



WILD ATLANTIC  
NATURE LIFE



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páircanna  
Náisiúnta agus Fiaidhíola  
National Parks and Wildlife Service

## Welcome message



Dear readers,  
Welcome to  
issue five of  
our project  
newsletter!

We are now past the half-way point in LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature and the project continues to go from strength to strength. We are continually developing and expanding our Land Restoration Programme, which seeks to deliver co-benefits for landowners and the environment and align with existing policy and land use. Our Natura Communities initiative is also progressing well, employing more than 40 people in nature conservation across rural areas. Our participation in EU Horizon projects continues through WaterLANDS and FarmBioNet, both of which provide updates inside the newsletter. The Shared Island Initiative Peatland Programme is also fast becoming a good practice example for cross-border cooperation on the environment. You can read more about these projects, along with lots of additional news and features, inside. You can follow our work on our website and social media accounts.

Regards, Gary Goggins



## About LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature

LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature is an innovative and ambitious project aimed at conservation and management of Ireland's Natura 2000 network of blanket bog habitats. Funded under the EU LIFE programme for nine years (2021-2029), LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature works with farmers, landowners, local communities, state agencies and others across a broad range of actions spanning sectors including farming, forestry, tourism, community development, education and research.

You can find out more about LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature by visiting our website at [www.wildatlanticnature.ie](http://www.wildatlanticnature.ie)



## Who we are

Coordinated by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the project involves nine associated partners including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), RTÉ, Coillte, Fáilte Ireland, The Heritage Council, BnM, Teagasc, Northern & Western Regional Assembly, and Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialaithe Áiteáil agus Oidhreacht  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



COILLTE  
LEADER PARTNER 2021-2024

BORD MÓNA  
LEADER PARTNER 2021-2024

Fáilte Ireland  
National Tourism  
Development  
Authority

USC IBADER  
Instituto de Biodiversidade  
Agenda e Desenvolvimento Rural

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

RTÉ

An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

Northern & Western  
Regional Assembly

## Project news

### Wild Atlantic Nature Land Restoration Programme *by Victoria McArthur*



The LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature Land Restoration Programme is a pilot habitat restoration scheme designed to explore the complexities of restoring blanket bog and associated peatlands at a landscape scale. Peatlands are one of Ireland's most important natural resources: they store vast amounts of carbon, regulate water flows, and provide habitats for rare plants and wildlife. Restoring them is vital not only for biodiversity but also for climate regulation and the building resilience in rural communities.

Over the past year, the programme has made significant progress in developing a network of peatland restoration demonstration sites. These sites will serve as practical examples of how restoration can be achieved in different settings focusing on local issues.

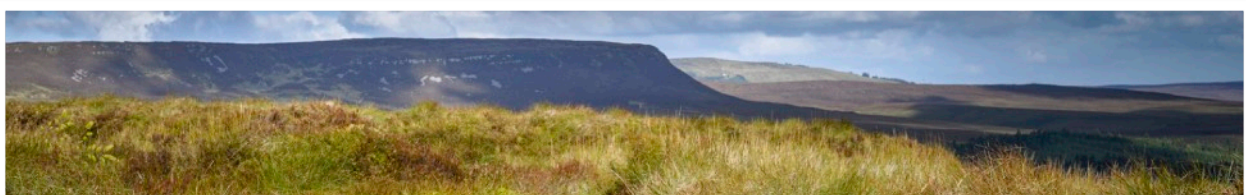
Working closely with the ACRES Cooperation Project teams, Natura Communities groups, and farmers, suitable peatland sites have been identified and a number of restoration plans are now ready to be implemented in 2026. This collaborative approach helps ensure that restoration is grounded in local knowledge and is building capacity in local communities to deliver habitat restoration.

Another key focus over the past year has been documenting the main processes required before restoration work can begin. From site selection through planning to implementation, each step has been carefully tracked to provide a clear roadmap to help inform future programmes and policy.

Robust data collection throughout the planning process has also been implemented, with peat depth surveys, habitat mapping and water flow mapping providing valuable insights into ecological change and guiding the restoration planning process.

To support the coordination of the programme, a database is also currently being developed to capture all relevant data, enabling effective reporting to relevant authorities and ensuring transparency in scheme delivery.

The programme has also invested time in community engagement, through advising stakeholders, participating in workshops, and field demonstrations that hopefully will help build a better understanding and encourage stewardship of peatland resources.



## Peatland restoration demonstration days for excavator operators *by Margaret Flaherty*

Earlier this year, demonstration days for excavator operators took place in Bangor-Erris, Co. Mayo. Designed to support contractors and businesses that may want to get involved in peatland restoration, these demonstration days were free and facilitated by LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature with support from project partners, BnM and Coillte.

Targeted at existing machine operators with an interest in peatland restoration, it provided an opportunity for those currently engaged in this type of work to share their knowledge, skills and experiences of peatland restoration. Discussions during the event included the potential opportunities for contractors in the area of peatland restoration, as well as discussing current and future projects.



The event itself involved an indoor morning session with presentations on the background of peatland restoration in Ireland, followed by an afternoon out on site to see peatland restoration in action. Attendees took a short bus trip to a nearby bog where a number of peatland restoration techniques were demonstrated, with a particular focus on peat dam construction, the use of borrow pits and practical information on best practise approaches to restoration works.



Operators appreciated the opportunity to see specialist techniques up close and to discuss real-world challenges with practitioners who have on-the-ground experience.

There will be a growing need for skilled operators as more restoration projects come on stream under national and EU-funded initiatives. By building local capacity and sharing practical expertise, LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature aim to ensure that communities can play an active role in the restoration and long-term management of Ireland's peatlands.

## What lies beneath *by Eoin McGreal*

The more you delve into peatlands the more you delve into various aspects of our past. Examples that come to mind are how the Céide Fields in North Mayo have revealed the highly organised nature of our Neolithic farming systems or how peat cuttings in the midlands have uncovered skeletons of Giant Irish Deer as they struggled to survive in a changing climate some twelve thousand years ago.

However the actual peat itself can also be revealing. Last May, as part of National Biodiversity Week, Maynooth University in collaboration with LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature and Wild Nephin National Park, showcased current work and research in relation to our blanket bogs, including studies on paleoecology, conservation of biodiversity and peatland restoration.

As part of this event pupils from local national schools assisted Dr Lisa Orme from the university's Department of Geography to take core samples of peat from near the Visitor Centre of the Wild Nephin National Park in Ballycroy.



As the peat accumulates on the bog over thousands of years the sediments that are deposited on its surface can provide evidence of what the climate was like over this period. By taking such core samples from bogs along the west coast researchers can then analyse them to identify past changes in storminess over time. This data can also be used to highlight the occurrence and timelines of such phenomena as tsunamis in the past. Further information on this project that informs us about how our blanket bogs can explain changes in our climate and environment is available at [holocenestorminess.com](http://holocenestorminess.com)



## WaterLANDS delivering peatland restoration with farmers in Leitrim *by Gary Goggins*

The WaterLANDS project was highlighted as a success story by the Green Deal Projects Support Office (GDSO) in April for its work at the Irish Action Site led by LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature, which guides and supports farmers in restoring blanket bog habitats. In early September, Wild Atlantic Nature and WaterLANDS partners from Wetlands International spoke in a panel discussion on “Implementing Restoration Solutions, Together” as part of an event organised by WaterLANDS partner ERINN Innovation, titled “Co-Creating Change: Participatory Approaches for a Resilient Ireland”. As part of their wider outreach activities, the Irish Action Site in Cuilcagh Anierin Uplands SAC recently hosted ACRES CP staff who undertook hands-on training in peatland restoration on Bencroy Mountain. In October, the site hosted about 30 participants from the IUCN Peatlands Conference, showcasing ongoing restoration work. Earlier this year, WaterLANDS colleagues met with local farmers and other stakeholders during a productive week of landscape analysis at the Cuilcagh Anierin Uplands SAC to deepen understanding of peatlands and strengthen restoration efforts. The site was also featured on RTÉ2 in a documentary ‘The Future of Nature’, where Dr. Guaduneth Chico outlined current restoration activities and their impact. Guaduneth has since left the project and we wish him well in his new role with Natural Resource Wales. More recently, RTÉ highlighted the team’s work on Bencroy Mountain in a news article, on Morning Ireland and on the Six-One News.



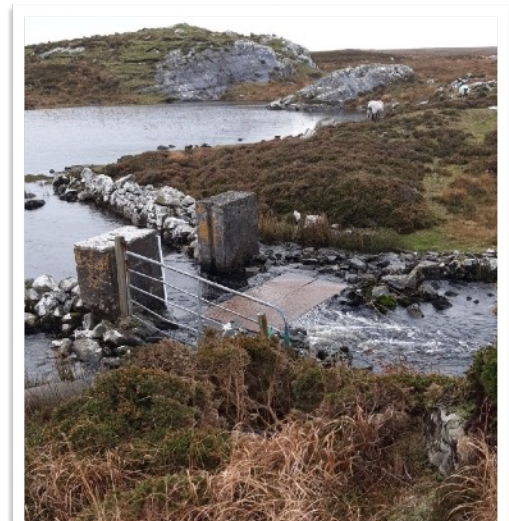
## Peatland survey update *by John Derwin*

It has been another busy and successful year on the Wild Atlantic Nature habitat survey. In 2025, four project sites were surveyed, totalling over 28,000ha. There is a further 30,000ha planned for survey next year. This will bring the total area of peatlands surveyed to over 90,000ha in four years, which is a great achievement by all the surveyors involved.

In 2025, Woodrow Consultancy surveyed 8,000ha of peatlands in Bellacorrick Bog Complex SAC in Co. Mayo. In addition, Studio Silva surveyed three project sites in Co. Galway totalling 20,000ha. This included a full survey of The Twelve Bens/ Garraun Complex SAC and partial surveys of the Maumturk Mountains SAC and Connemara Bog Complex SAC.

Throughout the year, surveyors made contact with landowners to inform them about the survey and to outline what was involved. This proved very successful with many landowners able to help with access and information about their lands. There were also on site meetings with landowners to discuss issues on specific commonages. Landowners have welcomed this engagement and have been very interested in discussing the conservation issues relating to their commonages.

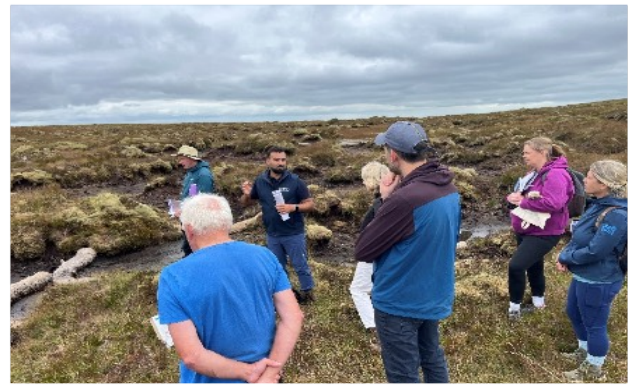
The aim of LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature is to protect and restore blanket bogs and associated habitats, with particular regards to priority Annex I Habitat ‘Active Blanket Bog’. By mapping the extent of the habitat, assessing its condition and identifying threats and pressures, the restoration potential for habitats can be determined. Areas of high restoration potential can then be prioritised for restoration actions, in consultation with farmers and other landowners. Next year habitat surveys will continue in Maumturk Mountains SAC and Connemara Bog Complex. Landowners at these sites will be contacted before any surveys begin, and the project team will be on hand to answer any queries.



## Shared Island Initiative Peatland Programme *by Derek McLoughlin*

LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature coordinates a €15m Shared Island Peatland Programme (SIIP) aimed at developing capacity and expertise, sharing knowledge and delivering peatland restoration in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This is a collaboration of National Parks and Wildlife Service, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and NatureScot, along with a range of stakeholders.

The project uses lighthouse demonstration sites in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland to deliver practical peatland restoration, build capacity for long-term peatland management, undertake research and monitoring, exchange knowledge, and address socio-cultural issues across a range of restoration scenarios. These include the restoration of private and public lands with a focus on state authorities, farmers, community-based groups and peatland practitioners.



Our two target areas in Ireland are Slieve Anierin, Co. Leitrim, where farmers are restoring eroding areas on upland blanket bog and, a number of sites in north Co. Mayo, where we are demonstrating forest to bog restoration on private lands and within Wild Nephin National Park.

In Northern Ireland our partners have awarded funding through the Peatland Challenge Fund to five peatland restoration projects ranging from training modules to the on-the-ground peatland restoration.

In Scotland, peatland restoration has been delivered through Peatland Action, an initiative led by NatureScot alongside Cairngorms National Park, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority, Scottish Water, and Forestry and Land Scotland. Through SIIP, they have focused their work across challenging areas to develop techniques for implementing restoration actions in environmentally sensitive sites, including extending the operating season through the use of a Peatland Restoration and Breeding Birds protocol and developing innovative techniques to deal with challenging restoration scenarios.

Our second in-person gathering took place in October 2025 in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone hosted by Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Delegates from organisations working on peatland restoration in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland joined the event to build expertise, exchange knowledge and create new opportunities to collaborate and share best practices across the partnership.



As well as discussing restoration examples in the field, there was a strong emphasis on developing solutions around managing delivery of restoration, capacity, and data and evidence.

Our work on the SIIP has been widely lauded as an exemplar of international cooperation. We have presented our work to the Developing Irish Sea Cooperation (DISC) symposium in Cardiff in November, to the Irish consulate at the Scottish Parliament in December and at a Shared Island Initiative panel in Dublin Castle at the invitation of the Department of An Taoiseach.

2026 will see a busy year with Ireland hosting Northern Ireland and Scotland partners, and the completion of restoration at a number of sites in the three jurisdictions.

## Restoration Retrofit Pilot Project *by Margaret Flaherty*



Wild Atlantic Nature is conducting a Restoration Retrofit Project (RRP) in the Owenduff Nephin Complex SAC. This pilot is looking to demonstrate the deep retrofit of homes as a way of reducing demand for turf, which is an important domestic fuel. Simultaneous to this, participants will agree to restoration of turbary areas in Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and sustainable management of peatland habitats on their farms.

The project has started work with Electric Ireland Superhomes (EIS), a One Stop Shop (OSS) service provider under the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme. EIS have undertaken Home Energy Assessments (HEAs) on the first four homes in the pilot. The HEA provides a comprehensive report on the work required to bring homes up to the

required level B2 Building Energy Rating (BER). Landowner agreements are currently being finalised for these four landowners ahead of the commencement of home retrofits and peatland restoration works.

In early 2026, we will be back in touch with all those that expressed an interest and that met the pilot criteria to offer a free HEA. Shortlisting of these candidates will also take place in the New Year, with up to 16 of these landowners selected for the full home retrofit and peatland restoration package. Whether landowners currently cut or burn turf is not part of the eligibility assessment, however they must own peatland in the relevant SAC.

## New publication on the evolution of Results-Based Payment Schemes in Ireland

The findings from a study commissioned by LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature have been published in the leading scientific journal *Agricultural Systems*. This paper analyzes the policy decision to mainstream Results-Based agri-environmental Payment Schemes (RBPS) in Ireland's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan (CSP) (2023-2027), representing Europe's largest implementation of RBPS in agricultural policy. The study employs three complementary analytical perspectives: a historical timeline, complex adaptive systems theory, and policy windows theory. The analysis reveals how the policy emerged

from a 20-year process of pilot projects, evidence building, and advocacy by a 'coalition of the willing'. The paper highlights the crucial role of pilot projects in providing proof of concept, building capacity, and developing methodologies. It demonstrates how significant policy change resulted from ongoing advocacy combined with strategic use of policy windows, particularly around CAP cycles. The findings contribute to understanding how innovative agri-environmental policies can be effectively developed and implemented at scale. The study will be of particular interest to agri-environmental policy-makers, scholars of environmental governance and RBPS practitioners. The paper is freely available at [https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0308-521X\(25\)00361-0](https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0308-521X(25)00361-0)





## Southern European Blanket Bog working group delivering results *by Javier Ferreiro*



Networking by IBADER-USC in the LIFE Wild Atlantic Nature project is proving to be worthwhile across Europe. After the success with international scientific publications, and technical visits to different European Member states, the team are working to gather best practices in a new publication about blanket bog restoration in Europe. This new publication will be a significant outcome from the networking actions of the project and will increase knowledge about blanket bogs.

This activity will integrate knowledge from experienced experts across Europe, bringing an integrated overview of ways to protect these so vulnerable and threatened

peatlands, while also aiming to have impact on European Commission legislation and future reviews of the Habitats Directive.

### Communication, dissemination and outreach activities

2025 continued to be another busy year for LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature communication and dissemination activities. The project was recognised as an exemplar for working together for nature in Europe, with an official celebratory event held to mark the receipt of the 2024 Natura 2000 Award held in May. The celebration doubled-up as a launch event for the Natura Communities initiative, with Alan Dillon TD doing the honours in front of a large crowd in Ballycroy Visitor Centre. Margaret Flaherty and Eoin McGreal were out and about in 2025, speaking at events across the project area, including activities to mark Connemara Bog Week, Biodiversity Week and Heritage Day. Gary Goggins was invited to give a presentation at the LatViaNature International Conference in Riga, where he spoke about stakeholder engagement. He also presented alongside farmer Colm Gavin at the IUCN Peatlands Programme Conference in Derry. Colm also accompanied Derek McLoughlin to an event in the Scottish Parliament, where they spoke about working with farmers to deliver peatland restoration. There was a similar theme in the keynote address delivered by Derek at the Europarcs Conference in Lithuania. Eoin McGreal also spoke about his work on the project at this high-profile event, while Lee McDaid gave a presentation to colleagues at the NPWS Annual Conference.



Guaduneth Chico participated in a Summer School organized by IBADER-USC. Under the title “Nature Restoration: Challenges, Strategies, and Action Proposals,” the event was held from July 7 to 10, 2025, at the Corrubedo Dune Natural Park (Galicia, Spain). Guaduneth explained to the students the objectives and goals of the blanket bog restoration developed by LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature, as well as the main challenges and results that are being accomplished by the project.

LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature featured in local and national media, including RTÉ Countrywide and the RTÉ Six-One News. Wild Atlantic Nature also hosted Yves-Marie Le Guen from LIFE Landes d’Armorique project in France. Meeting farmers continues to be a priority for Wild Atlantic Nature, and our staff attended and spoke at several farmer-focussed events across our project area and beyond.



## MASPER-C insights from Letterunshin *by Saw Min, Rachael Murphy & Giulia Bondi, Teagasc*

MASPER-C (Grant Agreement:2023 IE-NZ470) is a €2 million research partnership between Ireland and New Zealand, co-funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). The project brings together scientists from Teagasc, and other partner institutions in both countries to improve how we model carbon emissions and removals from agriculturally managed peat soils. Using process-based models, MASPER-C aims to better represent peat characteristics, climate conditions, and management practices across both regions. These models are being tested and refined using in-situ carbon measurements of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), weather and soil data from eddy-covariance tower networks, including the National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory (NASCO) in Ireland and the University of Waikato in New Zealand.



The blanket bog site in Letterunshin, Co. Sligo, is one of LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature's long-term monitoring sites and a key contributor to MASPER-C project. Since 2022, a NASCO eddy-covariance tower has been recording continuous exchanges of CO<sub>2</sub>, water vapour, and energy fluxes. These measurements help us understand how intact blanket bog's function and respond to pressures such as anthropogenic activities and extreme climatic conditions.

On 19 April 2023, an unexpected wildfire burned approximately 395 hectares over a 6.5-hour period. Before the fire, CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes at the Letterunshin bog were small, typically ranging from a small sink of C at -0.36 g C m<sup>-2</sup> to a small source of C at 0.50 g C m<sup>-2</sup>. During the wildfire on 19 April 2023, emissions were two orders of magnitude higher, with a total release of 42.7 g C m<sup>-2</sup> over just a few hours. Preliminary measurements show that Letterunshin remained a carbon sink in both 2023 (108 g C m<sup>-2</sup>) and 2024 (114 g C m<sup>-2</sup>). The slightly higher uptake in 2024 suggests that the bog is beginning to recover from the 2023 wildfire.

Ongoing work includes developing multi-year carbon budgets, monitoring dissolved organic carbon (DOC) export, and examining how water-table dynamics shape CO<sub>2</sub> exchange. These insights will support peatland restoration efforts and strengthen resilience planning across the LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature network.

## Interactive commonage game with farmers in Connemara *by Ivan Kelly, Teagasc*



In November, farmers in Connemara participated in a unique learning experience during the Teagasc/Wild Atlantic Nature Pilot Uplands course. They played an innovative game created by Dr. Colas Chervier from the University of Limerick, focused on grazing and commonage management.

The game, known as a common-pool resource game, helps people understand how to effectively manage shared resources. These games are used around the world for similar scenarios where communities share fish or forests. Players face two main strategies:

1. Short-Term Gains: Focused on immediate profits, which can harm the shared resource.
2. Teamwork for Sustainability: Encourages cooperation to protect the resource long-term, even if less profitable initially.

Each farmer decides how many sheep to keep on a fictional commonage, earning points both individually (based on sheep output) and collectively (based on commonage health). The game consists of up to 13 rounds and players aim to maximise points, which can be exchanged for gift vouchers, adding a healthy competitive edge! A big thank you to Colas Chervier and our "gamemasters"—Teagasc advisors Marion Fox and Joanne Masterson, along with MAIS student Sarah Lily James—who made these evenings both educational and enjoyable. The game sparked valuable discussion on commonage management issues.



## Bridging knowledge gaps in Biodiversity Friendly Farming: Insights from FarmBioNet workshop *by Niall Walsh*



The second Farmer-Focused Biodiversity and Agricultural Knowledge Network (FarmBioNet) workshop, hosted by LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature, brought together farmers, advisors, researchers, and policy makers to explore knowledge gaps in biodiversity-friendly farming (BFF) practices and to better understand the needs of farmers implementing these practices. The workshop was followed by a farm walk led by Colm Gavin in the Bundorragha river catchment, Delphi, Co. Mayo.

The workshop was centred around a discussion on BFF practices, their biodiversity value and long-term economic benefit. Farmers and advisors discussed the feasibility of these practices on their own farms, considered any additional co-benefits, and reflected on the time required for biodiversity and economic returns to become evident. Farmers also highlighted practical challenges associated with these actions, including farm abandonment, policy constraints, research gaps in upland farming, the importance of farmer-to-farmer communication, and the value of better recognising ecosystem services.



The second half of the day featured a guided farm walk led by Colm Gavin, an organic sheep farmer actively implementing BFF practices to enhance the vitality and biodiversity of his farm's natural habitats. Colm has previously participated in the Pearl Mussel Project EIP, which concluded in 2023, and his farm is also featured in the Farming for Nature Handbook, highlighting his commitment to integrating biodiversity-friendly practices into productive farming.

Many participants emphasised the need for further research into upland farming, noting that policy and research efforts in Ireland tend to focus disproportionately on lowland systems, leaving upland farmers underrepresented. Attendees also discussed the difficulties associated with organic farming and highlighted the importance of improving collaboration between different organic sectors, for example, aligning organic livestock production with organic cereal production to create more integrated and workable systems.

## Biodiversity conservation Summer School *by Javier Ferreira*

IBADER-USC, the only overseas partner of LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature, has participated in the Summer School "Biodiversity and Conservation Strategies in Protected Areas", held by the Mountain Research Center of Politechnic Institute of Bragança (Portugal).

The main focus of this event was the conservation of vulnerable habitats and protected species, with special attention to the lesser known examples, as they play a crucial role keeping ecological balance and they face increasing threats by human actions and climatic change.

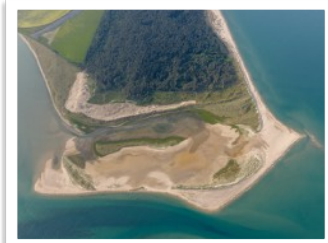
IBADER-USC presented the LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature project, highlighting the outstanding value of blanket bogs as one of the European biodiversity reservoirs, remarking the relevance of the involvement of Irish farmers, detailing the excellent results of restoration actions in the Irish sites, as well as explaining the huge effort of networking that the project is implementing.



## News from partners

### LIFE Insular project contributes to Irish fixed sand dunes restoration *by Javier Ferreiro*

IBADER-USC, NPWS and Coillte, partners of LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature project, are also joining efforts in LIFE INSULAR (LIFE20 NAT/ES/001007), a 5 year transnational project between Ireland and Spain, with a total budget of €5.2m, implementing a transnational strategy for integrated restoration of fixed dunes habitat (2130\*) on Natura 2000, promoting their favourable conservation status and increasing their resilience as the main measure of adaptation to current global changes.



After the amazing job at the Raven Nature Reserve, the project has focused now in The Ards, Rinclevan and Murvagh Natura 2000 sites, where conservation actions are deployed, addressing common conservation problems and threats, such as eliminating old forest plantations and

encroaching trees on sand dunes, protecting the sand dunes against anthropogenic pressures, and restoring insular habitats through sowing/planting their characteristic plant species. This will lead to increase the area and improve the structure and future prospects of the targeted habitats, proving that LIFE INSULAR's transnational strategy is successful way to address current global changes on natural ecosystems

Website: [www.lifeinsular.eu](http://www.lifeinsular.eu) Twitter: @life\_insular



### LIFE GLOBAL: transnational strategy for restoring Natura 2000 high conservation value areas under a global change perspective *by Javier Ferreiro*

IBADER-USC, partner on LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature is coordinator of LIFE GLOBAL project (LIFE23-NAT-ES-LIFE GLOBAL). It is a 5-year transnational project between Spain and Portugal, with a total budget of €5.2m, implementing a coherent restoration strategy in 31 Northern Iberian Natura 2000 high conservation value areas through small-scale actions, as a main measure of adaptation to current environmental challenges.

The project aims to pilot and demonstrate various initiatives, which can be transferred and replicated to other European territories with similar concentration and isolation of high conservation value habitats that are vulnerable as they exist in fragmented and complex mosaics.

As a result, IBADER-USC is holding networking workshops where the international partners may share information on the conservation and sustainable management of priority habitats and species, assessing their fragility and vulnerability to climate change.

These workshops have been extremely valuable as they have facilitated the evaluation of both the conservation status and population dynamics of those targeted habitats and species. In addition, workshops have identified the main threats facing these habitats and species and the conservation measures (both in situ and ex situ) to ensure their long-term preservation.



## News from related projects

### FARM Up: Coimín Beo *by John Walsh*



South West Mayo Development Company, in partnership with Cairde na hEragaile are delighted to introduce The FARM-Up: Coimín Beo EIP. The FARM-Up (Farming and Restoration Management for Upland Commonages) project officially began on 6th October 2025. This four-year EIP, with a budget of €1.75 million, focuses on management and restoration on upland commonages in the Nephin region of Co. Mayo and An Earagail region of Co. Donegal.

The project, now proudly titled FARM-Up: Coimín Beo, to reflect our Gaeltacht communities, aims to develop and demonstrate sustainable commonage management, restore peatland habitats, source external funding, scale up restoration, and share learnings nationally—all while supporting upland farming communities and their unique cultural and environmental heritage.

Since the launch, we've engaged directly with farmers across our target areas, building relationships and sharing the project goals of commonage habitat improvement. These conversations have been invaluable in shaping the next phase of the project and ensuring that local voices remain at the heart of our work.

We are delighted to announce the appointment of John Walsh as Project Coordinator who will focus on turning the project plan into action and Peadear Gallagher as Project Officer, who will focus on on-the-ground delivery and farmer engagement.



We are currently planning farmer information evenings in our target areas to recruit farmers. This will allow us to understand challenges and identify solutions for upland commonage management and restoration.

Looking ahead, we have two major project launch events to come in the new year in Tiernaur Hall, Newport, Co. Mayo & Óstán Loch Altan, Gortahork, Co. Donegal. Date and time of these events will be published on the FARM-Up: Coimín Beo website when confirmed. These open events will bring together farmers, policymakers and stakeholders to showcase the aims of FARM-Up: Coimín Beo, outline opportunities, and highlight the benefits of collaborative habitat restoration. FARM-Up, Coimín Beo is currently working on a dedicated website and social media accounts—keep an eye out for updates!.

### Corncrake/Traonach LIFE schools programme *by Patrick Fitzmaurice*

The CorncrakeLIFE project continued its very successful primary schools programme during 2025. The programme was delivered by the projects Community Engagement Officers Caitriona and Pat. The programme is aimed at primary school pupils aged between 9 and 13yrs.

The schools programme which is bilingual is also available to other schools via the CorncrakeLIFE website under resources tab. The schools programme consists of two classroom sessions and one field trip to the

farm of a CorncrakeLIFE participant. On the first session the ecology of the Corncrake is covered. Also oats, wild flowers and other plants are propagated. Early growing wild plants such as hogweed, nettles, and yellow flag Iris make ideal habitats for corncrake when they arrive back to Ireland. The second session includes bird migration, activities and nature quizzes. On the third visit which is a field trip the children transplant their propagated seeds into an existing corncrake cover plot and finish up participating in a wildflower scavenger hunt before concluding with a healthy snack in the outdoors.





## LIFE IP Peatlands and People *by Rebecca Pflanz*

LIFE IP Peatlands and People is a seven-year EU-funded project focused on restoring peatlands in Ireland's Midlands. It works with local communities to build capacity, develop solutions, and generate knowledge that supports the implementation of the Irish Climate Action Plan.



As part of the project, BnM is continuing to plant Sphagnum moss on peatlands formerly used for industrial peat extraction that have been re-wetted. BnM are on track to plant over 1 million Sphagnum plugs in 2025! This will result in a combined total of over 2 million plugs planted at 27 different BnM bogs covering 450.3 hectares to date. The project also collaborated with Leave No Trace to deliver the Hot Spot project for the second year in a row, offering corporate open days to companies who want to make an impact. Over four days in September, 143 Deloitte employees planted 18,500 Sphagnum moss plugs.

Ireland's first scaling accelerator for green innovators set up as part of the project, Accelerate Green, continued to support the transition away from peat-based industries in Ireland's Midlands region. In 2025, a total of 9 companies completed the Accelerate Green GROW programme – a six-month executive accelerator for scaling sustainability-focused SMEs.

The concept of the Peatlands and People visitor experience, rebranded to Climate House Ireland in 2024, had its public debut at the Climate Carnival, which brought together an inspiring mix of more than 500 people passionate about climate action, innovation, and community. The event was the culmination of months-long consultations with a variety of stakeholders in the design and planning of the new Climate House Ireland concept, with the ambition to build a new global destination in Ireland dedicated to tackling environmental challenges, co-creating solutions, and inspiring action. A targeted engagement activity at the event prompted participants to share their ideas and vision of a Climate House, which Illustrator Eimear McNally brought to life in a stunning live artwork that captured the creativity and optimism of the crowd (see image). A [two-minute-long video](#) introduces the vision and concept to interested listeners; a public Climate House [holding website](#) provides more information on the concept and background, with more collateral currently in development.



## Launch of All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence (APEX) at the University of Galway Ryan Institute

The Ryan Institute at the University of Galway recently announced the launch of the All-Ireland Peatlands Centre of Excellence (APEX). The APEX Centre will help address critical challenges linked to peatlands including decarbonisation, biodiversity loss, just transition, and cultural heritage. The Centre will serve as a hub for research, innovation, training, and policy development, supporting restoration and conservation efforts across the island of Ireland and beyond.



## Closing message

Dear reader,

Thank you for your ongoing support for our project, LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature. In 2025, I am particularly proud of the development of our land restoration programme. We hope this will form the basis for better opportunities for landowners in Natura 2000 areas to avail of support in restoration of peatlands. Our Natura Communities initiative continues to grow with the aspiration to include sites in Counties Kerry, Sligo and Leitrim in 2026. This will further boost numbers employed in locally-embedded restoration work. Our first homes will be fully retrofitted in early 2026, opening new opportunities for those farming Natura 2000 lands. Indeed, farmers are central to the objectives of the project and we continue to demonstrate and promote the considerable work being undertaken to a wide audience throughout Europe.

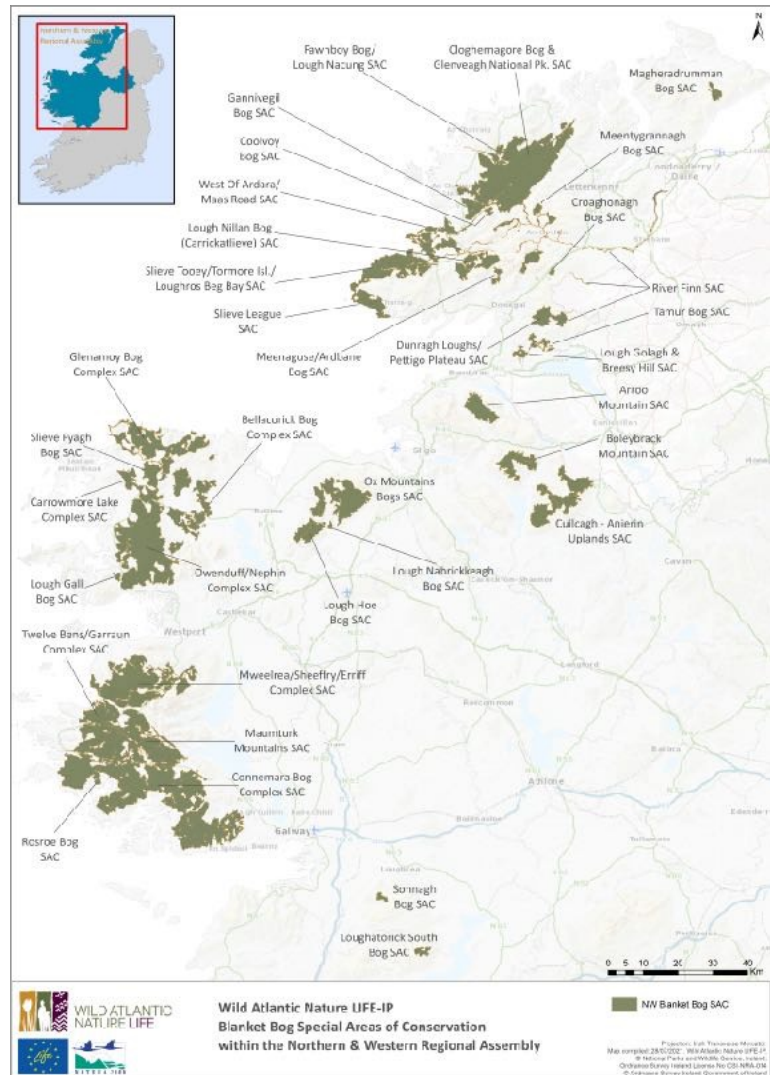
We thank you for your continued support in 2026 and wish you and yours the very best for the New Year.

Regards,

Derek McLoughlin and the LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature team



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