee
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	Staff development and delivery of organisational strategic objectives

Action 3.2	Management of Volunteers
Description	Increase appropriate opportunities for volunteer activity, ensuring a shared purpose through adding value to objectives of the organisation.
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board/Staff ○ Panels ○ Volunteer Individuals and Groups
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant volunteering opportunities – Projects/Activities - Management system for volunteering activities
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	Involvement and awareness creation through a shared sense of purpose

Action 3.3	Increase Membership Numbers
Description	Develop a campaign to increase membership numbers across all interest groups and individuals
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board/Staff ○ Panels/Councils ○ Existing Members (individual/group) ○ Representative Bodies
Required Resources/Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness creation campaign – messaging - Communications Officer - Panel Meetings - Discussion group - Circulations - Promotional activities - Fund to support campaign activities
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	A strong membership, ensuring relevant interests and skills to influence and shape the organisational objectives

Action 3.4	Internal Communication
Description	Ensure efficient internal communication processes
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WUC Board ○ Panels/Councils ○ Wider Membership ○ Staff ○ Funders
Required Resources/Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff Funding – Communications Officer - Marketing Budget - Internal systems
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	Ensuring efficient internal communication processes for the organisation

Action 3.5	External Communication
Description	Ensure maximum cost-effective external communication and promotion.
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WUC Board ○ Panels/Councils ○ Staff ○ Other Agencies/Bodies/Groups as channels of communications
Required Resources/Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications Officer - Marketing & Promotions Budget - Website/Social Media Channels/Print Material - Editorial/Interviews/Articles/Competitions. /Ezines/etc - Opportunities for representation/building profile
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	Creation of greater awareness about the organisation, its objectives, and its work among the wider community, resulting in increased opportunities for engagement.

Action 3.6	Stakeholder Engagement & Participation in Decision Making
Description	Engage in strategic partnerships, input into decision making and represent the views of all those who ‘work, live and recreate’ in the uplands through relevant submissions. Notable upcoming plans include Wicklow County Development Plan and Glendalough Wicklow Mountains National Park Visitor Mgmt Plan
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WUC Board ○ Panels/Councils ○ Staff ○ Other Agencies/Bodies/Groups as channels of communications
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Plan - Submissions - Policies - Representation on committees/boards/sub-groups/working groups
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	Influence and represent the views on behalf of those who ‘live, work and recreate’ in the uplands

Action 3.7	Policy Formulation
Description	Support policy development that promotes the sustainability of upland communities and the landscape they inhabit. Develop agreed (1) Climate Change and (2) Biodiversity Policies for the organisation as priority policy areas. Develop additional policies as required.
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board ○ Panels/Councils ○ Membership ○ Staff ○ Other Agencies/Bodies/Groups as channels of communications
Required Resources	- Relevant Policies and Guidance
Timeframe	2021
Outcome/Benefits	Clear and stated Policies for the organisation

Objective 4 – Projects

Projects	Continue to develop and manage internal and partnership projects and seek new projects that meet the objectives of the organisation for sustainable management of the Uplands whilst benefiting all who live, work, and recreate there
Number of Actions	5

Action 4.1	Internal Partnership Projects
Description	Continue to develop and manage in-house projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Village Interpretative Panels - Sustainable Trails Developments - Upland Path Survey, Etc
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wicklow County Council ○ NPWS ○ Mountaineering Ireland ○ Communities ○ Landowners ○ Coillte ○ Heritage Officer /Etc
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding - Technical Reports (Feasibility Studies) - Community Involvement and Funding
Timeframe	On-going
Outcome/Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced heritage/ visitor and local community experiences - Appropriated sustainable management of the environment and recreational users in the Upland areas - Development of sustainable recreational trails

Action 4.2	Existing Partnership Projects	
Description	Continue working with relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure the important work carried out through existing projects are funded and sustained to become mainstream initiatives where possible.	
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project Managers ○ WUC ○ Teagasc ○ UCD ○ NPWS ○ Wicklow Deer Management Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent Advisors ○ LAWCO ○ Coillte ○ South Dublin County Council ○ Wicklow County Council ○ Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Required Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate Funding - Partnership Arrangements/Stakeholders - Project Administration 	
Timeframe	On-going	
Outcome/Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical and environmentally sustainable management of the of uplands areas - Supporting management of natural heritage 	

Action 4.3	New Partnership Projects	
Description	Research and identify potential new partnership projects that meet the objectives of the organisation, particularly around natural and cultural heritage within the upland environment.	
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All potential partners/stakeholders ○ Relevant funders (WCC, Heritage Council) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Required Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant Projects/Schemes - Policies and position papers - Adequate Funding - Partnership Arrangements/Stakeholders - Project Administration 	
Timeframe	On-going	
Outcome/Benefits	Contribute to sustainable core values and strategic direction of the organisation for the benefit of all stakeholders and upland environments	

Action 4.4	Farm Family - Mentoring/Training Programme	
Description	Source funding to organise specific tailored training/mentoring for Upland farm families to help them explore and develop appropriate on-farm enterprises as a mechanism to sustain farm families in upland areas	
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Farm Families ○ Farm Organisations ○ CWP/LCDC – LEADER RDP Programme ○ Local Enterprise Office ○ Other funding streams 	
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultation with farm families on individual needs - Funding - Mentoring/Training Specification 	

	- Delivery mechanism/process
Timeframe	Funding dependent - 2021
Outcome/Benefits	Farm families will have an opportunity to research and develop viable on-farm enterprises leading to sustainability

Action 4.5	Covid 19 Training/Awareness Campaign
Description	Develop a specific Covid 19 educational/awareness publicity campaign that promotes safety and responsible use and practices in the uplands
Potential Partner/Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All recreational groups/users ○ PPSN ○ Dublin City Council ○ DLR ○ South Dublin County Council ○ Farming Organisations ○ Communities ○ Wicklow County Council ○ NPWS ○ Coillte ○ Etc
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding budget - Photography - Video - Social Media - Print Materials - Signage - Etc
Timeframe	Commence 2020
Outcome/Benefits	Clear Covid 19 safety messaging and promotion of responsible use of upland areas targeted at all recreational users (existing and new 'casual' users)

Appendix 1 – Current Board of Directors (AGM October 2020)

Farmers and Property Owners Panel	
Declan O'Neill	Wicklow County IFA
Pat Dunne	Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association
Tom Byrne	Wicklow County IFA
Joe Morrissey	Wicklow County IFA
Owen Brady	Wicklow County IFA
Sean Malone	Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association
Daniel Molloy	Wicklow County IFA
Environmental and Recreational Panel	
Louis O'Byrne	Individual Member
Bob Galvin	Bray Coast Care
John Flynn	Co Wicklow Game Conservation Council
Russell Boland	Individual Member
Community Panel	
Finian McEvoy	Glendalough & District Development Association
Martha Mitchell	County Wicklow Farm Family Group
Garvan Hickey	Individual Member
Claire Chambers	Roundwood & District Community Council
Economic and Tourism Panel	
Eugene Stephens	Ashford Self Catering Cottages
Dairine Nuttall	Wicklow Nordic Walking & Ireland Tour Guide
Geoffrey Seymour	Roundwood & District Community Council
Sean Byrne	Lough Dan House, B & B
CO Options to be decided at meeting on 21st October 2020	

Appendix 2. - Consultation Questionnaire



CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Consensus

Community
Participation

Partnership &
Collaboration



Review of Current Plan & Development of Strategic Plan (2021- 2023)

Please take the time to complete this consultation questionnaire as part of Wicklow Uplands Council's review and forward planning consultation process.

Name: _____

You have three options to complete:

1. Complete and return by email
2. Print and complete and return by post
3. Complete by phone.

[Deadline for completing the Questionnaire – ASAP or by the latest Monday 12th August 2020.](#)

Reference Documents

- ☐ Strategic Plan 2014 – 2016
- ☐ WUC, Annual Report 2019

Section 1. Review of Current Plan

STRATEGY PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES 2014 – 2020

Q1. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Objective: Ensure that the structures, procedures and policies of the Uplands Council are adequate to deliver this strategic plan

☐ FINANCE

How do you think WUC has performed in terms of maximising funding opportunities and managing its finances?

☐ ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Do you think the current organisational structure is the most appropriate? Please add in any comments/suggestions you may have about the structure e.g. panel groups, membership, board of directors etc.

☐ STAFF & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Do you think the organisation has supported the development of its Staff and Volunteers in the best way possible? Please elaborate/make suggestions.

☐ BROADENING THE MEMBERSHIP BASE

How do you think WUC has performed in terms of broadening its membership base to include more representatives from across community, tourism, economic and environmental/etc sectors? Please comment.

☐ SENSE OF PURPOSE AMONG MEMBERS

Do you feel that the organisation nurtures a shared sense of purpose among its Council members?

Q2. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Objective: To engage with and support consensus building among the people, groups and communities who live, work and recreate in the Uplands and to increase public awareness of Wicklow Uplands Council and its work amongst member groups, individuals and the general public. .

☐ INTERNAL COMMUNICATION –

WUC shares information and communicates through newsletters, ezine, meetings and press releases, etc. Please comment on how you think this is working.

☐ WIDER PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY –

WUC's objective is to implement and develop a wider promotions and communications strategy. Do you think the organisation has achieved an increased awareness of itself and its activities? Please comment.

Q3. DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE PROJECTS TO SUPPORT UPLANDS SUSTAINABILITY

Objective: To test and promote the use of innovative initiatives and responses to address gaps in services and /or provide increased access to opportunities and/or address unforeseen events support the sustainability of the uplands, or to address a particular issue affecting the uplands.

☐ IDENTIFYING PROJECTS & OBTAINING FUNDING TO DELIVER

How do you think the organisation has performed in identifying and agreeing projects and associated funding?

☐ IMPLEMENTING AND MANAGING PROJECTS

How do you think WUC has performed in implementing and managing its funded projects?

Q4. REPRESENTATION

Objective: To influence policy formulation, development and implementation through engagement with decision makers and decision making structures to ensure the views and diverse needs of upland communities are highlighted and addressed

☐ PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

WUC is represented on various committees, from your awareness, how do you think WUC has performed in its participation in key decision making?

☐ FEEDING INTO POLICY FORMATION

WUC makes submissions on relevant policies e.g. in 2019/2020-, submissions were made regarding, Dog Control, County Development Plan, Wicklow County Council Climate Action Plan and the Heritage Act 2018. Do you feel WUC has been effective in feeding into relevant policies? Are there other policy areas that WUC should be engaged in?

☐ DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

WUC works in association with other alliances and partnership. Do you think it has been effective in this area? Please comment/make suggestions.

Section 2. Development of Strategic Plan 2021- 2023



Please take time to consider the key 'CHALLENGES' AND 'OPPORTUNITIES' for WUC throughout the period of its next three-year Strategic Plan to 2023. Feedback from this part of the consultation will be used to create a key issues document for further consultation in September.

Q1. WUC - THE ORGANISATION

Please identify challenges that WUC as an organisation faces in the future and put forward any suggestions you may have, e.g. sustainable projects, strategic direction, possible sources of funding and supports, etc.

Q2. Identify key challenges and opportunities across all Panel Groups.

FARMING & LANDOWNING IN THE UPLANDS

ENVIRONMENT AND RECREATION IN THE UPLANDS

ECONOMY AND TOURISM IN THE UPLANDS

COMMUNITIES IN THE UPLANDS

Thank You for your feedback



Appendix 3. - Potential Sources of Funding

The following list is presented as a sample of potential sources of project/core funding. Funding programmes have different application timeframes and operate a temporarily closed status outside of these dates.

Programme	Funder/Dept/Agency/Group	Note
LEADER RDP Programme	County Wicklow Partnership/Wicklow LCDC/LAG	While funding under the current LEADER Programme (2014-2020) will cease at end of 2020. There is provision for an 'Interim' Programme in the Programme for Government. This is scheduled to operate over the two years before the new CAP/LEADER Programme commences. (delayed due to Brexit/etc) Budgets are not yet known however it is expected that this will operate in a LEADER style funding which included a strong emphasis on the Rural Environment.
LEO	Local Enterprise Office/WCC	Potential for mentoring, training, and capital support for farm families
Various	Wicklow County Council	Several new funding streams have been running through the LA's (Outdoor Recreation Infrastructural Scheme), Community Enhancement Programme, Town & Village, Rural Regeneration Programme, Covid 19' Response Funds.
Interreg Programme	Interreg	Interreg is one of the key instruments of the European Union (EU) supporting cooperation across borders through project funding. Its aim is to jointly tackle common challenges and find shared solutions in fields such as health, environment, research, education, transport, sustainable energy and more. Programmes include activities on a Cross Border, Transnational, and Interregional basis
The Godden Jubilee Trust	The Golden Jubilee Trust	The Golden Jubilee Trust is a charitable trust with the primary objectives of promoting, developing, and improving the co-operative movement and the industry of agriculture in Ireland.
Dormant Accounts		Every year, the minister must publish the Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan that lists then specific measures that will be funded from the Dormant Accounts Fund and the maximum money that each measure will receive Potential to apply under Disadvantages communities depending on criteria
EU Life Programme		Environment and Climate Action proposals – Specific calls currently open – closing in October 2020
Philanthropy Ireland		Philanthropy Ireland (PI) is the representative body for the philanthropic sector in Ireland supporting groups and communities across Ireland and overseas.

Appendix 4. - WUC 2020 Media Engagement Activities

October:

- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Welcomes News of Luggala Estate Reopening To Walkers”***
Published: The Wicklow People

September:

- ***“Luggala Estate Reopens to Walkers”***
Published: The Irish Times
- ***“Access To Lough Dan Remains Closed”***
Published: WicklowNews.net
- ***“Depicting Wicklow's Heritage Highlights” (2 page feature article)***
Published: The Wicklow People

August:

- ***“Explore Lacken’s Built Heritage With an Exciting New Video”***
Published: WicklowNews.net
- ***“A Journey To 1870’s Lacken - Guided Walk”***
Published: The Wicklow People, Wicklow Times, WicklowNews.net
- ***“Step Back In Time With Lacken’s New Heritage Panel”***
Published: The Wicklow People

July:

- ***“Heritage Interpretative Panel Unveiled in Shillelagh”***
Published: The Wicklow People.
- ***“Tracks & Trails Video Showcases Wicklow’s New Trails”***
Published: Wicklow Times.
- ***“Visitors To The Uplands Need To Be Mindful”***
Published: The Wicklow People.
- ***“Access To Lough Dan Closed”***
Published: The Wicklow People.
 - o Interview on East Coast FM – ‘The Morning Show’ Sean Byrne, Director of Wicklow Uplands Council.
- ***“Thoughtless Litter Louts Have Become Scourge of Ireland”***
Published: The Sunday Independent.

June:

- ***“Scenes Of Abandoned Campsites & Rubbish in the Uplands A Serious Concern”***
Published: The Wicklow People, Leinster Leader.
 - o Interview on East Coast FM – ‘The Morning Show’ Brian Dunne, Coordinator of Wicklow Uplands Council.
 - o Published On Digital Platforms: DublinLive.ie, Lovin.ie, WicklowNow.ie, KildareNow.ie
- ***‘False Representation of The Deer Management Project’***
Published: The Farmer’s Journal, The Wicklow People, Wicklow Times, Wicklow Voice.
Published On Digital Platforms: Agriland.ie, ThatsFarming.com, WicklowNews.net, WicklowNow.ie, Joe.ie, EastCoast.fm, SunshineRadio.ie

May:

- ***“Growing Challenge With Irresponsible Recreational Users In The Uplands”***
Interview on East Coast FM – ‘The Morning Show’ Brian Dunne, Coordinator

April:

- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Criticise The Irresponsible Use Of Quads And Scramblers in the Uplands”***
Published On Digital Platforms: DublinLive.ie, WicklowNews.net, Joe.ie

March:

- ***“Glendalough’s Car Parks and Facilities Closed”***
Published On Digital Platforms: NewsTalk.com, EastCoast.fm
- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Request That Visitors Avoid The Uplands”***
Published: Irish Mirror, Afloat.
 - o Interview on NewsTalk – ‘NewsTalk Breakfast’ Tom Byrne, Chairperson. Published on Digital Platforms: WicklowNews.net, WicklowNow.ie, DublinLive.ie
- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Issue Guidelines For Visitors To The Uplands”***
Published: WicklowNews.net
 - o Interview on East Coast FM – ‘The Morning Show’ Brian Dunne, Coordinator of Wicklow Uplands Council.
- ***“Funding For Outdoor Recreational Development & Responsible Dog Control”***
Interview on East Coast FM – ‘Wicklow this Week’. Tom Byrne, Chairperson
- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Welcomes Funding Announcement”***
Published: Wicklow Times, WicklowNews.net
- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Disappointed As No Announcement is Made On Extending Controlled Burning Season”***
Published: Wicklow Times.

February:

- ***“Next Govt Has To Get Serious About Attacks on Sheep”***
Published: Wicklow Times.
- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council Launch Responsible Dog Control Awareness Campaign”***
Published: The Farmer’s Journal, The Wicklow People, WicklowNews.net
- ***“Wicklow Uplands Council To Host Panel Meeting In Hollywood”***
Published: Wicklow Times.
- ***“SUAS Project Continues To Promote Controlled Burning Practices With Hill Farmers”***
Published: The Farmers Journal.
- ***“Hill Farmers the Custodians Of The Uplands With The SUAS Project”***
Published: The Farmers Journal - Weekly Podcast.
- ***“The Future of Hill Farming in the Dublin Mountains Event A Huge Success”***
Published: The Irish Independent, Wicklow People, Wicklow Times, Tallaght Echo, Irish Mountain Log. Published On Digital Platforms: Agriland.ie, WicklowNews.net

January:

- ***‘Profile of Two Walks Featured on Wicklow Uplands Council’s Trail Booklet’***
Published: The Wicklow People (January & December)