



# Community-driven Peatland Restoration & Engagement

Abbeyleix Bog Project & Community Wetlands Forum

Chris Uys  
'Engaging with Key Stakeholders at a Practical & Policy Level'  
IUCN UK Peatland Programme Conference  
Europa Hotel, Belfast  
Thursday, 3 October 2019

Abbeyleix  
Bog Project



*Irish Rural Link*  
*Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann*



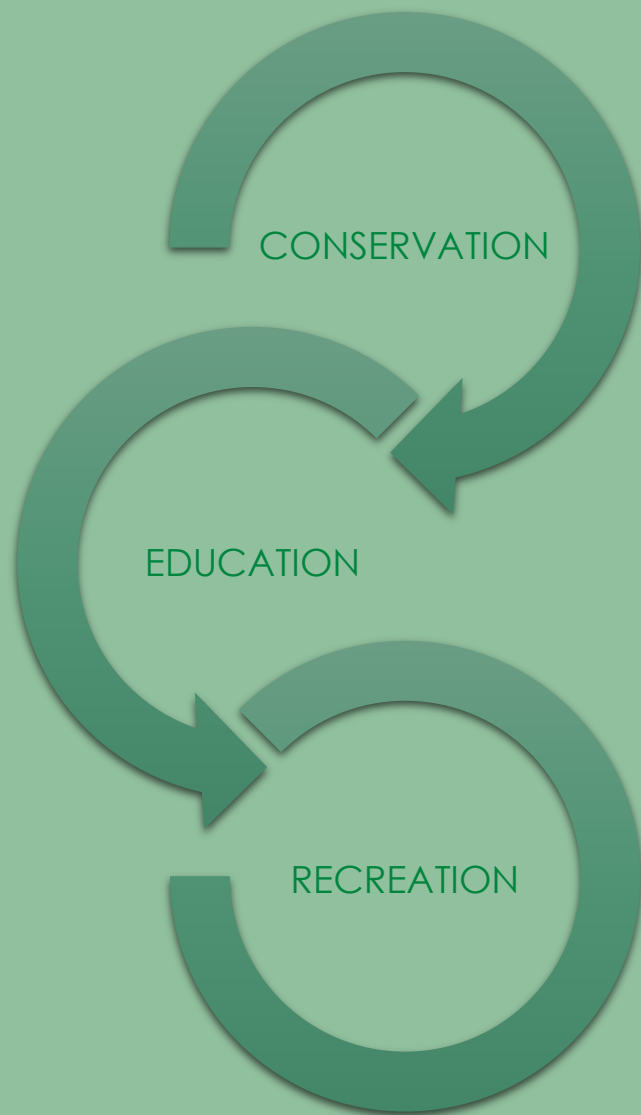
Community  
Wetlands Forum





In the year  
2001 AD...





## Objectives

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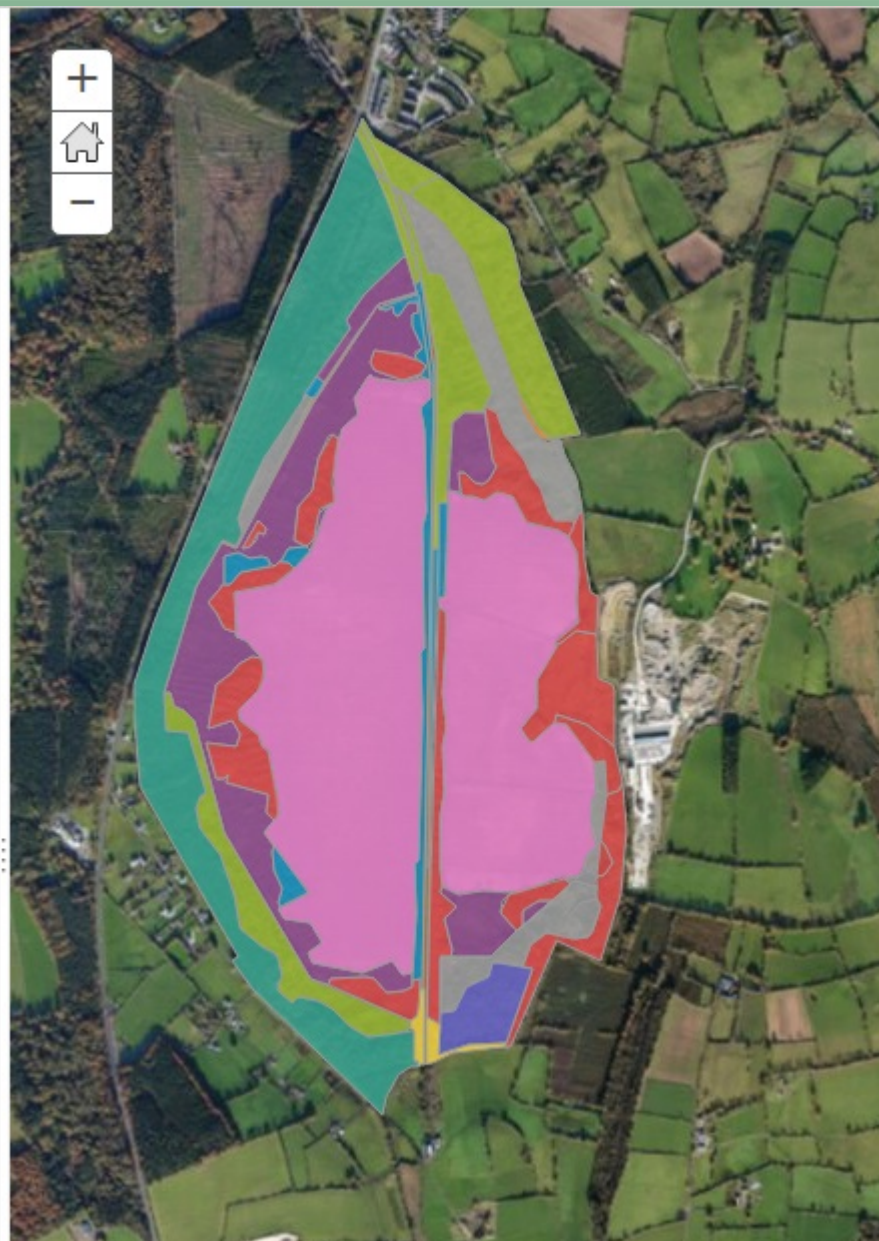


[About](#) [Content](#) [Legend](#)

## Legend

### GIS data - Abbeyleix bog habitat map (2014)

- Bog woodland (WN7)
- Scrub (WS1)
- Mixed broad-leaved/conifer woodland (WD2)
- Secondary PB4 - dry heath and scrub (HH1/WS1)
- Riparian areas (streams or drains with fringing habitats)
- Oak-Ash-Hazel woodland (WN2)
- Raised bog (PB1)
- Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
- Conifer Woodland/plantation
- Recently planted woodland
- Others



## Habitat map

Abbeyleix  
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Raised Bog



Cutaway bog





Bog woodlands



Wet woodlands



# Workshops & Events

**Volunteer Conservation Work Group**

**Distribution Survey: Otters on Wetlands**

Saturday 19 March 2016 - 10 am to 3 pm  
Dr Denise O'Meara - Waterford IT  
Abbeyleix Heritage House - Abbeyleix Bog

**IRELAND'S BioBlitz**

**ABBYLEIX BOG 2013**

Friday 7th June:  
8.30 am: Meet at the bog entrance. 9.00 am: Start surveying. 12.00 pm: Lunch. 1.30 pm: Start surveying. 4.00 pm: Finish. 5.00 pm: Refreshments.

Saturday 8th June:  
8.00 am: Meet at the bog entrance. 8.30 am: Start surveying. 12.00 pm: Lunch. 1.30 pm: Start surveying. 4.00 pm: Finish. 5.00 pm: Refreshments.

All guided events will start from the entrance to the bog next to the car park of the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel at the southern end of Abbeyleix town.

**'Rhododendron Bashing' @ Abbeyleix**

Saturday, 11th April 2015 - 10.00 am - 12.00 pm

Join us to tackle the invasive Rhododendron plant found in the bog. On the day we will sweep an area along the old railway track for saplings, smaller plants and bigger clusters.

What to bring: Wellies, old clothes (weather appropriate), gloves, tea & biscuits

Duration: Up to 4 hours

More information: Call 083 1106210 or email info@abbeyleixbog.ie

Join us for this interesting survey - first a talk (10 - 12 am) on otter habitat and surveying methods in the Abbeyleix Heritage House. Then a walk (1 - 3 pm) on Abbeyleix Bog. Dr O'Meara will be present.

What to bring: Wellies and weather gear

Booking essential due to limited capacity

epa

IRISH WILDLIFE TRUST Laois/Offaly Branch

More information: Call 083 1106210

**Poo patrol: a toolkit for evidence community action to prevent dog fouling**

Dr Eric Morgan, Dr Debbie Watson (University of Bristol); Chris Uys

**1. Background**

Dog ownership brings significant social and health benefits, and increases access to outdoor and natural environments. However, parasites can be transmitted via dog faeces to wildlife and people, for example the roundworm *Toxocara canis*. Control of dog fouling is therefore important to public health, and to public enjoyment of outdoor spaces.

Map: preliminary data on dog fouling density

**4. Outcomes**

Results will be used to assess the effectiveness of anti-fouling measures on the bog walks and the wider area. Methods will be formalised as a toolkit, for adoption by community projects elsewhere. This will improve the limited evidence base on the effectiveness of anti-fouling measures, especially community-based schemes, and support the benefits of responsible dog ownership.

**5. Contacts**

If you have questions about this project, or would be interested in participating, for example in data collection, please contact the bog project or [eric.morgan@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:eric.morgan@bristol.ac.uk)

CBS Manual

Abbeyleix Bog Project

BirdWatch Ireland protecting birds and biodiversity

**2. Purpose**

To develop effective initiatives to protect the bog.

**3. Methodology**

Volunteers will be trained to identify and record bird species. They will also be trained to identify and record signs of bird life, such as nests and eggs.

Interested in increasing your bird monitoring skills and contributing to national voluntary bird surveys coordinated by BirdWatch Ireland? Abbeyleix Bog Project and BirdWatch Ireland are hosting a training day in Laois. Dick Coombes, BirdWatch Ireland Countrywide Bird Census (CBC) Coordinator will provide a day long training event with both class and field based learning, covering all aspects of CBS and Irish Wetland Bird Survey (IWBS).

Event open to anyone interested in participating in the CBS or IWBS survey schemes.

Venue: Abbeyleix Heritage House, Abbeyleix, Co.Laois

Date: Sunday March 8th Time: 09.30 - 4pm (lunch provided)

Training event free but booking required

Book Via Email: [info@abbeyleixbog.ie](mailto:info@abbeyleixbog.ie) or [birdwatchlaois@gmail.com](mailto:birdwatchlaois@gmail.com)

**#BEACTIVE**

European Week of Sport

10-18 SEPT 2016

GROUNDWORK

CONSERVATION WORKGROUP

ABBYLEIX BOG

SATURDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER @ 10AM

Abbeyleix Bog Project

An initiative of the

European Commission

IRISH WILDLIFE TRUST Laois/Offaly Branch

Abbeyleix Bog Project





# Workshops & Events

**NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2017**  
19-27 AUG



**Bat Walk & Stargazing**

Abbeyleix Bog Project

**NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2017**  
19-27 AUG



Abbeyleix Bog Project

**The Pine Marten of Abbeyleix Bog**

**OTHER EVENTS**

**2018 Summer and Autumn Workshop Programmes**

We will be releasing details of our additional 2018 workshop programmes later in the Spring, and Summer, respectively. Some of the topics we have planned for ahead for improving your field and identification skills include detailed workshops on: pollinators, birds, and insects, the use of botanical keys, identifying members of the Willow (Salix) family, identifying aquatic macrophytes, mosses and ferns, and the role of indicators of habitat type, an introduction to the Irish Vegetation Classification & ECRICA tool use, and much more.

**2018 Monitoring Events**

**Evening talk - Butterfly Atlas 2017**  
17th March, 2018 (19.30 - 20.30)  
Butterfly Conservation, Northern Ireland  
St. John's School Hall, Belfast, Co. Antrim

**Evening talk - Butterfly Atlas 2017**  
20th April, 2018 (19.30 - 20.30)  
Butterfly Conservation, Northern Ireland  
St. John's School Hall, Belfast, Co. Antrim

**2018 A**

**Workshop Details**

<b>Leader</b>	Dennis O'Meara / Andrew Harrington	<b>Time</b>	10.00-16.00 (field work included)
<b>Date</b>	Saturday, 10th March	<b>Audience</b>	Beginner & intermediate recorders
<b>Venue</b>	Heritage House, Balroney Road, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois	<b>Fee</b>	€30

**IDENTIFYING & RECORDING**

**Ireland's Biodiversity SPRING 2018 Workshop Programme**

**3 Squirrel and pine marten tracking (in conjunction with Abbeyleix Bog Project)**

After a brief introduction to the respective biology of both squirrels and pine martens you'll learn of the latest research and conservation stories revolving around these mammals and how you can go about employing certain techniques to carry out your own surveying. This will be followed by an outdoor session where participants will have the opportunity to visit Abbeyleix Bog to see some of the surveying techniques and conservation enhancements described in the morning session.

**National Biodiversity Data Centre**

**NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2017**  
19-27 AUG



**Family Fun on the Bog!**  
Sunday 27th Aug (11am - 1pm)

Abbeyleix Bog Project

**Illustrated Talk**  
by  
**Tina Claffey**





**Botswana To The Bog**

Thursday  
December 7th  
@8pm

Mueller & O'Connell  
Abbeyleix

Join Tina Claffey as she brings us on a photographic journey from her days in Africa to her more recent work on Irish boglands.

**Free event - All welcome**

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Laois/Offaly Branch

Abbeyleix Bog Project

**Abbeyleix Bog Project**





Anton



## Student work experience



Conor

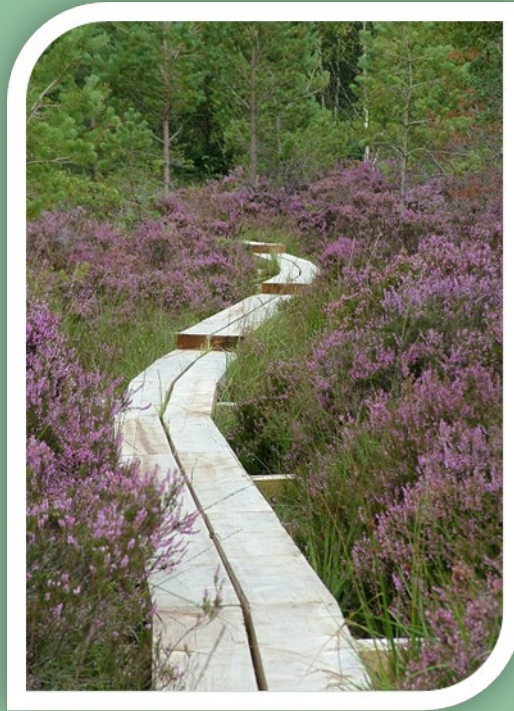


Gareth

Abbeyleix  
Bog Project







Amenity infrastructure

Abbeyleix  
Bog Project







Recreation & well-being

Abbeylax  
Bog Project






# LOCAL COMMUNITIES & THEIR LANDSCAPE

*'Place, Space, People & Planet'*

22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017  
 Abbeyleix, County Laois



An Chomhairle Oidhreacht  
 The Heritage Council

ABBEYLEIX  
 Tidy Towns

An Roinn Eilíne, Oidhreacht,  
 Grúpaí Náisiúnta, Tuathla agus Gaileirí  
 Department of Arts, Heritage,  
 Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

IRISH PLANNING  
 INSTITUTE

IRISH LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE  
 INSTITIÚID TOSRÚBÁDHA NA GÉILLEANN

Laois County Council  
 Coimisiún Contae Laois

Abbey  
 Bog Project

ABC  
 DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Heritage House  
 Abbeyleix  
 Museum & Millinery Building

ABBEYLEIX



Sense of community

Abbeyleix  
 Bog Project







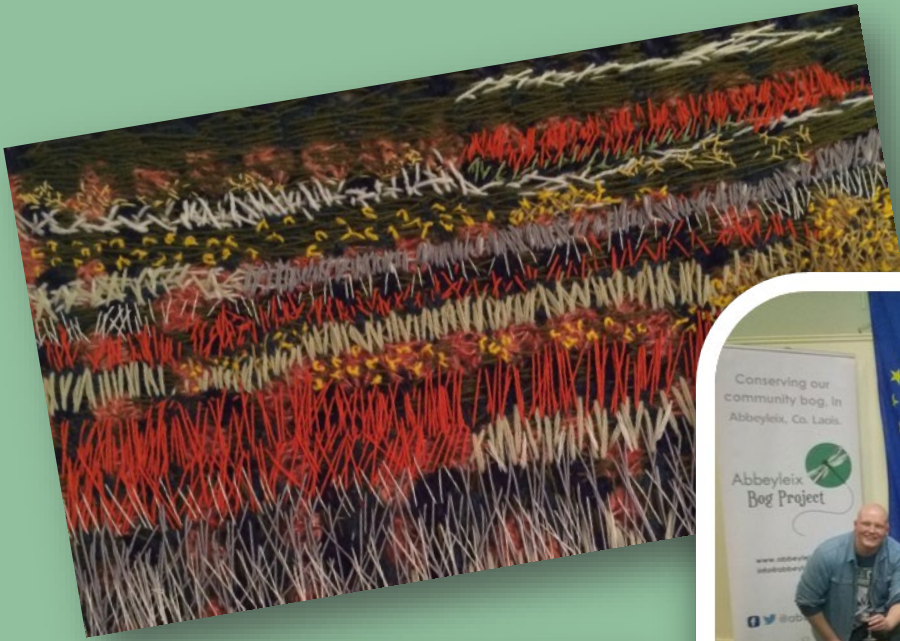
Sense of community

Abbeyleix  
Bog Project





## Nature & the arts



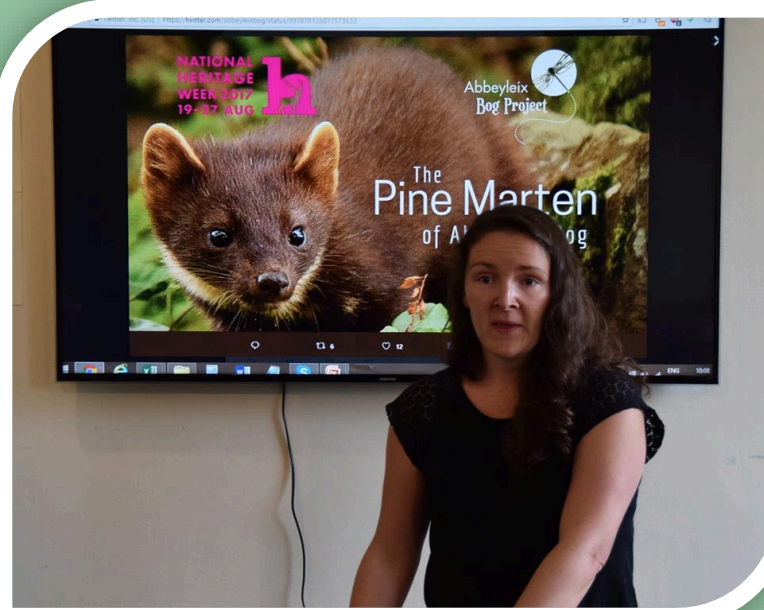
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Hydro-ecological Climate Change study (TCD)



Mammal surveying (WIT)



Bat boxes & surveys

Abbeylagh  
Bog Project





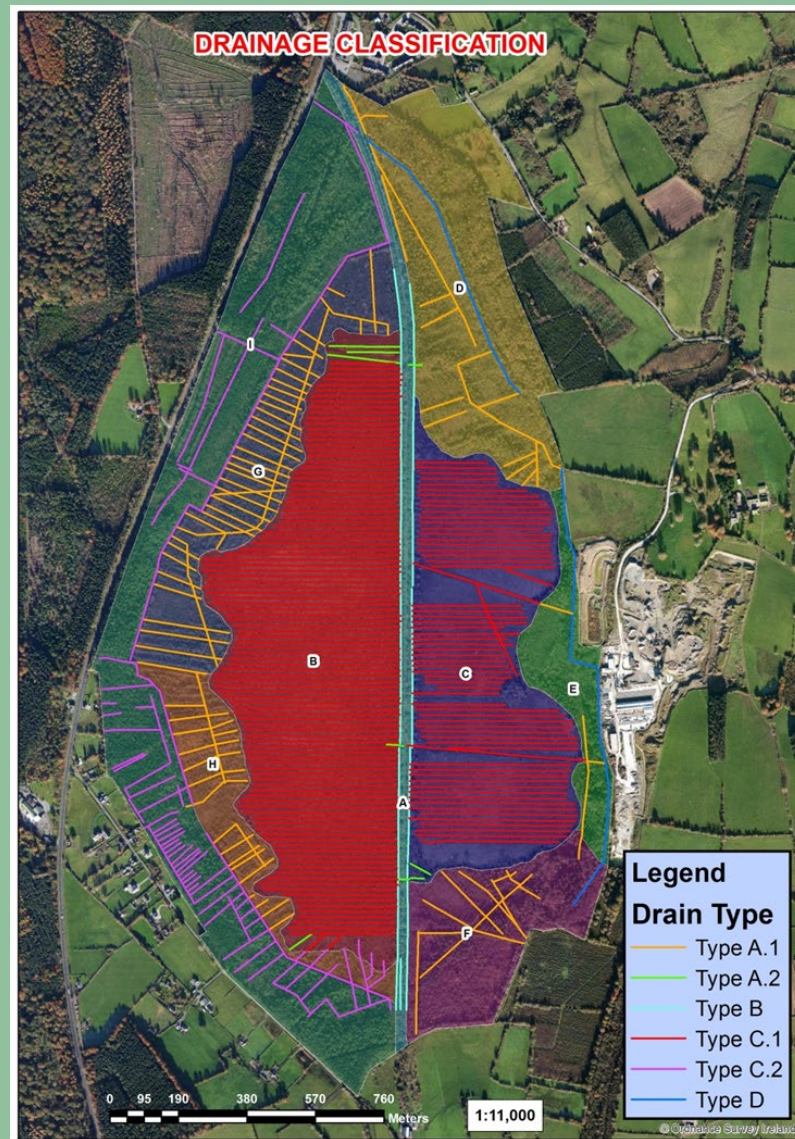
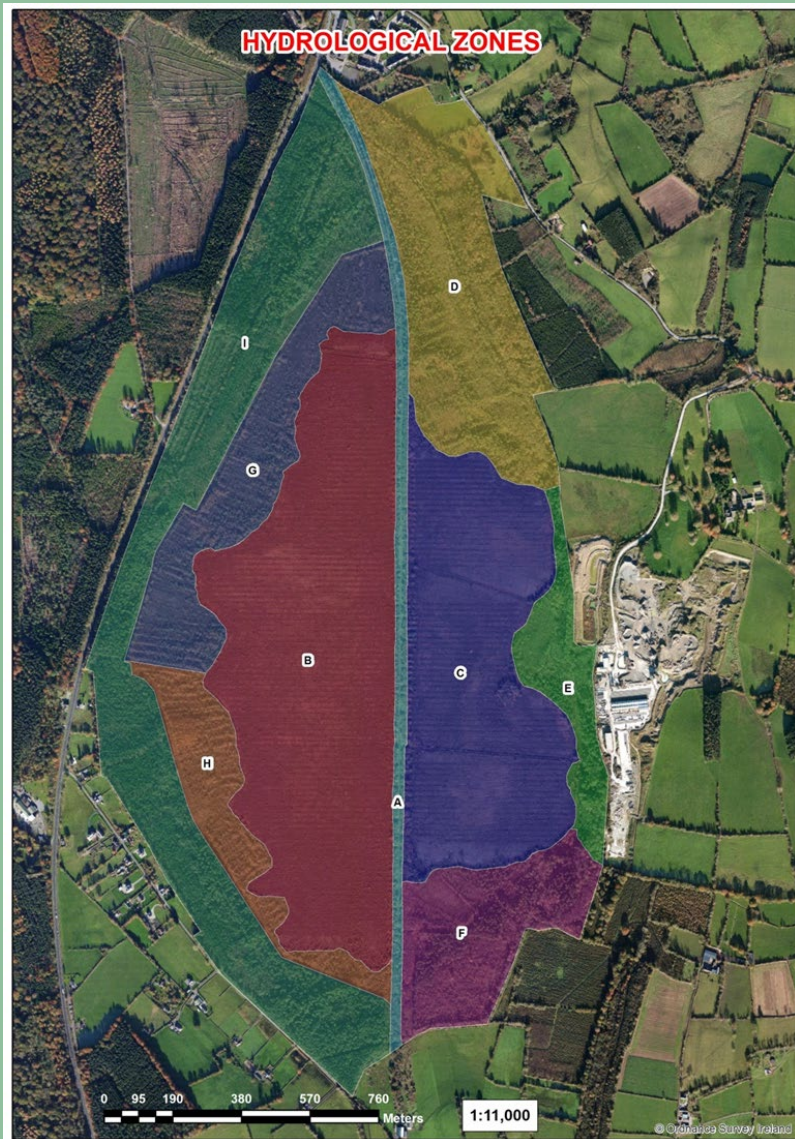


Ecotope surveys

Abbeyleix  
Bog Project







Proposed Restoration Plan  
2019-2024

(Maps courtesy of Fernando Fernandez)



## Factors for Effective and Sustainable Community Wetland Projects:

### Socio-environmental capacity building:

*"A community based approach contributes towards a pride of place"*

### Integrated, multi-agency collaboration:

*"Partnership and networking is the success of a project. Communities don't have all of the capacity/resources needed. Synergy means sharing capacity in an integrated approach "*

### Objective, socially inclusive governance

*"There is a lack of impetus amongst the public sector to engage with local communities in a practical sense. Failure occurs due to failure to get buy-in."*

### Honest, progressive working relationships:

*"Involving different stakeholders in decision-making is crucial to an effective community project. Involving various stakeholders introduces new ideas and techniques and results in learning."*

Maxwell, C. Stakeholder Perceptions of Sustainable Community Engagement in Wetland Projects. NUIG. August 2015

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## Community-based conservation is our game...

"If the ecosystems that support biodiversity were simple systems, and if the creation and implementation of protected areas did not involve social and political controversy, state control would be an appropriate low-cost solution. But this is not the case. Conservation is typically a complex systems problem, because the natural environment itself is a complex adaptive system with issues of scale, uncertainty, and multiple stability domains....

....ecosystem management and human well-being should be integrated, recognizing that biodiversity conservation and livelihood needs are ultimately complementary goals.....

The panacea of community-based conservation is probably no more effective than the panacea of exclusively state-based conservation, because they both ignore the multilevel nature of linkages and multiple partners required for any biodiversity conservation project to be successful."

Berkes, F. *Community-based Conservation in a Globalized World*. PNAS September 25, 2007. 104 (39) 15188-15193

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# How Wetlands Support Achievement of the SDGs

## SDG 17 – PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The Ramsar Convention works in partnership with other MEAs to support governments in achieving the SDGs.

## SDG 16 – PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Effective management of transboundary wetlands contributes to peace and security.

## SDG 15 – LIFE ON LAND

40% of all the world's species live and breed in wetlands.

## SDG 14 – LIFE BELOW WATER

Healthy and productive oceans rely on well functioning coastal and marine wetlands.

## SDG 13 – CLIMATE ACTION

Peatlands cover only 3% of global land but store twice as much carbon as the entire world's forest biomass.

## SDG 12 – RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION

Wetland areas properly managed can sustainably support increased demands for water in all sectors.

## SDG 11 – SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES

Urban wetlands play a vital role in making cities safe, resilient and sustainable.

## SDG 10 – REDUCED INEQUALITY

Healthy wetlands mitigate the risk to an estimated 5 billion people living with poor access to water by 2050.

## SDG 9 – INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Healthy wetlands form a natural buffer against the increasing number of natural disasters.

## SDG 1 – NO POVERTY

More than a billion people depend on wetlands for a living.

## SDG 2 – ZERO HUNGER

Rice, grown in wetland paddies, is the staple diet of 3.5 billion people.

## SDG 3 – GOOD HEALTH & WELL BEING

Half of international tourists seek relaxation in wetland areas, especially coastal zones.

## SDG 4 – QUALITY EDUCATION

Safe water access enhances educational opportunities, especially for girls.

## SDG 5 – GENDER EQUALITY

Women play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

## SDG 6 – CLEAN WATER & SANITATION

Almost all of the world's consumption of freshwater is drawn either directly or indirectly from wetlands.

## SDG 7 – AFFORDABLE & CLEAN ENERGY

Sustainable upstream water management can provide affordable and clean energy.

## SDG 8 – DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH

Wetlands sustain 266 million jobs in wetland tourism and travel.

## Wetlands and the SDGs

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## Climate change actions

“Effective climate action will require much stronger participatory democracy, where local people are actively informed and engaged in decision-making about their own communities and their own futures. People have to believe their input matters and, importantly, they must be able to trust governments and businesses to act in the public interest.”

Cohen, Shana. *Bold action on Climate change needed now that we have declared emergency*. The Irish Times. Tuesday, 14 May 2019







Community  
Wetlands  
Forum

Working Together  
Sharing Knowledge

World  
Wetlands Day  
2 February 2019

Wetlands and climate change



*Irish Rural Link*  
*Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann*



Community  
Wetlands Forum



# Community

A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common  
Or the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common – *Common Purpose*



# Wetlands

Inclusive, amongst others, wet grasslands, peatlands, fens, estuaries, lakes, rivers, lakes, deltas, tidal flats and human-made wetlands (Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2010)

# Forum

A meeting or medium for open exchange of ideas and information, or discussions amongst citizens to reach agreement on matters usually to better the common good





# Our Vision

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



Community  
Wetlands Forum



@forum\_wetlands



@communitywetlandsforum

[www.communitywetlandsforum.ie](http://www.communitywetlandsforum.ie)

A Special Interest Group of



***Irish Rural Link***  
*Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann*



# Strategic Plan – 10 Key Actions



**CWF 01: Growing membership of the CWF** - Identifying community groups involved in wetland conservation and management. Raising awareness of supports offered by the CWF



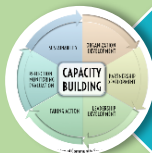
**CWF 02: Developing partnerships** - Developing a culture of open and inclusive collaboration and knowledge exchange between community groups and other key stakeholders involved in managing and conserving wetlands



**CWF 03: Community engagement with wetlands** Encouraging an integrated approach to supporting communities who wish to become involved in the management and conservation of their local wetland



**CWF 04: Communications & awareness -raising** – Identifying & using Best Practice in developing communications strategies to promote wetlands and their wise use both locally and nationally



**CWF 05: Capacity building and funding** - Developing the knowledge, skills, resources and supports to implement actions and assist communities in conserving and managing their local wetland



**CWF 06: Ecosystem Services Research** - Evaluating and raising awareness of ecosystem services and the socio-economic benefits provided by wetlands and peatlands to communities



**CWF 07: Conservation & Biodiversity projects** - Identifying conservation management measures which can be implemented by local communities & partnering with agencies, NGOs and academia to deliver Citizen Science projects



**CWF 08: Education & Interpretation** - Identifying the wetland education needs of local communities, and providing a central resource of materials about education and interpretation at wetland sites



**CWF 09: Site Management, Recreation and Amenity** – Facilitating ecologically sensitive amenity and tourism use of wetlands to support communities and sharing knowledge and best practice guidance with members



**CWF 10: Monitoring implementation of the plan** - Planning to ensure the actions outlined are implemented by responsible partners, and reporting and reviewing on progress

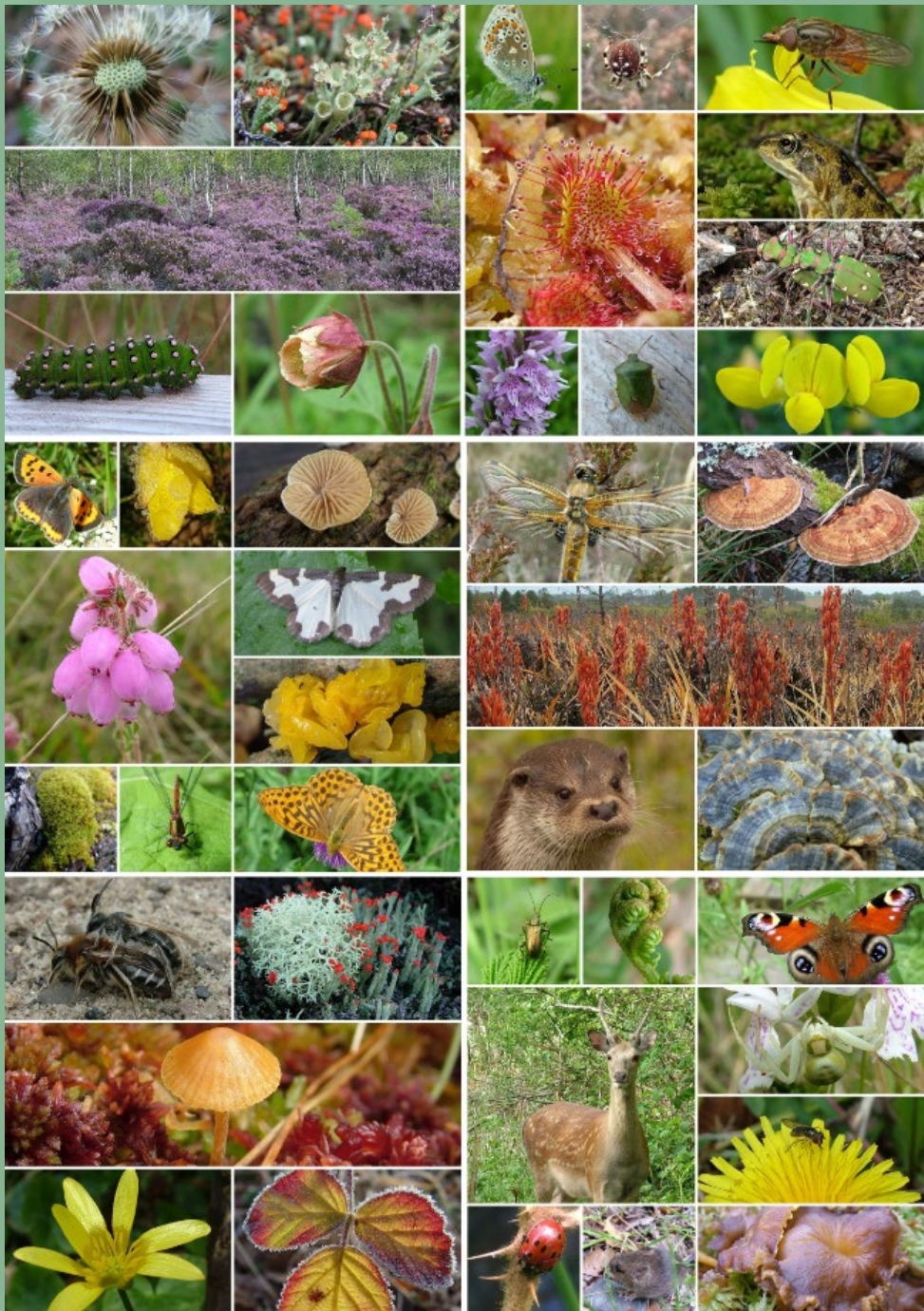




# Strategic Plan Launch May 2017







Thank you

[www.abbeyleixbog.ie](http://www.abbeyleixbog.ie)

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