Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland (WRI)

Strategy & Action Plan 2019 – 2023

Introduction

WRI [www.wri.ie] is a not for profit NGO established in 2010 working for the general advancement of wildlife protection and rehabilitation in Ireland. It is a registered charity and private company limited by guarantee.

WRI promotes and encourages best practice and sets high ethical standards for the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife; is a data collection point for records of wildlife casualties; unites Ireland with the International wildlife rehabilitation community; and offers wildlife educational events to all interested in Ireland's wildlife.

The driving force is its voluntary Board of Directors who oversee the implementation of WRI objectives. The Board is responsible for the overall control and strategic direction of the charity. It is made up of eight experienced and driven people and presents a balanced combination of people in the fields of wildlife conservation, welfare and rehabilitation, management, finance, communications, governance, education and IT.

The range of skills and expertise shared amongst Board Members also includes (but not limited to):

- Veterinary
- Dealing with Wildlife Crime
- Working with Communities
- Hospital Developments/Hospital Building Projects
- Project Management
- Process Management
- Accreditation
- Marketing

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to articulate the future ambition of WRI, to outline its key strategic priorities for 2019 – 2023 and to present these in the form of a Strategic Plan. This is accompanied by an Action Plan focused on key deliverables over the 5 year life span of the strategy.

Developing the Strategy

The Board of Directors worked closely to ensure that WRI is identifying and focusing on key strategic priority areas over the next three years. They participated in a facilitated workshop and a number of exercises to build strategy content while taking into account the evolving requirements of wildlife rehabilitation in Ireland. As part of the workshop the mission and vision statements were also reviewed by the Board. A detailed SWOT analysis is included in Appendix 1 attached.

Stakeholder Engagement

In developing its Strategy and Action Plan, WRI was conscious of its supporting role to wildlife rehabilitation and volunteers around the country. Members of the Board of Directors continue to solicit ideas and gain input from key stakeholders.

Mission of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

The Mission of WRI is "To promote wildlife rehabilitation and improve wildlife welfare and conservation in Ireland."

Vision of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

The Vision of WRI is "To facilitate networking and create a community of wildlife rehabilitators, with access to high quality science-based training, information and support."

Values

The work of the WRI will be underpinned by Excellence, Integrity and Caring:

Excellence
Through ongoing training and research, we are committed to facilitating the delivery of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation service which provides the highest standard of wildlife care and meets international best practice standards.

Integrity
We will at all times endeavour to work in partnership and collaboration with key stakeholders including volunteers, community representatives, WRI members and patrons, wildlife experts, other wildlife and conservation NGOs, and Government in a trusting and transparent manner. We are an organisation that "says what we do and does what we say".

Caring
We are committed to facilitating the delivery of a rescue and rehabilitation service by wildlife rehabilitators, for all wildlife in Ireland through a caring and wildlife centred approach.

Strategic Objectives

WRI has 3 main objectives.
- Provide Care for Wildlife in Ireland
- Provide Education in Wildlife Welfare
- Raise Awareness of WRI and its work

Strategic Objective 1

Provide Care for Wildlife in Ireland

Ireland is home to 28 species of land mammal, over 400 species of birds, and over 12,000 species of insect (National Parks and Wildlife Service).
There is currently no national organisation representing all types of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in Ireland. Admirable work is done by small organisations and individuals (rehabilitators) around the country but without finance or network support.
WRI was established to develop a more coordinated approach, raising the standards of care across the country and helping groups and individuals through the provision of funding, equipment and training.

Research
- WRI carries out wildlife research through various surveys and visits to veterinary practices and rehabilitators. The surveys form part of ongoing research providing invaluable data on wildlife casualties; emerging infectious diseases, volume, species and location of casualties, the effects of illegal persecution, habitat loss and climate change. The data also provides WRI with information on the varying standards of care being delivered across the country.
  This information is shared with other organisations including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), researchers, and other interested bodies.
  The data demonstrates the enormity of the numbers of wildlife casualties being rescued. It enables WRI to identify and provide assistance to rehabilitators. It has led the NPWS to establish new licencing protocol. It has led to the wildlife care being added to the veterinary college curriculum. Ultimately it illustrates the need for and the value of the profession of wildlife rehabilitation.

Post-Release Monitoring
  Monitoring animals after they are released informs us of the effectiveness of the wildlife rehabilitation process. It is essential that rehabilitators demonstrate that the welfare of the animals they're caring for isn't compromised by the process. WRI has facilitated various post-release monitoring programmes in Ireland, and coordinated Ireland's first ever post-release monitoring project of two rehabilitated pine marten kits using radio telemetry.

WRI also seeks to establish the first National Wildlife Hospital which, as well as providing a location for wildlife to be treated, would act as a focal point for education and research. WRI is working with Fingal County Council (FCC) to realise this project. FCC are making available a site in Donabate worth €2 million. A Feasibility Study has been drafted and is ready for presentation to the full Council for approval. This study divides the project into 2 Phases with 75% of the hospital and visitor centre to be built in Phase 1 with expansion of both elements together with the addition of on-site volunteer accommodation and a dedicated teaching facility in Phase 2.

From 2020 to 2023 WRI will seek to ensure that:

1) The number of rehabilitators is increased from 30 to 50

2) Post-release monitoring of wildlife is introduced across the county

3) Regular surveying is developed for rehabilitators and vets treating wildlife to establish baseline practices

4) Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Wildlife Hospital are well underway together with Fundraising campaigns

Strategic Objective 2
Provide Education in Wildlife Welfare

One of the main keys to effective wildlife care and rehabilitation is information and education. WRI Strives to inform and educate all those who have a role to play in wildlife welfare. These include people trained in veterinary care at all levels, rehabilitators, volunteers and the general public as well as local and national policy makers.

WRI uses a number of vehicles to carry out this objective including websites, newsletters, training courses, workshops and events, articles and press releases, social media, mailshots, local talks and school/college visits. Currently WRI is hosting the following websites:

- Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland website (wri.ie)
  This site provides information to individuals or groups actively involved in rehabilitation. It offers general guidelines on rehabilitation, licences and provides standardised forms for volunteers dealing with wildlife casualties. It includes links to national surveys, relevant publications, further education, grants and career options in wildlife rehabilitation.

- Irish Wildlife Matters website (irishwildlifematters.ie)
  This wildlife first aid site provides specific step-by-step information for treating the most common mammals and adult or baby birds. It is aimed at the general public, rehabilitators and the veterinary profession. It offers information on capture, assessment and short-term care in addition to detailed rehabilitation process information, common diseases and species specific veterinary treatment.

- Wildlife Crime Ireland website (wildlifecrime.ie)
  This site provides detailed information on wildlife crime, advice on recognising & recording a wildlife crime, contact details for reporting a wildlife crime, and links to further information.

Training courses

WRI have provided wildlife courses since 2011 and they have grown rapidly in popularity. All WRI courses are accredited by the Veterinary Council of Ireland.

- 'Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation' Course
  This Introductory course outlines the theory and practice of wildlife rehabilitation and is run regularly throughout the year.

- 'Advanced Wildlife Veterinary Treatment' Course which is designed to give veterinary professionals an in-depth knowledge of the modern approaches to mammalian and avian wildlife treatment options

- 'Orphan Rearing and Fostering' Course which focuses on the rearing and fostering of orphaned Irish birds and mammals.

Introducing Wildlife training to the University Veterinary Curriculum

In 2015, following the publication of WRI's article on Wildlife in Veterinary Practices, WRI was invited to teach wildlife rescue and first aid to University College Dublin (UCD) School of Veterinary Medicine veterinary and veterinary nursing students. This has now become part of the curriculum for the veterinary nursing degree course. Conferences

- **Wildlife Rehabilitation Conferences**

These conferences are aimed at professionals and volunteers involved in rehabilitation. Both national and International speakers are brought in to deliver talks and practical workshops. These conferences also provide excellent networking opportunities.

- **Wildlife Crime Conferences**

WRI believes that wildlife crime needs to be tackled on an All-Ireland basis through collaboration, communication and cooperation of all the relevant parties. To this end it has run 2 highly successful All-Ireland wildlife crime conferences where government agencies, NGOs, professional bodies, voluntary groups and individuals network and share their experience and expertise.

WRI plans to achieve the following between 2020 – 2023

1. Continue to run existing training courses.
2. Introduce online educational webinars and tutorials.
3. Expand courses to include Advanced Rehabilitation, Parasitology, and Nationwide Networking Workshops.
4. Introduce a structured accreditation scheme to complement the annual training programme.
5. WRI annual event to alternate between a 'Wild' Event, a Rehabilitation Conference, and a Wildlife Crime Conference.

Strategic Objective 3
Raise awareness of WRI and its work

In the period of this plan, WRI is determined to maintain its quality, credibility, and effectiveness by paying attention to a number of organisational areas including the effectiveness of its Board, its volunteers and administration. Charities are rightly expected to attain and maintain high standards in their governance. The continued recruitment of high calibre board members and the provision of opportunities for training and continuing professional development for board members and volunteers is also vital in that regard.
WRI depends on regular grants, donations and events to cover the running costs of the organisation.
Medium-term sustainability is still a challenge and it will continue to be necessary to develop diverse sources of core funding from grants, individual supporters, own income and fundraising, to ensure that any forms of Government funding is matched from other sources, so that the independence of WRI is assured.
For this, and in order to further its other goals, WRI needs to maintain a high profile on all platforms with clear information and messages.

1. Marketing plan in place.
2. Develop merchandising for sale online, at key locations and at conferences etc.
3. Updated website.
4. Raise awareness at events and workshops.
5. Develop a programme of school/community talks.
6. Streamline operations by putting formalised book-keeping and administration in place.
7. Ensure best practice in the Board by having good governance in place and adhered to.

Implementation Planning and Reporting

It is important that control mechanisms are in place to ensure the success of implementing the strategy in a timely manner and also to ensure that the measures being implemented are having the desired effect. These mechanisms also provide an opportunity for WRI to reflect on what may not be working as well as anticipated and to put remedial measures in place to address issues identified.

Action Plan

Year	Objective 1 Provide care for Wildlife in Ireland	Objective 2 Provide Education in Wildlife Welfare	Objective 3 Raise Awareness of WRI and its work
2019	• 30 rehabbers in place • 2 post-release monitoring projects • Rehabilitator survey • Hospital Feasibility completed	• Introductory Wildlife course x 3 • Veterinary course x 1 • WILD event • UCD sessions x 3	• Develop merchandising plan and commence introducing
2020	• 2 post-release monitoring projects • Veterinary Survey • Plans completed	• Introductory Wildlife course x 3 • Orphan course x 2 • Veterinary course x 1 • Crime Conference • UCD sessions x 2 Courses and events may be impacted by Covid 19 restrictions	• Establish Marketing plan • Establish merchandising stock management • New Website • Establish panel of speakers on behalf of WRI • Formalise book-keeping • Develop fundraising plan • Complete Good Governance
2021	• 40 rehabbers in place • 4 post-release monitoring projects • Rehabilitator survey • Develop system of rehabilitator accreditation • Phase 1 of Hospital started	• Introductory Wildlife course x 3 • Advanced Wildlife course x 1 • Orphan course x 2 • Veterinary course x 1 • WILD event • Networking workshops x 2 • UCD sessions x 3	• Develop programme of Community Talks • Expand social media platforms • Develop 'pack' for Community functions/talks
2022	• 4 post-release monitoring projects • Veterinary Survey • Phase 2 of Hospital started	• Introductory Wildlife course x 4 • Advanced Wildlife course x 2 • Orphan course x 3 • Veterinary course x 2 • Networking workshops x 2 • Rehabilitation Conference • UCD sessions x 4	• Formalise administration • Put SORP reporting in place
2023	• 50 rehabbers in place • 4 post-release monitoring projects • Rehabilitator survey	• Introductory Wildlife course x 4 • Advanced Wildlife course x 2 • Orphan course x 3	• Establish office location

● Hospital completed	● Veterinary course x 2 ● UCD sessions x 4 ● Parasitology course x 1 ● WILD event ● Accreditation in place	

Appendix 1
WRI SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weakness
▪ Skilled & knowledgeable BOD ▪ Strong Governance ▪ Reputation/liked/good will ▪ Relevant ▪ International Connections ▪ Government & Council on Board ▪ First Irish all-species National wildlife welfare & conservation organisation ▪ Directors and rehabilitators all passionate about their role ▪ Patrons ▪ Wildlife Hospital innovative project	▪ Funding ▪ Staff and Resources ▪ Not aligned to one government department (DAFM & DCHG) ▪ No Partnership ▪ Not widely known/Public Awareness ▪ BOD as per Memo & Arts, must work voluntarily ▪ Key Man Reliance ▪ Time ▪ Digital Platform ▪ Legal expertise ▪ Spokesperson/Storyteller ▪ Not utilising patrons enough
Opportunities	**Threats**
▪ Board of Directors ▪ Patrons ▪ General goodwill ▪ Educational opportunities and enthusiasm ▪ Global Partners	▪ Funding ▪ Staff and Resources ▪ Council Engagement and 'Buy In' ▪ Not aligned to one government department (DAFM & DCHG) ▪ Economic downturn

▪ Wildlife Hospital ▪ Academic Partner i.e. UCD ▪ Advertising ▪ Links with conservation and biodiversity ▪ International Dimensions ▪ Social Media ▪ National Wildlife Day ▪ Merchandise ▪ Grants	▪ Competition