

‘CHALLENGES, CHANGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IRISH UPLANDS’ is a Research Project investigating the current social, economic and environmental issues affecting landscapes and communities in three upland areas in Ireland.

Research will be carried out in the:

- North Sligo / North Leitrim uplands
- The Comeragh Mountains
- The Twelve Bens and Benchoonas of North-West Connemara

The findings of this research will

- Identify opportunities that could contribute to the future sustainable development of upland areas
- contribute to national policy development in the area of upland management and
- inform the Irish Upland Forum’s future work programme.

The results of the research will be presented at the Heritage Councils Landscape Conference in October 2009.

Who is carrying out the research?

- Project commissioned by the Irish Uplands Forum (IUF). The primary focus of this voluntary group is the pursuit of a partnership approach to sustainable upland management.
- Dr Mary Tubridy, Dr Alan Craig, David Rowe and Helen Lawless of the IUF are the steering group overseeing the project.
- Zena Hctor of DARE Ltd, a rural development consultancy company based in Kinvara, Co. Galway, is undertaking the research on behalf of the IUF.
- Project funded by the Heritage Council and the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs.

Why is this research being undertaken?

A national conference held in 1995 in Galway, which led to the establishment of the Irish Uplands Forum (IUF), explored many issues impacting on the management of the upland regions of Ireland at that time.

These included:

- Centralised decision-making
- Decline in rural populations, resulting in loss of cultural identity and landscape management issues
- Limited employment in upland areas
- Mechanised turf harvesting and associated environmental impact
- Overgrazing
- Forestry including landscape impact and acidification of lakes and rivers
- Mining pollution and environmental degradation
- Increasing recreation pressure

Since 1995 there have been many political and socio-economic changes at local, national and EU level. Progress has been made on some of the above issues through changes in various farm policies, LEADER initiatives and publication of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy, while new issues and challenges have emerged.

A **status report** is now needed to:

- Establish the current position with respect to the 1995 issues
- Identify the new challenges facing upland areas and
- Identify opportunities that could contribute to the sustainable development of upland areas.

How will the research be carried out?

The research will be carried out between February and October 2009. Information will be collected on the demographics, landuse patterns, employment and recreational activities in each area with changes since 1995 being highlighted. The impact of these changes on the natural and cultural heritage will be explored.

Landowners, local residents, community groups, recreationalists, statutory and non-statutory agencies and interested individuals involved with the three areas of study will be invited to partake in a participatory community consultation process in order to capture the views of all those concerned on the issues affecting their landscapes and communities.

How you can be involved

- Between April and August 2009 community consultation will be taking place in your area. This will involve face-to-face interviews and open meetings.
- Notices of meetings will be advertised locally. Your attendance at these meetings will enable your voice to be heard on the issues affecting your landscape and community.
- If you wish to express your views on the project or discuss any issues affecting your upland area, at any time, please contact:

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Irish Uplands Forum
Fórum Cnoch na hÉireann

Promoting sustainable management of the Uplands
A spreagann forbairt inmharthana ar na hArd Tailte

‘CHALLENGES, CHANGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IRISH UPLANDS’

Research Project

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



*An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe
agus Gaeltachta*
*Department of Community, Rural
and Gaeltacht Affairs*