



WicklowUplands
COUNCIL

OUR PLACE
OUR VOICE
OUR FUTURE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pride to introduce Wicklow Uplands Council's Strategic Plan 2026–2030, titled 'Our Place. Our Voice. Our Future'. This plan represents not only a direction for our organisation for the years ahead, but also a reaffirmation of our deep commitment to the people, communities, and mosaiced landscapes and habitats of the Wicklow Uplands.

Wicklow Uplands Council and the Wicklow Uplands we believe are synonymous - and that is where our value lies. The Wicklow Uplands are a unique living environment—shaped by nature, built by generations of farming and community life, and increasingly valued for their ecological and cultural heritage, and their recreational significance and opportunity.

The Council's role in protecting and promoting this region has never been more important. Climate change, habitat and biodiversity loss, water quality, demographic shifts, recreational and economic pressures are reshaping the context in which we operate and the benefits to people. Yet alongside these challenges lie immense opportunities—for collaboration, restoration, innovation and renewal.

This new Strategic Plan is the result of extensive consultation and reflection. It has been shaped by the voices of those who live, work, recreate in and care for the Uplands: farmers, residents and community groups, business owners, environmental stewards, walkers and other recreational users, policy drivers and more. I want to thank everyone who took the time to share their

experiences, priorities, and hopes. Your input is at the heart of this document.

The plan sets out four ambitious strategic aims:

- To strengthen the organisational foundations of the Council.
- To amplify the collective voice of upland communities.
- To support efforts to advance climate, habitat and biodiversity and water quality resilience.
- And to support a sustainable local economy that honours place and heritage.

These aims reflect not only what is needed, but what is possible—when we work together with purpose, clarity and shared vision.

As Chairman, I am inspired daily by the dedication of our staff, the guidance of our Board, the engagement of our members, and the strength of our partnerships. I am confident that this strategic plan will help us build on our legacy and chart a bold, inclusive path to 2030.

Our place matters. Our voice matters. And with this plan, we are investing in a future where both are sustained and strengthened—for the benefit of generations to come.

Michael Keegan

Chairman, Wicklow Uplands Council

January 2026





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wicklow Uplands Council's Strategic Plan 2026–2030 — Our Place. Our Voice. Our Future. — sets out a bold and practical roadmap for the years ahead shaped by extensive consultation with those who live, work and recreate in the Uplands.

It reflects a renewed commitment to the heritage, landscapes, people and communities of the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands.

The plan responds to both the challenges and opportunities facing the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands:

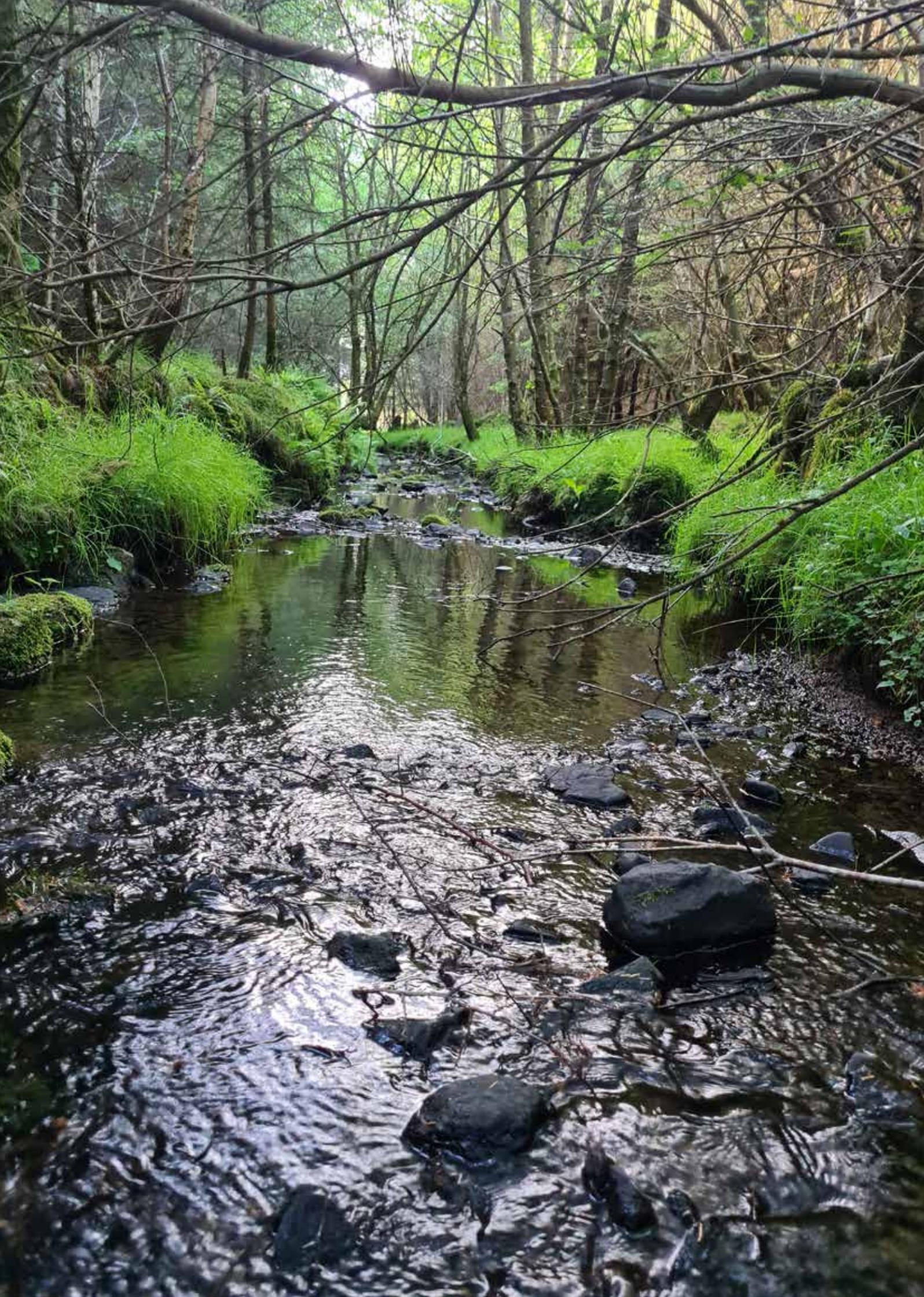
The challenges include climate change, biodiversity loss, water quality pressures, service decline, rural depopulation, and increasing recreational pressure (principally due to the proximity of Dublin's large and increasing population).

The opportunities lie in harnessing the area's rich heritage (natural, cultural and built) to support sustainable land

management, strengthen rural livelihoods, and enhance community resilience, as well as in the strength of local knowledge, environmental stewardship and collaborative action.

The plan reaffirms the Council's role as a trusted convener, educator and advocate, grounded in partnership and committed to the long-term sustainability of the Uplands. Guided by our mission and values and a clear vision, this Strategic Plan outlines the Council's priorities delivered by a refreshed organisational approach. It is underpinned by an implementation and monitoring framework, which will ensure transparency, adaptability and measurable progress throughout the period.

At its core, this Strategic Plan is about place, voice, and shared purpose. It positions Wicklow Uplands Council to lead with clarity and confidence to protect, support and value the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands for generations to come.



WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC) is a non-profit, community-led organisation working to support and sustain the unique landscape, heritage and communities of the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands. It is a partnership-based organisation, which works through consensus and collaboration.

Since our establishment in 1997, we have brought together a broad range of stakeholders across the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands —farmers, recreational users, environmental groups, local businesses, residents, and public agencies—with a mission to support the sustainable use of the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands for the people who live, work and recreate there.

With a living, working landscape, shaped over centuries by people and nature, the role of WUC is to support and encourage responsible land use, foster community stewardship and advance practical solutions to environmental and economic challenges. We are proud to act as a voice for the Uplands—advocating for sustainable development, balanced recreation and rural vitality.

Our work spans a range of projects, from supporting upland farming through initiatives like the Sustainable Uplands Agri-Environment Scheme (SUAS) EIP Project and Vegetation Management Programme, to protecting biodiversity (rhododendron control, upland gully native woodland planting) and cultural heritage (development of heritage interpretive panels, dry stone wall training, heritage walks, farming cultural events and talks). Through the PURE project we help tackle the persistent challenge of illegal dumping. We also work to improve access to and understanding of the Uplands through recreational trails, signage, and educational outreach.

Guided by the values of sustainability, inclusivity and partnership, everything we do and what we will continue to do is rooted in the belief that upland communities, landscapes, habitats and biodiversity are interdependent—and that their future must be shaped together, by those who know and care about them most, to ensure desired future conditions.





STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 2023

Wicklow Uplands Council's 2021–2023 Strategic Plan was developed and delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic. It responded to a time of heightened uncertainty and transformation. Restrictions on in-person engagement, altered funding landscapes and increased recreational pressure on the Uplands posed considerable challenges.

The experience of COVID-19 catalysed reflections on the importance of local leadership, rural resilience and place-based collaboration. These insights directly shape the ambition and tone of the 2026–2030 strategic direction.

The 2021–2023 Strategic Plan was underpinned by an ambitious programme of work across sustainable land use, community development and environmental stewardship. At the heart of this delivery was the SUAS project—a landmark European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project that demonstrated the Council's capacity to manage complex, high-impact initiatives. SUAS supported upland farmers to deliver positive environmental outcomes, becoming a national exemplar for collaborative land management.

Other projects delivered via Strategic Plan 2021–2023 were:

- Continued development of sustainable trails and visitor infrastructure, including work on the Bray Head Loop, the Avonmore Way and the extended Sugarloaf Way.
- Expansion of the Village Interpretative Panels network, enhancing local heritage visibility and community engagement.
- Ongoing expanded delivery of the PURE Project & PURE Mile initiative which is a unique multi-organisation programme (Coillte, NPWS, WCC, SDCC, DLRCC & WUC) which tackles illegal dumping, removing many tonnes of waste from the Uplands annually and engages individuals in focused community litter removal, delivering substantial environmental improvements and social good.
- Significant progress up to and including national level has followed our Deer Management Project.
- Completion of a major Upland Path Survey which assessed the environmental condition of 167 kilometers of unmarked upland paths. It identified that more than 7,000+ hours of work will be necessary to repair existing environmental damage, protect habitat and protect visitor safety.

FINANCE

These projects not only advanced the objectives of the 2021–2023 plan but also supported the financial sustainability of the Council. However, while project

administration funding—particularly from SUAS—enabled significant operational stability, it also exposed a structural vulnerability: a reliance on finite project cycles for core income.

The 2021–2023 period brought investment in staff and communications. The engagement of a Communications Officer improved outreach and public understanding of the Council's role.

GOVERNANCE

While the 2021–2023 Plan made strides across programme areas, a key learning was that Governance (Organisational Strength) was not afforded sufficient strategic focus. The structure of the Board—while long-serving and highly committed—has not kept pace with evolving best practices in the sector, particularly considering obligations under the Charities Governance Code.

We recognise that strong governance is essential for legitimacy, trust and long-term resilience. The new plan period presents an opportunity to address this gap systematically. With the welcome support of a leading law firm now engaged pro bono, we are bringing forward reforms from our previous plan to embark on a process to:

- Strengthen the structure and function of the Board.
- Implement rotation and succession planning policies.
- Enhance Directors' oversight of legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- Embed governance compliance as a cultural norm, not an administrative task.

These reforms will be phased and collaborative, ensuring alignment with the Council's values of consensus, inclusivity and partnership.

The Strategic Plan 2021–2023 delivered meaningful progress under trying circumstances. It solidified the Council's role as a convener, advocate and educator. It demonstrated the potential of upland-focused innovation, particularly in sustainable farming and community-led heritage. Most importantly, it clarified where investment is needed to build a more robust, resilient organisation.

2021–2023 LEARNINGS

The next five years will see a renewed focus on governance, funding diversification and stable core financing, and deeper engagement with the communities we serve to strengthen engagement across panels, broaden participation and reinvigorate the membership base. The Council enters this period grounded in experience, strengthened by learning, and guided by the same commitment that has defined our work for nearly three decades.

THE 2026-2030 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In 2024, Wicklow Uplands Council began the process of developing the new strategic plan. An external consultancy, 'the change we need', was appointed to partner with us and work began in earnest in October 2024.

A comprehensive consultation process with internal and external stakeholders was central to the approach and, in December 2024, the Board and members were invited to participate in an interactive exercise to understand the

priorities of each of the four constituent panels of Wicklow Uplands Council for the period ahead.

Throughout January 2025, 'the change we need' listened to staff, funding partners, implementing partners, as well as supporting organisations, board members and peer organisations, via 1-2-1 interviews and focus groups.

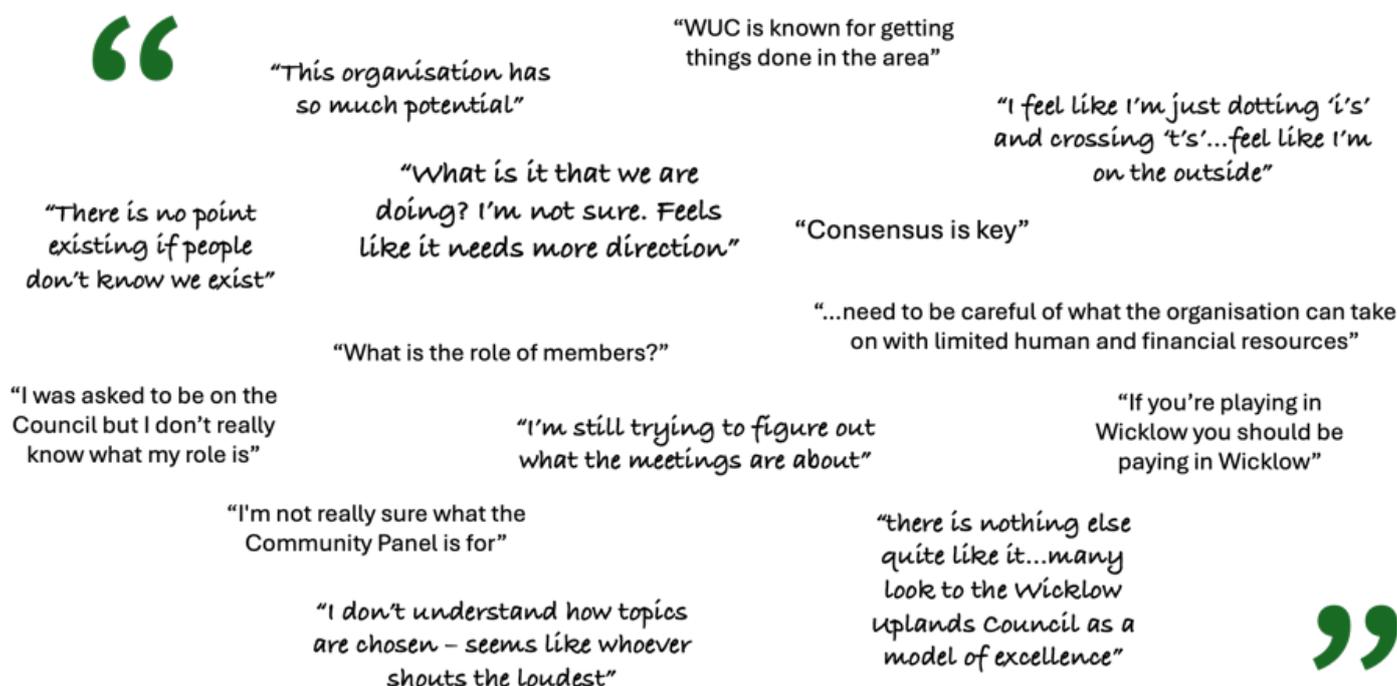


Figure 1: Feedback from the Stakeholder Consultation Process

A review and an analysis by 'the change we need' of the policy landscape we operate in, for example the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy Action Plan 2020-2025 and the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, 'Our Place in Time' 2023-2028, National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030, allowed us to consider externalities that may influence our work, our communities.

The strategic planning exercise provided a valuable opportunity to assess our operational environment, consider our future direction, and gather insights and feedback from the eco-system we operate in.

A draft strategic framework was presented to the Executive in May 2025 and subsequently approved by the Board on May 18th, 2025.

VISION, MISSION & VALUES



OUR VISION:

Wicklow Uplands Council’s vision is a thriving Uplands landscape that balances nature, farming, recreation, heritage and community needs. We strive for an Uplands environment that is sustainably managed, socially inclusive and ecologically rich, conserved not just as a scenic backdrop, but as a living, working part of local life.



OUR CORE MISSION IS:

“To support the sustainable use of the Wicklow & Dublin Uplands through consensus and partnership with those who live, work and recreate there”



OUR CORE VALUES ARE:

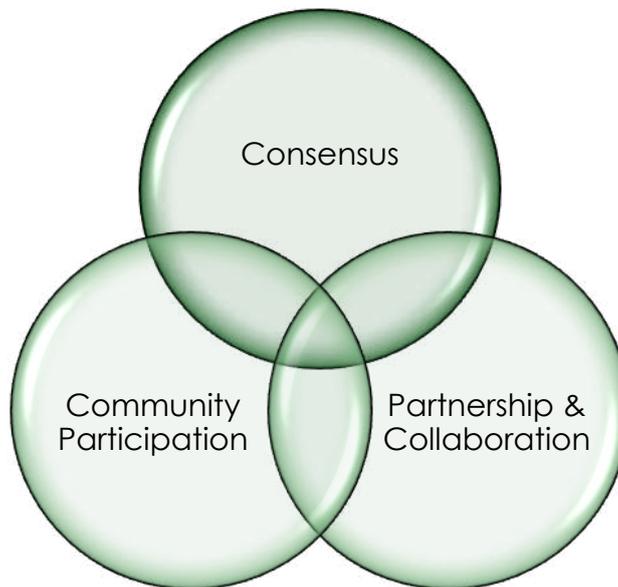


Figure 2: Wicklow Uplands Council Values

Wicklow Uplands Council’s mission and values drive a wide spectrum of ground-level projects—from trail development and maintenance, litter/illegal dumping clean-ups (PURE Project/PURE Mile), habitat restoration (gully woodland planting, rhododendron control), farming support (SUAS EIP) to heritage interpretation (Heritage Information Panels). The emphasis on partnership ensures that upland

development is community based, ecologically sensitive and resilient.

In essence, the Council aspires to sustainable Uplands, where farmers/landowners, recreational users, wildlife, and local village/town communities thrive side by side, shaped by partnership, responsibility and environmental care.



HOW WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL WORK ALIGNS TO THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Wicklow Uplands Council recognises the contribution it will make to the achievement of the UN SDGs. The strategic planning process for the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan included reflection on the UN SDGs. Much of the work already undertaken by Wicklow Uplands Council to date under previous Strategic Plans naturally aligns with many of the 17 goals.

For the years 2026-2030, four goals (8,11,13,15) have special resonance for WUC's Strategic Plan. These are the goals where we believe we can make a significant impact in the coming years.



Figure 3: The UNSDGs of the Wicklow Uplands Council

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth promotes continued, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Wicklow Uplands Council supports rural livelihoods, especially in upland farming and sustainable tourism. Previous and current initiatives such as the SUAS project and Vegetation Management support hill farmers with training, funding, and cooperative land use practices, helping maintain traditional employment while ensuring economic viability in rural areas. We also enhance the visitor experience through trail development, which contributes to the local tourism economy.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Wicklow Uplands Council plays a key role in fostering sustainable upland communities by supporting responsible planning, heritage preservation and community engagement. As a neighbour of Dublin, the country's largest centre of population, the busiest port and the location of the busiest international airport there are challenges and opportunities that require consideration. Through initiatives like the PURE Mile and local interpretation projects, we encourage local stewardship of landscapes, combat illegal dumping, and improve public access to nature—promoting a stronger sense of place and shared responsibility.

Goal 13: Climate Action calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The Council contributes to climate action by promoting sustainable land management practices that reduce erosion, support carbon sequestration, slow the flow of water and enhance climate resilience. Projects like gully woodland planting, habitat restoration, deer management and vegetation control help protect carbon-rich upland ecosystems and maintain our ecological integrity under changing climate conditions.

Goal 15: Life on Land seeks to protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, halt biodiversity loss, and manage forests and land sustainably. Wicklow Uplands Council is actively involved in supporting efforts to protect biodiversity and upland habitats. Our collaborative work with landowners and environmental and ecological practitioners ensures holistic management of upland areas, supporting biological diversity, water quality, restoring degraded habitats and tackling invasive species. Our stewardship model integrates environmental conservation with local land use traditions.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2026 – 2030

A VISION FOR 2030

In 2030, the Wicklow Uplands will be a thriving landscape in which our community lives, works and recreates through a balance between nature and sustainable development. Wicklow Uplands Council will be at the heart of this collaborative process: a trusted facilitator and advocate, working across tourism, recreation, environment, farming and rural community life.

Sustainable tourism and visitor management in the Uplands will be guided by care, not volume. Visitors will be welcomed with clear information, well-managed trails, and respect for the land. Wicklow Uplands Council will have played a key role in ensuring tourism protects biodiversity, supports local communities and enriches the visitor experience.

Increasing climate and habitat resilience will be evident across the Uplands. Communities will be adapting to

climate change, restoring nature, and managing land and water in more sustainable ways — informed by national and EU policy, and supported by Wicklow Uplands Council’s knowledge-sharing and coordination efforts.

Organisational Strength will be the backbone of our work. Active membership, strong partnerships, sound governance and a clear funding strategy will ensure we can continue to deliver meaningful impact and serve the diverse interests of the Uplands.

Our Collective Voice will be louder and more effective, whilst maintaining its integral inclusiveness. Through our four panels — Community, Farming & Landowner, Environment & Recreation, and Tourism & Economy — we will advocate confidently and credibly on behalf of Upland people and priorities at every level.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: OUR PLACE. OUR VOICE. OUR FUTURE.

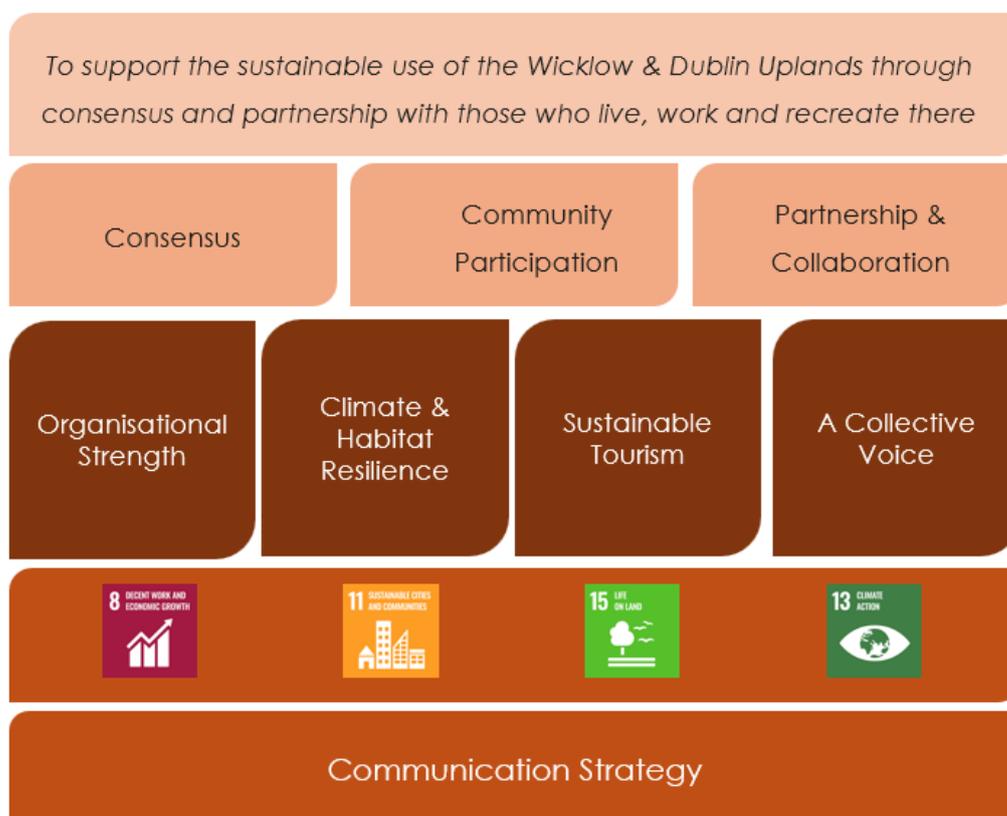


Figure 4: 2026 – 2030 Strategic Framework

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2026 – 2030

STRATEGIC AIMS

Four Strategic Aims form the basis of Wicklow Uplands Council's Strategic Plan 2026-2030:

Strategic Aim 1: Organisational Strength -To focus on the fundamentals of the organisation: how we fund the work of the organisation, how we do the work of the organisation, and how we govern the work of the organisation.

Strategic Aim 2: A Collective Voice - To use our collective voice to advocate for the farmers/landowners, communities and recreational users of the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands.

Strategic Aim 3: Climate Change & Biodiversity Loss - To support the protection of our natural heritage, our people and the ecological integrity of our Uplands in the face of Climate Change and biodiversity loss.

Strategic Aim 4: A Sustainable Economy - To foster sustainable farming, recreation/tourism and business in the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands and surrounds, harnessing the positive effects of farming, recreation and tourism and promoting appreciation and protection of the region's rich natural, cultural and built heritage.

Together, these ambitions reflect a vision of upland leadership from within — where local knowledge, shared values, and collaborative effort shape a more sustainable and resilient future for all who live in, work in, and care for the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands.

STRATEGIC AIM 1 - ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

To focus on the fundamentals of the organisation: how we fund the work of the organisation, how we do the work of the organisation, and how we govern the work of the organisation.

Objective 1.1: Review and enhance our governance structure

We will review and strengthen our governance structures and processes to ensure accountability, transparency and efficiency. This includes reviewing our Board structure to align with best practice, clarifying roles and responsibilities within the Board and panel groups, refreshing policies and procedures, and ensuring compliance with the Charities Governance Code and other legal obligations. Training and support for Board and staff will be prioritised, ensuring the organisation is equipped to lead and represent its stakeholders effectively and ethically.

Objective 1.2: Develop and implement a diversified funding strategy

We will develop a sustainable and diversified funding model to ensure long-term organisational resilience. This includes exploring core funding opportunities, project-based grant and philanthropic support.

We will pursue diversified funding streams aligned with EU biodiversity restoration targets, LEADER programme objectives, and climate adaptation grants. Wicklow Uplands Council will also ensure transparency around financial planning and reporting, while building internal capacity to identify, secure and manage funding streams.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen our membership

We will build a more engaged, diverse and active membership base, recognising that our strength lies in our members. This will involve reviewing the current membership structure, improving communication and engagement practices, and developing new ways for members to participate in the organisation's work. Wicklow Uplands Council will also promote the value of membership across sectors and communities, ensuring that individuals and groups feel heard, represented, and invested in the Council's mission.

Objective 1.4: Strengthen our partnerships

We will deepen relationships with local, regional and national partners, recognising the importance of collaboration in achieving shared aims. The Council will act as a trusted convener and facilitator, creating spaces for dialogue and joint action across sectors such as farming, conservation, tourism and research.

Objective 1.5: Modernise IT Infrastructure

We will modernise our IT infrastructure to support more efficient, secure and collaborative working. This includes transitioning from outdated, on premises servers to reliable cloud-based systems that enable flexible access, improved data management, and better communication with members and partners. By upgrading our digital tools, WUC will strengthen our ability to advocate, coordinate, and share knowledge across the Uplands and beyond.

STRATEGIC AIM 2 - A COLLECTIVE VOICE

To use our collective voice to advocate for the farmers/landowners, communities and recreational users of the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands.

Objective 2.1: Our Farming Voice

We will advocate for Upland farmers/landowners, recognising the complex challenges they face, including changing farm incomes, uncertainty around the future of farming and an ageing demographic. We will facilitate discussions on farm viability, succession, climate adaptation, and land use change, so that that upland farmers are supported and represented in agricultural policy and environmental schemes. We will build understanding between farming and non-farming stakeholders. We will encourage farmers to continue producing high quality food for premium markets thereby supporting sustainable jobs in the Uplands economy. Wicklow Uplands Council will also work to strengthen trust and collaboration across the Upland landscape.

Objective 2.2: Our Working Voice

We will advocate for all those who work in the Uplands with a view to supporting sustainable, community-benefiting tourism and recreation, and a rural economy, informed by the lived experience of local businesses and residents. This includes promoting policies and initiatives that support local enterprise, seasonal balance, infrastructure investment, tourism and recreation that enhances — rather than undermines — the environmental, ecological and social fabric of the Uplands. Wicklow Uplands Council will also support local business networks and represent them in wider economic development conversations.

Objective 2.3: Our Environmental Voice

We will support landowners and communities in all actions they take to protect and restore the environment and biodiversity. We will champion the protection and responsible enjoyment of the Uplands' natural heritage, drawing on our knowledge of recreation impacts, conservation priorities, and biodiversity goals. Wicklow Uplands Council will engage with landowners, agencies and recreational users to promote best practice, resolve tensions, and represent upland-specific issues in national environmental policy discussions. Wicklow Uplands Council will also continue to facilitate multi-stakeholder approaches to balancing access, conservation and land use.

Wicklow Uplands Council recognises that safeguarding ecological diversity, integrity and resilience is the foundation on which all other upland activities depend. We will champion the protection and responsible enjoyment

of the Uplands' natural heritage, while actively supporting its regeneration and ensuring that biodiversity and conservation priorities remain central to decision-making. Drawing on our knowledge of recreation impacts and conservation challenges. We will continue to facilitate multi-stakeholder approaches that balance restoration, access and sustainable land use, always guided by the principle that a healthy, resilient environment underpins the cultural, social and economic value of the Uplands.

Objective 2.4: Our Community Voice

We will clarify and amplify the concerns and aspirations of upland communities. Key issues such as the reduction and closure of public services, planning challenges, energy - and poor digital and transport connectivity - will be highlighted as barriers to rural quality of life and community resilience. Through dialogue, facilitation and informed advocacy, Wicklow Uplands Council will bring these lived experiences into policy conversations and support inclusive, long-term rural development that reflects the needs of upland residents and the importance of protecting their cultural heritage.

STRATEGIC AIM 3 – CLIMATE CHANGE & BIODIVERSITY LOSS

To support the protection of our natural heritage, our people and the ecological integrity of our Uplands in the face of Climate Change and biodiversity loss.

Objective 3.1: Promote and support ways to mitigate climate change

We will promote awareness and facilitate knowledge-sharing on ways to reduce carbon emissions in the Uplands, supporting initiatives such as peatland restoration, renewable energy use, and sustainable land management practices. Wicklow Uplands Council will support implementation of national climate policies such as the Climate Action Plan and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, contributing to Ireland's legally binding climate goals through local peatland restoration, carbon farming and adaptation projects.

Objective 3.2: Support nature restoration while protecting the biodiversity of the Uplands

Our foremost responsibility is to protect what we still have, safeguarding priority habitats, species, and the natural heritage that sustains biodiversity and cultural

identity. Where ecosystems have been degraded because of varying pressures, we will enable the repair of landscape functionality through the recreation of habitat diversity and sustainable land management.

By strengthening landscape functionality and recognising and valuing the natural capital of the Uplands, we will open new pathways for community engagement, sustainable rural regeneration, and innovative opportunities that deepen stewardship. These commitments reflect and advance the ambitions of the EU Nature Restoration Law, Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, and the Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan, embedding upland priorities within wider national and European frameworks.

Objective 3.3: Foster an awareness of the importance of clean healthy rivers and lakes.

We will encourage greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of clean, healthy rivers and lakes. Building understanding of how water quality underpins the wider upland environment will be a key focus through communication, engagement and collaboration.

The Council will explore opportunities to work with LAWPRO community groups, and other partners, to promote good catchment stewardship and citizen involvement. Supporting interest in local water monitoring and sharing knowledge on best practice can help foster a stronger sense of collective responsibility for the uplands' rivers, lakes and streams.

Objective 3.4: Support our communities and their livelihoods in a changing environment

We will inform and educate communities and stakeholders about adapting to environmental change. We will facilitate discussions on building resilience in local infrastructure, renewable energy, ecosystems, farming practices and upland management. We will foster resilient farming and land management practices that maintain landscape functionality, create new opportunities for sustainable rural economies, and strengthen connections between people and place. We will support our farmers and landowners in the face of climate change and help to ensure that upland agriculture can contribute positively to climate action and biodiversity goals.





STRATEGIC AIM 4 - A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

To foster sustainable farming, recreation/tourism and business in the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands and surrounds; harnessing the positive effects of farming, recreation/tourism and business and promoting appreciation and protection of the region's rich natural, cultural, and built heritage.

Objective 4.1: Protect our Heritage

We will educate visitors and communities about the rich natural, cultural and built heritage of the Uplands, and facilitate community-led initiatives to protect and celebrate it.

Objective 4.2: Public Transport and Road Safety

We will advocate for improved public transport options and promote safe, sustainable travel to, from and within the Uplands, through partnerships and awareness campaigns.

Objective 4.3: Trails & Walkways

We will facilitate best practice in trail management, supporting responsible dog control, restoration of bare peat trails, community-led trail development, and the protection of biodiversity along trail networks.

Objective 4.4: Enhance Visitor Facilities Sensitively

We will facilitate collaboration to identify needs and advocate for sustainable sensitive visitor amenities, helping ensure

that facilities support both local communities, heritage and environmental goals.

Objective 4.5: Promote Responsible Recreation

We will develop and promote a Responsible Visitor Guide, supporting respectful, low-impact recreation by encouraging responsible behaviours among visitors, tourists, and tourism and recreational providers.

Objective 4.6: Research Economic Opportunities from Tourism

We will share research on the economic potential of sustainable tourism, helping to inform community planning and support local enterprise development. We will encourage local communities to benefit economically from the already high visitor numbers to the area.

Objective 4.7: Support Business

We will encourage and support sustainable local businesses in the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands, promoting practices that balance economic growth with environmental protection. By facilitating partnerships, providing guidance on eco-friendly operations, and highlighting opportunities linked to tourism, recreation, and the region's unique heritage, we aim to strengthen the local economy while safeguarding the landscapes and communities that make the Uplands so special.



APPENDIX 1 - COMMUNICATIONS, MONITORING & EVALUATION

COMMUNICATIONS

To implement the actions that will achieve the aims in our Strategic Plan, effective communication will be vital as we have many stakeholders, we work on many topics and communicate on many levels.

Wicklow Uplands Council impacts on people within and outside the organisation. Our internal stakeholders include our members across our four panels 1) Landowner and Farming, 2) Environment and Recreation, 3) Tourism and Economic and 4) Community), our Board members, our Executive team and our staff. Our internal communications

goal for this strategic plan is that information flows well within the organisation.

Our external stakeholders include our partners, visitors to the Uplands and the communities that work, live and recreate in the Uplands. Our partners include funding bodies who provide us with core and project funding, partners with whom we implement projects, state agencies and policymakers. Our external communications goal for this strategic plan is that the Wicklow Uplands Council is highly visible and perceived as adding significant value to the area.

“Our Place. Our Voice. Our Future. Strategic Plan 2026-2030”

Communications Strategy – how we will deliver

External Goal: *The Wicklow Uplands Council is highly visible and perceived as adding significant value to the area*

Internal Goal: *Information flows well within the organisation.*

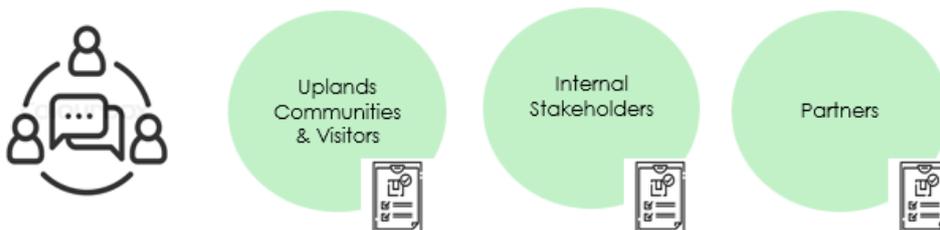


Figure 5: Communications Strategy

To achieve each goal of this strategic plan, we need effective and efficient communication. We will set out a communications plan that outlines each stakeholder group, the main messages that we need to communicate with them, how we will communicate with them (e.g., in person, by email or via social media), who is responsible, and how often we will communicate with them.

To ensure that we can carry out all the communications in our plan, there is some groundwork to be done. Two main activities will ensure that the Wicklow Uplands Council is able to effectively and efficiently fulfil its communications plan and achieve the internal and external communications goals:

1. Identify and access target groups: While many internal and external stakeholders have been clearly defined. Wicklow Uplands Council does not have an extensive database of recreational visitors to the

Uplands and the communities that live and work there. To communicate effectively with this group, it is necessary to research this target group, identifying individuals and how to best reach them, for example, understanding how communities pass information to each other.

- 2. Get the right communications tools in place to communicate effectively and efficiently:** A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool that manages information on internal and external stakeholders will allow the right messages to be sent to the right group quickly e.g. member updates to members at a click or social media posts to visitors. Other methods to save time and effort include having a clear reporting cycle in place with partners, simple formats or templates for sending various types of messages, and communications protocols with partners that are defined at the start of projects.

With the right preparation and tools available, Wicklow Uplands Council will be able to talk to its people regularly and effectively, improving information flows within the organisation and ensuring the work of Wicklow Uplands Council is well known by its partners, Uplands visitors and its communities.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

As well as monitoring the progress of the implementation of our Strategic Plan, we will evaluate how well the activities undertaken contribute to our Vision and our Strategic Aims.

We have adopted the OKR (Objectives & Key Results) framework to help us do that. OKRs are a collaborative goal-setting methodology used to set challenging, ambitious goals with measurable results. OKRs will track progress, create alignment, and encourage engagement around measurable goals.

- **Objectives** – Goals that inspire and set direction.
- **Key Results** – Steps that measure progress towards an objective.
- **Initiatives** – Tasks that drive progress towards key results.

The objectives and key results are designed to measure progress towards the achievement of our Strategic Aims and of the related outputs/activities/initiatives.

Each key result will be supported by a clearly defined means of verification (Key Performance Indicator) and a collective plan for measuring achievement, in a way that uses our resources efficiently and effectively.

Progress will be monitored quarterly and evaluated. At these evaluation points, initiatives/tasks can be adjusted, added or removed to ensure the Strategic Plan aims and objectives are achieved. The Executive and the Board will oversee this.

A mid-term review of progress at the end of 2027 will be conducted engaging internal and external stakeholders to review progress and adjust our workplans as necessary to ensure we achieve our Strategic Aims & Objectives by mid-2030.

An external end evaluation process in 2030 will allow us to review progress, celebrate achievement and plan for the future.







WicklowUplands
COUNCIL

Images Courtesy of:

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