



The Irish Uplands Forum Limited: 12th AGM SECRETARY'S REPORT

Date: 7.30pm Wednesday, 24th June 2020

AGM 2019

The Eleventh AGM was held on Saturday 6th April 2020 at Carnlough, Co Antrim.

Fourteen members attended, including four members of the Board of the IUF.

- Chairman's Report (Frank Nugent) was accepted.
- Minutes and Secretary's Report (Deirdre Lewis) were accepted.
- Treasurer's (Tom Byrne) report and Accounts were accepted.

Nominations were received for election to the Board of Directors at the AGM in 2019. Some of the serving officers had resigned for personal reasons and new nominations were sought. The remainder of the existing Board indicated their willingness to continue for the forthcoming term. The following members were elected to the Board:

Chairperson:	Frank Nugent
Vice-Chairperson:	Frank Bergin (Slieve Blooms)
Company Secretary:	Deirdre Lewis
Treasurer:	Tom Byrne (Wicklow)
Membership/ web:	Georgia Macmillan (Mayo; Mountaineer Ireland)
Research:	Mary Tubridy
Regional Members:	Judith Annett (Northern Ireland) Ross Millar (Northern Ireland) Pat O'Shea (Kerry) Michéal McDonnell (INHFA)

IUF Directors' Meetings

There were seven monthly meetings held since the 2019 AGM. Given the geographical distribution of the Board across the island of Ireland, this year we have experimented with using teleconferencing and 'zoom' to expedite the meetings, cutting down on travel time for contributing Board members. Physical board meetings were held principally in the Maldron Hotel in Dublin, and remotely by telephonic meetings.

Corporate Actions & Achievements

- The Companies Registration Office (CRO) was notified of the composition of the Board and Directorships following the AGM 2019 in April last.
- Company accounts for 2019 were prepared by IUF auditors Gerard T. Murphy Ltd. and have been filed to the Revenue Commissioners. These will be presented at the AGM 2020 to the members.
- The IUF is continuing to explore Charitable Status and is undergoing the registration process with the Charities Regulator.
- Preparation of a Draft '*Membership Handbook*' for Board members is underway to ensure good governance and institutional continuity, with various amendments to be updated.
- Updating of the *IUF Statement of Strategy & Action Plan (2016-2020)* for the final years of the current strategic term was prepared in February 2019. It was intended to have a further strategic meeting early this year (Feb. 2020) to prepare the Strategic Action Plan 2020-2025 but unfortunately this had to be postponed and then CV19 restrictions prevented the meeting. As a result, a *Draft*



Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is been prepared remotely by a working group of the Board and will be circulated to the membership upon completion.

- A renewed call for the **IUF's small grants for uplands research** was issued in March 2020. Research is coordinated by IUF's Research Director (Dr Mary Tubridy) with a focus on issues pertinent to the uplands, such as ecology, landscape, ecosystems services and carbon sequestration.
- Publication and launch of the joint IUF/ Heritage Council all-island research '**A Profile of Ireland's Uplands – An All-Island Study Highlighting their Strategic Importance**'. Research was conducted by Dr Brendan O'Keeffe and Dr Caroline Crowley, and launched on 30/10/19 at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin by Ms. Virginia Teehan, CEO of the Heritage Council.
- Successful delivery of the **IUF's European Innovation Partnership (EIP) networking event**, held on 3rd October 2019 in Glenree, Co Wicklow. Up to 40 people attended presentations and workshops.
- **Early Summer Networking Event 2020** on rural diversification was due to be held in Kilfinane in the Ballyhoura Mountains in Q1/ Q2 2020 but this has had to be postponed due to CV-19.

Representation on National Bodies

- The IUF continues to be represented on the executive of *Comhairle na Tuaithe* (CnaT) by our Chair, Frank Nugent and Research Director, Dr Mary Tubridy. CnaT has been reinvigorated this year, with a new Chairperson, Mr Liam Twomey. Has been some positive supports for key regions for path maintenance including MacGillycuddy's Reeks, Murrisk, Sliabh Liag, Inishowen.
- The IUF continued its participation on the multi-stakeholder Management Board of the *Uplands Partnership Network*, by IUF Chairman Frank Nugent and Research Coordinator, Dr Mary Tubridy, under the joint auspices of the Heritage Council and the Irish Uplands Forum. However, funding for the role of Uplands Partnership Coordinator was discontinued in 2019 and the Management Board is working to resolve this issue.

Correspondence/ Liaison/ Participation with Agencies:

- Ongoing correspondence and meetings with the Department of Rural and Community Development concerning potential supports for the Uplands.
- Liaison with Mountaineering Ireland as a key partner of the IUF.
- Attendance at Burren Winterage School October 2019
- Attendance at Blue Dot water catchment management, March 2020 (MT)
- Continued engagement and liaison with DAFM and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) projects.
- Positive discussions with NPWS and Heritage Council regarding participation in an EU LIFE Western Raised Bogs project for community engagement for bog restoration projects (ecosystems, landscape conservation, climate mitigation and education).
- Attendance at NPWS Biodiversity Forum, September 2019 (MT)
- Submission to Northern Ireland consultation on the Draft Environment Policy (Dec. 2019).
- Ongoing engagement with research institutions (TCD, TU Dublin, others as arise), local authorities and statutory agencies for collaborative opportunities on research pertaining to the Uplands.

Membership Issues

- The IUF website has been updated for improved reference by members.
- Communications are ongoing through email/ web/ social media. Special thanks to our Membership Secretary, Georgia Macmillan for her work on communications and the website.

Deirdre Lewis - Secretary of The Irish Uplands Forum Limited