



Community
Wetlands Forum



Strategic Plan

2024 - 2026



Photographs by Tina Claffey, Alf Harvey and Jeff Harvey.
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Introduction

Since being founded in the early 2010s, the Community Wetlands Forum (CWF) has gone from strength to strength. We now have 58 members in 15 counties, together protecting 2,275 hectares of wetland. We have strategic partnerships with various bodies and are actively involved in exciting projects including Connecting Communities with Peatlands, FarmPEAT and WaterLANDS. In 2023, we changed from being an externally hosted project to incorporation as an independent company limited by guarantee.

We therefore needed a new strategy. We undertook an extensive member and stakeholder consultation process to inform thinking about our future. A working group of directors, staff and member representatives subsequently drew up this strategic plan, in line with our new Constitution, with the support of a not-for-profit sector consultant and brought it before the membership in early 2024.

Our purpose

Irish wetlands, of all types and in all locations¹, are of immense value to nature and to people. But many are under threat, and it is essential that something be done about this. There is no single solution for conserving our wetlands. 'Top-down' approaches including public policy and technical advances are vital, but they are insufficient on their own. 'Bottom-up' approaches that involve engagement with, and leadership by, local communities are an essential piece of the puzzle.

The CWF has expertise in community-led wetlands stewardship. With the right mix and level of financial and human resources, our organisation undertakes a range of relevant activities, which:

- Raise awareness amongst everyone who needs to know about wetlands
- Promote understanding of wise wetland use
- Encourage collaborative action between many different players
- Catalyse the conservation and restoration of wetlands.

In so doing, we not only ensure the sustainability of our wetlands, we also build community.

1) Article 1.1 of the Ramsar Convention defines wetlands as “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.



Our vision

A society where wetlands are valued by local communities and community stewardship is valued as a means of protecting and managing wetlands for present and future generations

Our mission

To promote, develop, and support community-led wetland conservation for the public benefit and to provide a representative platform for community-led wetland conservation groups

Our values

- Participation
- Inclusion
- Empowerment
- Self-determination
- Partnership
- Resilience

We also 'walk the talk' and take account of our effects on the natural environment in all our work.





Strategic direction

We recognise that we are in a process of transition. We will build on our past successes. We will continue to review our previous priorities and ways of working to reflect our new reality. We will consolidate and fortify before considering any significant organisational growth. We will also be nimble as we adapt to a constantly changing external landscape. We have identified four clear strategic aims, each of which has various related objectives. Our plan is ambitious, but we are confident that it is achievable.

Aim 1: Build our internal capacity

Objectives:

- 1.1 Secure additional funding for CWF's work from a variety of sources (statutory, philanthropic, corporate, earned income)
- 1.2 Comply with the Charities' Governance Code and related regulation
- 1.3 Seek and avail of charitable tax exemption from Revenue (CHY status)
- 1.4 Increase the size of the Board, ensuring Directors/Trustees have the right skill-sets
- 1.5 Build on current processes to ensure staff are effectively supported and supervised
- 1.6 Further develop our policies and procedures for human resources (paid staff/contractors/volunteers)
- 1.7 Further develop our policies and procedures for funding and financial management
- 1.8 Further develop our data protection policies and procedures
- 1.9 Develop policies and procedures for research (both usage of and involvement in)
- 1.10 Optimise on technological solutions
- 1.11 Establish an efficient system for the storage and sharing of organisational documentation
- 1.12 Improve internal communication channels and protocols
- 1.13 Continue to track and evaluate our work in a manageable way





Aim 2: Develop our membership

Objectives:

- 2.1 Monitor the new process to administer membership fees and adjust as necessary
- 2.2 Streamline the process for member communication
- 2.3 Seek to increase membership numbers, with a target of at least one Full Member in each county
- 2.4 Undertake a needs analysis of members and use this to develop and roll out a strategy to meet priority needs that will likely include the following:
- 2.5 Provide members with essential information resources in formats that suit their needs
- 2.6 Introduce a basic one-to-one support offering for Full Members
- 2.7 Support members to establish a baseline assessment and action plan for each wetland site to inform future activities
- 2.8 Provide opportunities for members to connect, gain peer support, learn from each other and share skills
- 2.9 Make it easier and more appealing for members to get actively involved in the work of the CWF if they so choose



Aim 3: Work effectively with stakeholders

Objectives:

- 3.1** Further map and critically evaluate all current stakeholder collaborations (both with Irish and overseas partners and across all sectors: political/statutory; commercial; educational/academic; other non-governmental organisations; etc)
- 3.2** Manage and nurture those stakeholder relationships that are deemed mission-critical
- 3.3** Relinquish those stakeholder relationships that are not deemed mission-critical
- 3.4** Identify which stakeholders the CWF should target for collaboration over the coming three years, and why, and make efforts to ensure this is realised
- 3.5** Be open to arising opportunities in stakeholder engagement, provided that these are aligned with the CWF mission and agreed policies

Aim 4: Educate others about our work

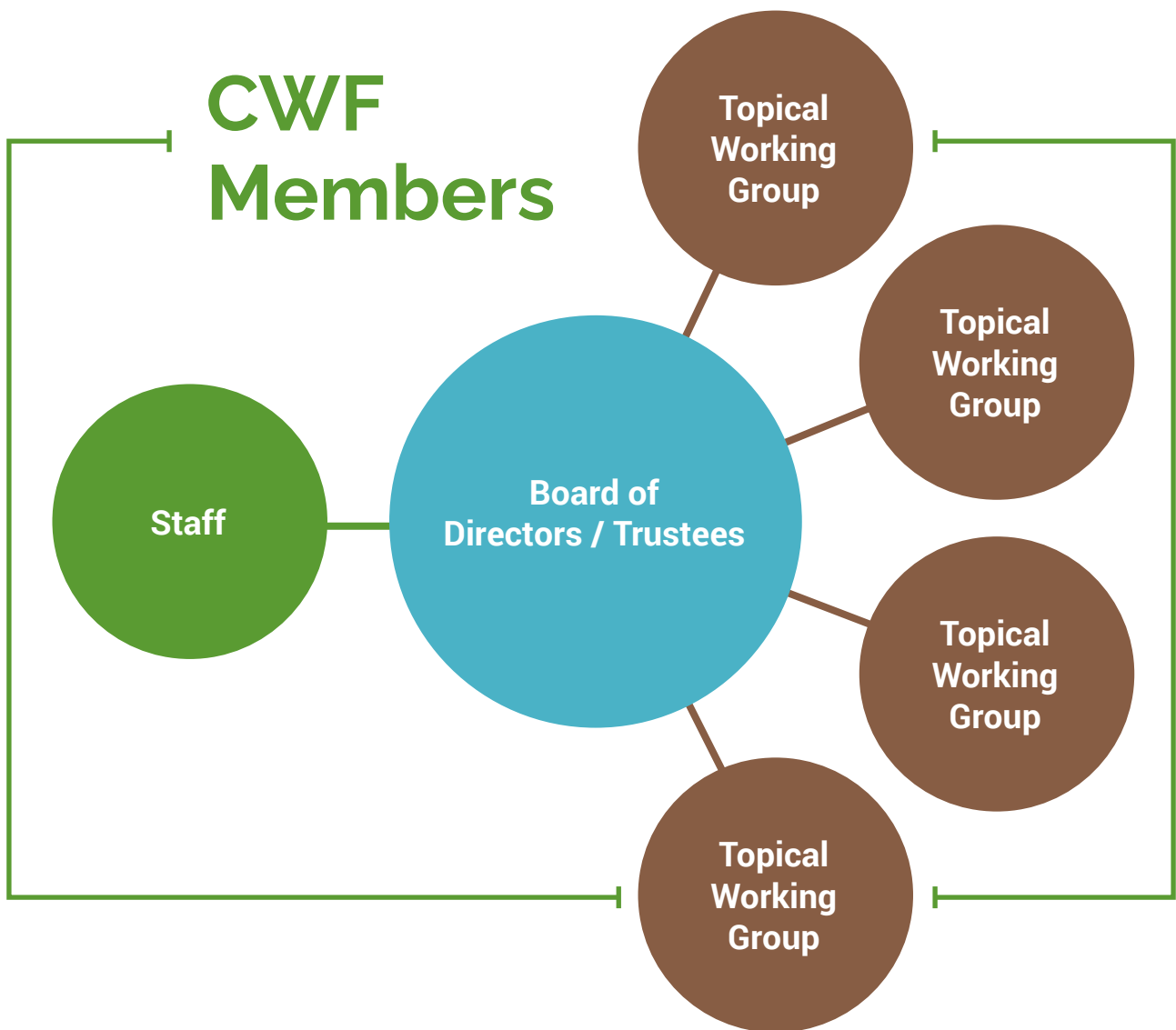
Objectives:

- 4.1** Roll out the CWF Communications Plan across four key audiences (members, funders/potential funders, stakeholders, the media)
- 4.2** Improve our website, ensuring it is an appealing, constantly updated hub for all matters relating to community-led wetlands management
- 4.3** Effectively manage a limited number of social media channels
- 4.4** Make concerted efforts to ensure a variety of wetland types are highlighted in CWF communications (for example, fens and wet grassland; not just bogs)
- 4.5** Make full use of awareness days and external events in the promotion of the CWF
- 4.6** Make targeted submissions on relevant public consultations focusing on the value of community stewardship of wetlands



Our new structure

Our previous structure no longer met our needs as an independent company/charity. It has been amended as per the schematic below. The remits of each component of the structure will be clarified and the suitability of the new structure will be kept under review over the lifetime of the plan.



Acknowledgements

This plan was produced in collaboration with the members of the Community Wetlands Forum and wider external stakeholders. We wish to thank all members and stakeholders for their contribution to this process. In addition to the contribution of members we are grateful for the input of the following stakeholders:

- The National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Co. Monaghan Biodiversity Officer
- Co. Offaly Biodiversity Officer
- Waterlands
- An Fóram Uisce / The Water Forum
- EPA
- Native Woodland Trust
- Wild Atlantic Nature
- Irish Peatland Conservation Council
- Waterlands
- Fáilte Ireland, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

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