



**Irish Uplands Forum**  
**Fórum Cnoch na hÉireann**

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

**Statement of Strategy 2008 – 2012**

*Stakeholder Consultation Draft - July 2008*

# **Irish Uplands Forum**

## **Origins and Background to the Forum**

Irish Uplands Forum (IUF) was established following a national conference in 1995 in Galway, which explored many issues impacting on the management of the upland regions of Ireland at that time. The benefits arising from the development of a positive network in pursuit of a partnership approach to sustainable upland management has motivated and sustained the Forum since then.

The Forum is open to stakeholders in upland districts, farmers, landowners, recreational users and all those who live and work in the uplands at activities such as farming, forestry, provision of local services, community groups and tourism.

## **Who we are**

The current members of the executive committee are:

Chairperson: Frank Nugent, Mountaineer and founding member

Vice Chairperson: Joss Lynam, National Trails Advisory Committee

Secretary: Helen Lawless, Wicklow Uplands Council and founding member

Treasurer: Dr. Alan Craig, Environmentalist

Member: David Rowe: Wicklow Dublin Mountains Board

Member: Sean Byrne: Farmer County Wicklow

Member: Dr. Mary Tubridy: Environmentalist and previous Chairperson

Member: Siobhan Egan, Bird Watch Ireland

Member: Aodhnait Carroll, Mountaineering Council of Ireland

## **What IUF does and how we work:**

### **Support**

- Provision of practical support to established and start-up local partnerships to support sustainable local community management in upland areas

### **Actions**

- Organises workshops and study visits to address issues affecting the uplands
- Promotes research and policy development which support the involvement of landowners and local communities in the management of upland resources
- Provides a key role in the development of countryside recreation, including the development of countryside recreation through active membership of Comhairle na Tuaithe - the Countryside Council (CnaT) established by Minister O'Cuiv. Through its broad membership the Forum is well placed for building, and supporting local and national structures and to assist in resolving conflicts between landowners, recreational users and tourism interests.
- Supports the Leave No Trace programme which is designed to promote responsible use of the outdoor environment by participants in recreation activities and other visitors to countryside.

### **Voice**

- Informs policy by providing an integrated stakeholder response to discussions and proposals regarding upland issues

The Forum is always looking at opportunities for working with new partners on local and national projects concerned with the uplands and welcomes new members who wish to be involved in its activities.

### **What IUF has done so far?**

- One of the first achievements of the Forum was the practical support for the establishment of the Wicklow Upland Council (WUC) based on a community partnership structure.
- IUF has developed and implemented a number of educational and research projects and has contributed to the Young Observers Schools Project. Many of these projects (managed by the late IUF pioneer Professor Adrian Phillips) contributed to the development of WUC as an effective community organisation.
- More recently, IUF played a key role in the policy development of Comhairle Na Tuaithe including preparation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy.

### **Who has Funded IUF?**

The following statutory organisations have supported a number of IUF projects and events and/or have financially contributed to the work of the forum:

- The Forest Service
- The Heritage Council
- The National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Fáilte Ireland
- Comhairle Na Tuaithe

## **Statement of Strategy 2008 -2012**

### **Process**

In February 2008, the current forum members conducted a strategic planning workshop in Wicklow to review its work to date and to develop strategy and priorities for its work over the next four years. The outcome of the workshop was further developed, time-lined and costed by the executive.

A series of meetings with supporting agencies to discuss draft Statement of Strategy and Work Programme with potential funding bodies will take place during July and August 2008. The Strategy will then be published.

### **Workshop Summary**

The meeting identified that IUF is a small yet very effective body which has made a significant and positive contribution to the development of dialogue among stakeholders. It has been instrumental in establishing sustainable structures towards improving upland management particularly in relation to Comhairle na Tuaithe and in providing practical support for research projects for Wicklow Upland Council.

IUF clearly fills a void and provides a unique integrated perspective to issues. Its members see the importance of using media and dialogue for advocacy rather than controversy and are willing to continue to provide that informed and calm voice. IUF wishes to be seen by the government and public as an essential 'community of interest concerned with uplands'.

To survive as an effective body and to further develop it is recognised IUF will need to maintain its commitment to a community model of upland management and indeed continue to champion an integrated management policy. It is fully committed to dialogue and consensus approaches to developing policy and management structures. IUF now wishes to widen its scope to include additional relevant interest groups with economic, environmental and social perspectives. It needs to be knowledgeable using well grounded local knowledge combined with an international perspective to influence policy.

IUF is convinced that the voluntary partnership approach it has adopted and promoted is the right one and will continue to provide proactive support for the implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy as a priority.

### **Structural and Funding Deficiency**

The work of IUF has been carried out with a huge amount of voluntary input from individual members with sporadic and usually specific project funding. Much important work has not been carried out due to lack of capacity and consistent financial support. Projects and policy submissions which have been successfully carried out, have been based on ad-hoc voluntary organisational efforts.

To redress this structural deficiency and to secure its future effectiveness IUF needs to:

- Secure dependable annual funding (€60K approx.) which will support the employment of a part-time paid officer and the provision of additional resources such as day-time phone accessibility. IUF now seeks a core funding commitment from relevant government departments and statutory bodies to implement its work programme and objectives.
- The officer's work programme will be to develop and maintain an accessible information dissemination capability including web site and an ability to attend meetings, network and respond to initiatives with other relevant stakeholder bodies.

The following is an outline of IUF strategy with proposed timelines for each action:

### **Statement of Strategy 2008-2012**

#### **Vision**

The Forum will be a collective voice advocating the sustainable management of Ireland's uplands and providing informed support to communities in these areas.

#### **What is proposed to achieve our vision?**

The forum will continue its work with upland stakeholders in actions and support structures listed under the following headings:

1. Organisation
2. Communication
3. Research
4. Community Support
5. Education and Youth
6. Representation

## **1. Organisation**

- 1.1 Completion of the company and charity registration process during (2008)
- 1.2 Encourage established upland groups to join and/or to participate in IUF activities and actions
- 1.3 Conduct annual national meetings of upland groups to swap notes and report and encourage progress (2008 – 2012)
- 1.4 Sourcing of sufficient stable core and project funding from relevant statutory agencies and stakeholder organisations for the period 2008-2012
- 1.5 Explore the legal and administrative issues associated with the employment of a development officer (2008)
- 1.6 Recruit a paid part-time development officer (2008)
- 1.7 Develop a supportive framework to enable additional volunteers to contribute to IUF activities and provision of services

## **2. Communications**

- 2.1 Become more accessible to service users through employment of a paid Development Officer and the establishment of day-time phone and e-mail contacts and base (2008)
- 2.2 Develop, maintain and maximise the potential of the IUF website (2008)
- 2.3 Continue to build IUF profile and status with key statutory agencies and stakeholders (on-going)
- 2.4 Assemble and secure IUF archive (2008-9)
- 2.5 Develop range of corporate image materials (letterheads, compliment slips, business cards and folders) to support communications with stakeholders (2008)
- 2.6 Publish e-newsletters and research reports (2008-2012)

## **3. Research**

- 3.1 Develop IUF research capability by forging a partnership with relevant academic institutions to establish a centre for excellence in upland community management such as provided in Scottish highlands and islands by the Centre of Mountain Studies in Perth. This research should:
  - (a) Reply to policy initiatives relevant to the uplands and local communities and
  - (b) Identify research projects and management initiatives which are relevant to the sustainable development of uplands (ongoing 2008-2012)
- 3.2 Deepen contacts in academic institutions (2008-9)
- 3.3 Research the provisions of the European Landscape Convention (2008)
- 3.4 Conduct study visits to other European upland regions (Austria 2008)
- 3.5 Research and disseminate successful models of upland landscape conservation (Burren Life Project 2008)

## **4. Community Supports**

- 4.1 Support the establishment of new Upland partnerships and the maintenance of existing upland partnership groups (2008-2012)
- 4.3 Develop a supportive framework which enables additional volunteers participate in upland partnership activities

## **5. Education and Youth**

5.1 Work with schools and youth organisations to raise consciousness of the value of upland resources with students and provide a balanced view on issues related to the future sustainability of upland communities and resource management.

## 6. Representation

6.1 Continue to contribute to Comhairle na Tuaithe by attending meetings with essential aims of:

- Ensuring as a priority the creation of national and local representative structures for countryside recreation
- Supporting positively the implementation of the Countryside Recreational Strategy
- Submitting research and development projects

6.2 Apply for membership of other environmental management networks such as EENGO Core Network Ltd. (2008). Liaise with Northern Ireland Protected Area Network (NIPAN) (ongoing).

6.3 Prepare submissions in response to public consultation on relevant matters

## IUF Work Programme Funding Requirement 2008

### Budget 2008

Includes salary and PRSI for Development Officer, travel expenses for groups to participate in meetings and events, research funding , facilitators and meeting room costs for meetings

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>€</b>
<b>Start Up Costs</b> Computer, Printer & IT packages, phone, desk, chairs and file storage, network connection, etc.	9,000
<b>Salary &amp; PRSI</b> Salary for 4 mts (20 -22K per annum) part-time Development Officer PRSI (€2,500 per annum)	7,000 850
<b>Rent 4 mts.</b> Shared with other compatible NGO or body	3,000
<b>Overheads and operating costs</b> Light, heat, insurance, phone, sundries, etc.	2,500
<b>Materials</b> Stationery and printing	1,000
<b>Management</b> Complete company and charity registration Develop legal and administrative infrastructure to support recruitment of Development Officer Web development and maintenance	1,000 1,000 3,000
Meeting facilitation with stakeholders and public	1,000
Research Funding (Austrian nature park study visit)	3,000*
* Part-funded by Heritage Council	
<b>Total</b>	<b>€32,350</b>

## **IUF Annual Work Funding Requirement 2009 -2012**

### **Annual Budget 2009-2012**

Includes full-year salary and PRSI for Development Officer, travel expenses for groups to participate in meetings and events, research funding , facilitators and meeting room costs for meetings

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>€</b>
<b>Salary &amp; PRSI</b>	22,000
Annual Salary part-time Development Officer	
PRSI	2,500
<b>Rent</b>	9,000
Shared with other compatible NGO or body	
<b>Overheads and operating costs</b>	8,000
Light, heat, insurances, phone, sundries, etc.	
<b>Materials</b>	3,000
Stationery and printing	
<b>Management</b>	
Legal and administrative costs and annual accounts audit	5,000
Meeting facilitation with stakeholders and public	5,000
Research Funding	10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>€64,500</b>

## **Immediate Programme Priorities**

### **2008**

1. Complete company registration and charity registration processes
2. Review strategy and funding with key stakeholder bodies
3. Develop legal and administrative infrastructure to support the recruitment of a Development Officer
4. Contribute to Comhairle na Tuaithe
5. Conduct study visits to other European upland regions (Austrian Nature Parks)
6. Recruit a part-time paid Development Officer
7. Establish day time phone and e-mail contact
8. Develop IUF corporate image documents and stationery
9. Develop and establish IUF website
10. Contribute to Wicklow Uplands Council Young Observer Project 2008
11. Make application to EENGO for membership
12. Publish E- newsletter

### **Priorities 2009 - 2012**

1. Increase contact with local upland partnership groups and offer support to emerging groups
2. Identify and recruit appropriate rural community based bodies to IUF membership.
3. Support the building of national and local structures for National Countryside Recreation Policy.
4. Conduct national meetings concerning with upland sustainable development involving diverse stakeholders and attend meeting and conferences organised by other upland and countryside stakeholders or statutory bodies
5. Continue contribution to Comhairle na Tuaithe
6. Develop volunteer support framework to increase volunteer capacity in IUF and local partnership groups
7. Assemble and secure IUF archive
8. Identify and forge linkages with Irish academic institutions with interest in sustainable rural development
9. Deepen IUF contacts with institutions by making them aware of our role, events and proceedings documents and networking capability
10. Research the provisions of relevant international conventions
11. Disseminate reports on successful models of upland management and partnership projects to upland
12. Work with schools and youth organisations to raise awareness of upland issues