



**MINUTES OF THE NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
THE IRISH UPLANDS FORUM LIMITED
HELD AT KINNITY COMMUNITY CENTRE, CO OFFALY
SATURDAY 22 APRIL 2017 – 14.15pm**

Present: Frank Nugent - Chairman
Deirdre Lewis – Secretary
Georgina MacMillan – Membership Secretary
Mary Tubridy – Director, Research
Helena Fitzgerald – Director IUf / Blackstairs Farming Group
Pat O’Shea – Director IUf/ Kerry IFA
Michael Monaghan – Carlow
Helen Lawless – Mountaineering Ireland
Frank Bergin – Slieve Bloom RDS
Catherine Bergin – Slieve Bloom RDS
Denis Tuohy – Slieve Aughty Farming Group
Patricia Deane – South Kerry DP, Reeks Mountain Forum
Cornelia McCarthy – Blackstairs & Barrow Valley Tourism Network
Sean Byrne – Wicklow Uplands Council
Brian Dunne – Wicklow Uplands Council Co-ordinator
Ged Dowling – Mayo Dark Sky Park
Apologies Colin Murphy (outgoing Vice-Chair); Tom Byrne, Treasurer

Meeting Opening:

The Chairman welcomed all attendees to the meeting and thanked the Slieve Blooms RDS for hosting the AGM in Kinnitty, in particular Frank and Catherine Bergin. Thereafter, he introduced the agenda items as follows:

1. **Minutes from the last AGM**

The Secretary read the Minutes of the Eighth (8th) Annual General Meeting for 2016, held in Dublin on 4th February 2017. No questions or queries arose on the content of the minutes as read.

Mary Tubridy proposed the Minutes of the 8th AGM; Georgia MacMillan seconded. The minutes were approved and adopted by the Meeting.

2. **Secretary’s Report**

The Secretary’s Report since the 8th AGM to present was read by Deirdre Lewis to the meeting.

The Secretary’s Report was proposed by Helen Lawless and seconded by Sean Byrne. The Report was approved and adopted by the Meeting – (attached Appendix 1).

3. **Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman’s Report was read by Frank Nugent to the meeting. The Chairman thanked our hosts in Kinnitty again.

The Chairman reported on a recent meeting held on 24th March with the Heritage Council in Kilkenny to advance and formalise the arrangements for establishment of a national Uplands Partnership Network (UPN). Key stakeholders at the meeting included Mr. Michael Starrett, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, Ms. Finola Moylette, Principal Officer/ Rural Recreation Section



at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRGA); representatives of Mountaineering Ireland, NPWS; IFA and others with relevant interests. The objective was to advance arrangements for the establishment of the Uplands Partnership (UPN), modelled on Walled Towns Network, and critically the appointment of a Management Group, and a National Coordinator. The latter will coordinate the activities of community-based Upland groups across the island, and to enable the groups to develop appropriate Action Plans and secure resources to implement those plans. The programme will aim to complement the roll-out of relevant Leader projects under the Rural Development Programme (RDP). Contractual issues pertaining to the appointment of the Coordinator and the appointment of the Management Group will be finalised in the coming months, with a view to recruitment completion by September 2017.

The Chairman explained that the 2016 8th AGM was held slightly late in February 2017 to complete the corporate requirements of the Irish Uplands Forum Limited. The 9th AGM (for 2017) is being held in Q1/2017 in accordance with legal requirements and to adopt the Annual Accounts of 2016. This will be the schedule for future meetings.

The Chairman reported on the recent governance training held for all Board members to ensure compliance with recent changes in company law and improved accountability of voluntary groups. To that end, the IUF will be working in the coming months to:

- Combine our Articles of Association and Memorandum into a single Constitution; Define roles and responsibilities of each Director; with fixed terms for each Director's role;
- Establish a 'Risk Register';
- Develop a 'Membership Booklet'
- Develop templates for e.g. expenses claims; letters etc.

Following the 2016 AGM in February 2017, the Chairman noted the Working Groups model to be adopted, that will be chaired by individual Board members: proposed as Operations & Resources; Research & Development (including Agri-Environment); and Membership/ Communication, respectively:

1. **Operations & Resources Group** – to be led by the Chairman, this group is to be responsible for the direction of the new Co-ordinator (to be appointed) as well as Financial and Governance responsibilities of the Group.
2. **Research & Development** – to be led by Research Director, this group will direct the needs of the main group for new and updated research. It was noted that there is currently a need to update published reports with data obtained since the recent Census.
3. **Memberships and Communications** – to be led by the Membership Secretary, this group will be responsible for managing communications to the members and for monitoring queries, website updates and Facebook page. This group will also liaise strongly with the Secretary as required.

The Chairman's Report was proposed by Mary Tubridy and seconded by Pat O'Shea. It was deemed approved and adopted by the Meeting.

4. **Treasurer's Report**

The Chairman presented the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Mr Tom Byrne, Treasurer, who could not be present at the AGM.



The IUF has notified the Bank of Ireland regarding changes in authorisation since AGM 2016, to include cheque signings etc.

Regarding the audited Accounts for 2016, the IUF reports a small surplus of €809 at the end of year. The total balance in the IUF account is now €7,938.31 on 21/04/2017.

There were three main expenditure items in 2016: including two research reports (Uplands Communities €4,500, and Socio-Economic research €5,000, respectively) and the running of the Beaufort Conference in May 2016 €16,000, costing approximately €26,000 in total.

The Chairman thanked the core funders of the IUF's efforts in 2016, in particular:

- The Heritage Council, who provide €20,000 per annum, in two tranches (mid-year and end-year) on receipt of IUF validated reports.
- Rural Recreation Section of (DAHRRGA) - €6,000 – which assisted the running of the Beaufort Conference in May 2016.
- Mountaineering Ireland - €1,000.

The Chairman thanked the auditors for their efficiency in preparing the Accounts (Directors Report and Financial Statement) for year ending 31/12/2016. The Accounts are to be sent to the CRO and registered online (in accordance with the Companies Act 2014), upon approval of the membership.

The Treasurer's Report was proposed by Sean Byrne and seconded by Frank Bergin and was deemed approved and accepted by the Meeting.

5. **Re-Appointment of Auditors**

It was proposed by the Chairman that the accountancy practice, Gerard T Murphy Co. Ltd., should be re-appointed as Auditors of the Irish Uplands Forum Limited. It was also noted that their charges had been very reasonable and work conducted to a very high standard.

The re-appointment of the Auditors was agreed by unanimous approval of the Meeting.

6. **Election of Directors**

The new Board of Directors were recently been appointed in February 2017 at the AGM 2016. Thus the officers are in place for the coming term and there is no requirement for full elections at this AGM.

The Vice-Chairman, Mr Colin Murphy, is stepping down from the Board. The Chairman noted the good work undertaken by Colin (Acting Treasurer in 2016) and thanked him for his excellent work. The members joined the Chairman in wishing Colin well for his dedication to IUF over many years.

Nominations were taken for the appointment of a Vice-Chairman.

Mr Frank Bergin was nominated by Sean Byrne and seconded by Helena Fitzpatrick. There were no further nominations. Frank Bergin was duly appointed unanimously.

This concluded the appointments to the Board of The Irish Uplands Forum Limited.



7. Any Other Business

- The next meeting of the Board will be agreed by email in due course.
- Point of Clarification from Cornelia McCarthy regarding the reported value of membership subscriptions in the Accounts 2016. The Chairman noted that the sum is low, due to an administrative overlap at the Beaufort Conference and agreed that the Board is working to tighten up the procedures for management of subscriptions. In future, the Membership Director will be managing the subscriptions through the online payments system and by changes in the Register and acknowledgement of such payments.
 - Georgia MacMillan will send individual reminders and acknowledgments
 - Deirdre Lewis suggested that we commence all subscriptions on 1st January of each year, to simplify the voluntary management of subs.
- Denis Tuohy raised the need for notification of the AGM. Georgia MacMillan stated that notifications had been sent out to the full membership and will check that all emails are correct on the system.
- Events & Linkages:
 - Frank Nugent noted that Slieve Gullion in South Armagh are hosting a seminar “Managing Recreation in Protected Areas”, 22-23rd June 2017.
 - Mary Tubridy noted that the Irish Geographical Society are hosting a conference on 4-6th May 2017 in UCC, with Dr Eileen O’Rourke running a workshop on Uplands Management based on her work in West Cork and the Iveragh Peninsula. Mary will attend for the IUF.
 - Denis Tuohy suggested that, to promote the work of the IUF to a broader constituency, that we could submit an article to the monthly bulletin of the National Rural Network.
 - Slieve Blooms Walking Festival on May Bank Holiday Weekend (29/4 – 1/5) next weekend. Graded walks suited to all levels.

- **Après-AGM Walk in Kinnitty.**

Frank Bergin introduced the proposed walk after the AGM in the vicinity of Kinnitty Castle. He also demonstrated the walking maps, brochures and resources available to visitors to the Slieve Blooms. John Feehan’s ‘Landscape of Slieve Blooms’ book was shown to delegates and offered as a gesture of goodwill to all delegates. Thanks Frank!

The Chairman thanked all attendees for their positive input. There being no further business, the meeting was duly closed.

Chairman
Mr. Frank Nugent

Date April 2017

On behalf of the Board of The Irish Uplands Forum Limited



The Irish Uplands Forum Limited: Ninth AGM

APPENDIX 1: SECRETARY'S REPORT

Venue: The Community Centre, Kinnitty, Co Offaly

Date: Saturday 22nd April 2017

AGM 2016

The eighth AGM for 2016 was held on Saturday 4th February at Red Cow Hotel, Dublin. Eleven members attended.

- Minutes and Secretary's Report (Mary Tubridy) were accepted.
- Treasurer's (Colin Murphy) report and Accounts were accepted.
- The main action of the day was Election of new Board of the IUF, as follows:

Chairperson:	Frank Nugent
Vice-Chairperson:	Colin Murphy
Company Secretary:	Deirdre Lewis
Treasurer:	Tom Byrne
Membership/ web:	Georgia Macmillan
Research:	Mary Tubridy
Regional Members:	Helena Fitzpatrick (Blackstairs) Frank Bergin (Slieve Blooms) Ross Miller (Northern Ireland) Pat O'Shea (Kerry)
<i>Additional Web support</i>	<i>Eamonn Kelly</i>

- Proposal to strengthen the IUF structure, using **working group** model to focus on specific areas was accepted: 1) Network co-ordination 2) Finance/Governance 3) Research 4) Membership & Communications. It was agreed these Working Groups will be coordinated by:
 - i. Network Coordinator – *Management Committee; to be agreed by IUF & Heritage Council*, based on the model of the Irish Walled Town Network
 - ii. Research Chair Mary Tubridy
 - iii. Operations/Resources Chair Frank Nugent
 - iv. Membership/Comms Chair Georgia Mc Millan
- Sundry items regarding 2017 planning were also discussed
- Minutes were taken by Dr. Mary Tubridy, outgoing Secretary.

IUF Directors' Meetings

There was one formal meeting of the new IUF Board to date, held on Tuesday 28th February 2017. A number of e-meetings have also been held by the Chair, Secretary, Membership Director and others to discuss specific aspects of the IUF Strategic Plan and to make arrangements for this, the ninth AGM.

Board meetings are generally held at the Red Cow Hotel, Dublin. However, efforts are increasingly being made to use skype technology to facilitate meeting attendances for Directors living in regional locations.

Corporate Actions

- The Companies Registration Office (CRO) was notified of the changes to the Board and Directorships following the election at AGM 2016 in February. Work is ongoing to ensure all Directors are fully registered correctly.
- Company accounts for 2016 were prepared by IUF auditors Gerard T. Murphy Ltd. and have been filed to the Revenue Commissioners. These will be presented today to the members.



- A training day in Corporate Governance was held on Saturday 25th March, to induct Board members on their responsibilities and obligations as Directors under recent changes to legislation and regulations concerning voluntary bodies.
- Planning and organisation of IUF Community Network Meeting held in the morning of 22nd April in Kinnitty, Co Offaly, with speakers Dr Áine Macken-Walsh (Teagasc); Mr Michael Starrett (Heritage Council) and Mr. Frank Nugent (Chair, IUF); hosted by Slieve Blooms Uplands Community Group.

Correspondence/ Liaison with Agencies:

- There has been ongoing correspondence with Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) in relation to the IUF Strategic Plan and also with regards to funding proposals for the appointment of a national Network Coordinator of Uplands Community groups.
- Correspondence has also been held with the Heritage Council in relation to the role of the Network Coordinator and the operational management and logistics.
- Meetings were held between the Chair of the IUF, DAHRRGA and officers of the Heritage Council to firm up the proposal and to finalise practical logistics.

IUF Statement of Strategy

The Statement of Strategy 2016-2020 was developed in late 2016 to provide a road map to meet the key objectives of the IUF in the coming years. Central to this has been the development of detailed proposals for the appointment of a full-time Network Coordinator to work with the 25+ upland communities across the island of Ireland to provide advice on management structures, financing and supports as relevant for specific projects. Sharing of information and resources will be a key aim of the network.

The Strategy was forwarded to DAHRRGA and the Heritage Council as a central element in our proposal to seek funding to support the role. It is proposed that a collaborative Service Contract will be established between the IUF and the Heritage Council to underpin the terms and appointment of the Network Coordinator. This includes a proposal for a joint management board to provide governance and direction to the Coordinator, as well as full accountability.

Membership

- The IUF website has been recently updated so that all publications and relevant documents are available to the membership.
- The website paypal facility has also been strengthened to facilitate member payments and event registrations.
- New member groups have joined recently, and we welcome in particular the groups from Slieve Aughty, the Sperrins and Mourne Heritage Trust to the IUF.
- Communications with membership are ongoing through email/ web/ social media.

Representation on National Bodies

The IUF continues to be represented on the executive of Comhairle na Tuiathe (CnaT) by our Chair, Frank Nugent and Research Director, Dr Mary Tubridy. CnaT has recently undergone a review of the original objectives, structure and mandate by an external consultant, who has made a series of recommendations. Central to these are proposals for a revised structure and the updating of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy. The recommendations were accepted in full and were formally recommended to the Minister in early 2017.

Deirdre Lewis
Secretary of The Irish Uplands Forum Limited.
22 April 2017.