



Project Name:	Parish Habitats and Biodiversity EIP (PHAB)
Project Id:	LLOC5026
Review Period:	End of Project Report
Project Coordinator:	John Hassett, Ballyhoura Development

Project Description

The **PHAB (Parish Habitats and Biodiversity)** project was devised to support farmers to address the challenge of biodiversity loss through the enhancement of habitats within the catchment of the Keale and Ahaphuca Rivers (Sheep20) and in the uplands of Glenroe-Ballyorgan in County Limerick. The PHAB EIP consortium was led by Ballyhoura Development (BD).

Project Context

Ireland is undergoing a period of unprecedented growth in agricultural output. This is a consequence of increasing global demand for agricultural produce. It is estimated that global food production will increase by 70% to meet expected population demands by 2050 (www.fao.org). It is recognised that this expansion will place additional pressures on the natural environment in terms of demand for land, greenhouse gas emissions, potential loss of biodiversity and impact on water quality. Intensive agriculture is one of the 5 main drivers for biodiversity loss in Ireland.

Farmer-catchment partnerships have been successful where farmers have a strong environmental protection attitude (Buckley et al. 2012), where the benefits of working together with peers to reduce pollution can transcend costs (Sturdy et al. 2008), and where landowners and other key actors in the local community are in cooperation .

Upon implementation of the PHAB project the operational team were cognisant that the approach adopted by other EIPs would be a roadmap for implementing the PHAB project. While the majority of other EIPS are longer term projects, the PHAB project was initially only a one year programme to implement the proposal. Initially the project team engaged with and visited other EIPs namely the Bride and Allow projects.

PHAB Project Approach

The PHAB Operational Group followed a DMAIC (define, measure, analyse, improve, control) approach integrated with a CLLD (community led local development) approach to support farmers in learning and implementing biodiversity measures. Therefore, the remit of the project, from the outset was defined as *“to support farmers to address the challenge of biodiversity loss through the enhancement of habitats within the catchment of the Keale and Ahaphuca Rivers (Sheep20) and in the uplands of Glenroe-Ballyorgan in County Limerick”*. The community survey and the agri consultant assessing individual farms provided the supporting data to define and measure outputs. Upon reviewing this data, it was possible to analyse what measures could be implemented, changed, challenged or improved. The dual roles of the Operating Group and the BD Project Officer ensured there was consistent controls and monitoring of the project in place.

The Study Area

As outlined in the project proposal the community of Glenroe, Ballyorgan was the study area. It is situated in South East Limerick. The nearest urban settlement is Kilfinane. The study area cannot be considered a High Nature Value landscape. A comparison of maps from the 1840s and present-day aerial photographs, show that the available habitat for wildlife has decreased over the last two centuries. Field boundaries have been removed from farmlands. In this context, the remaining field boundaries are particularly important as a habitat for wildlife. Hedgerows are an essential component in a range of ecosystems and provide valuable services to agricultural activities, such as habitats for pollinators, flora and fauna, prevention of soil erosion, interception of water flows and the sequestration of carbon. Aerial photographs show that a high level of connectivity persists, with the riparian areas and the hedgerows interconnected and forming part of a well-linked network of, potentially, green corridors.

The PHAB project involved building on the tradition of cooperation amongst farmers who cooperated 30 years ago to facilitate the development of a 4.5km way-marked walk through their lands, along the Keale River. In addition, 15 years ago there was an enhancement to a biodiversity corridor, when they agreed to have a fence erected protecting key habitats. More recently, they agreed to have panels installed interpreting its natural heritage. They are currently collaborating with Ballyhoura Heritage & Environment in order to upgrade the walk.

Therefore, when BD initiated the animation of the farmers and the community as a whole to participate in PHAB, these stakeholders were positive to its implementation. However, a challenge initially was holding public meetings to animate for the project due to Covid 19 restrictions on public gatherings. The first two events were held outdoors and the first indoor event was held with participants socially distanced. There was strong interest to attend information sessions as the project progressed, however, Covid 19 restrictions was an influencing factor on this throughout. There was a strong interest at this time for a farmer's discussion group to evolve but due to Covid 19 this did not happen. It is, however, seen as an opportunity in the near future, after PHAB has completed, to be a vehicle for keeping the farmers group together for future initiatives.

It was only as the project neared completion that it was possible to hold larger information and dissemination sessions. At this point, in conjunction with farmers having implemented their measures, other farmers expressed interest in participating in the project or future projects if the opportunity arose. One farmer at one of these events noted it was the first public event he had been at in two years. If these sessions had been possible at the commencement stage of the project it is possible a larger number of farmers would have engaged.

Stakeholders / OG

Ballyhoura Development (BD) was the lead partner of the PHAB project, and was responsible for convening OG meetings, as well as recording and circulating key points and actions. In addition to BD, the OG was comprised of representatives of the primary stakeholders of the project, namely:

Farmers in Glenroe-Ballyorgan represented by IFA organisations (Glenroe IFA and Ballyorgan IFA), Keale River Walk farmers and farmers who are Directors of Glenroe-Ballyorgan Community Council.

Glenroe-Ballyorgan Community Council - (GBCC) - Work carried out by GBCC includes supporting the development of the Keale River Walk in conjunction with the landowners and Ballyhoura Heritage & Environment.

Teagasc

TUS (Technological University of the Shannon)

Ballyhoura Heritage & Environment CLG - responsible for promoting the heritage, culture and biodiversity of the Ballyhoura area and the trail management body for 12 accredited loop walks in the region.

Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO)

Secondary stakeholders that supported the PHAB project included:

- Dairygold Sustainability Programme, was formed in 2021 in response to challenges faced in agriculture in light of the climate crisis and proposed mitigation measures. The local Dairygold Sustainability Officer supported the PHAB project with an information and training day on the farm of Mr. Tom Hyland looking at hedgerow management and biodiversity corridors. It was delivered by a Biodiversity Officer from Dairygold and attended by 15 farmers.
- The Barn Owl Project established in 2019 to support the conservation of Barn Owls in Ireland and initiate a public awareness campaign around the importance of Barn Owl conservation in communities across Ireland.

Biodiversity awareness and stakeholder engagement

In order to set the context it was important to establish how the community as a whole were in tune with the level of biodiversity and habitat quality in the community. BD carried out a Survey to establish this baseline at the start of the project. 90% of respondents were aware of what biodiversity was but almost 50% accepted that they were not informed enough around the topic.

Clear themes emerged from the survey. These were:

- An understanding of the importance of balance between the environment and life as a whole. i.e. how all life is interconnected with a quality eco system

- An acceptance of huge losses in wildlife, habitats and the “sounds and smells of the countryside of my youth”. i.e. disappearance of birdlife etc.
- Changes in the landscapes, i.e. more monoculture grass types and more single activity farming practices, eg all cows with no tillage, pigs, poultry etc.
- Larger fields, hedgerows absent, geological and historical features removed
- A recognition of changes in weather patterns and how the landscape can be effected by weather events
- Decline in bee population

This study set the challenge of identifying, establishing, restoring and repairing habitats in the community. Following on from this action, BD in cooperation with the Operational Group (OG) created and agreed upon an expression of interest form which was provided to interested parties and resulted in the recruitment of 16 farmers to participate in the project.

Farmer Profile

Recruitment of the participating farmers took place during the height of Covid 19, therefore, this task was challenged by being unable to hold large public meetings. The process was, however, supported by members of the OG approaching individual farmers in person. The Community Council engaged the parish text and email service as a recruitment tool also. Interested parties were invited to an outdoor event to establish a better understanding of the project.

16 farmers ultimately participated in the project. In summary, the profile of the participating farmers/ farms:

- Average Farm size 40Ha
- Largest farm 80 Ha
- Smallest 4Ha
- 5 Dairy farmers
- 1 Forestry farmer
- 10 Dry stock (Beef) farmers
- Farmer age profile could be described as older
- 4 farmers under ages of 45 years approx
- Of the 10 dry stock Farmers 4 had off-farm income.
- Most have participated in Agri environment schemes in the past
- All had a good awareness of their habitats and the importance of preserving them.

The BD project officer engaged with the farmers on a regular basis, supporting them to progress their plans at regular intervals throughout the project implementation, through a range of supports, including:

- Supported farmers with additional information and supports on the project on a one-to-one basis.
- Introduced Agri consultant to participating farmers for farm mapping and farm plan preparation.
- Identified and provided appropriate and approved measures on a farm by farm basis.
- Communicated awareness of public information and dissemination sessions to the farmer.
- Initiated a procurement process for the delivery of farmer’s measures.
- Communicated with and introduced contractors to participating farmers.
- Liaised between successful contractors and the farmers.
- Gathered relevant documentation, as per procurement process, for the purpose of processing farmers’ claims.
- Processed farmers’ claims with the accounts department of Ballyhoura Development.

- Engaged and resolved farmer claim queries from awarding department in the case of claim delays



Photograph 1: Owl Box

Total number of measures implemented by the farmers were:

- 370 trees
- 20 fruit trees
- 2 solar water pumps
- 1 pasture pump
- 3 ponds
- 1 mob grazing measure
- 11 owl boxes
- 35 bird boxes
- 3 bee scrapes
- 5600 hedging plants
- 630 tonne of lime



Photograph 2: Lime ready for spreading

The budget allocated for farmers' measures was entirely spent, alongside a contingency fund. As part of National Tree Week in spring 2023, Ballyhoura Development arranged for the PHAB farmers to receive trees for their farms. Farmers were consistent in attending the information events (mentioned in this report) as well as attending community events. Some farmers were frustrated by the delay in receiving their payment, having provided documentation at the early stage of claims process. Farmers were also challenged when implementing some measures due to seasonality of the measures. Eg. Ensuring hedging/trees were planted in the autumn and early spring.



Photo 3: pond with wildlife

Overall Project Aim

The PHAB (Parish Habitats and Biodiversity) project was to support farmers to address the challenge of biodiversity loss and to enhance the habitats in the catchment of the Keale and Ahaphuca Rivers (Sheep20) and in the uplands of Glenroe-Ballyorgan in County Limerick.

Specific Aims

1. To increase awareness and involvement of farmers in participative training, in order to increase their knowledge and to enhance on-farm biodiversity.

This was achieved across a number of engagements with both the community as whole and with the farmers.

Across the autumn of 2022 there were information sessions on:

- Soil Health. This workshop was delivered by Teagasc and attended by 14 Farmers. This was an important element of the project as liming was a popular measure adopted by farmers. Therefore, this session emphasised the importance of lime in soil structure and mitigating overuse of chemical fertiliser.
- Hedgerow management and biodiversity corridors delivered by Biodiversity Officer from Dairygold and attended by 15 farmers. Hedgerow, native trees and fruit tree planting were popular measures adopted by participating farmers. This session highlighted the importance of strong, connected and diverse hedgerows as an integral element in habitat repair and expansion.
- A visit and talk by The Barn Owl Project to 25 farmers and community members as well as a visit to the local school. Owl Box installation was a popular measure implemented by farmers. The Glenroe-Ballyorgan area has a good population of Barn Owls and other raptures. In the days leading up to this event the BD project officer received numerous contacts from the area by persons detailing the locations of Barn Owls in the parish.
- There was an overview of the overall PHAB project delivered in Mitchelstown in September. This included an overview by Ballyhoura Development and presentations by representatives of Teagasc, Lawpro, a participating farmer and a project officer from the Bride Project. This event was also attended by farmers interested in participating in future schemes.
- A Forest School with the local school children attended by approx. 20 school children and Coolfree Kids pre-schoolers celebrated biodiversity by way of creating a wormery. The children had great fun gathering dead leaves and shredding newspaper for bedding. They learned the many benefits of a wormery. The wormery is now nice and snug in the grounds of Coolfree Kids where the soil will transform into nutritious compost over the winter.

2. To map the habitats of Glenroe Ballyorgan utilising an innovative habitat mapping technology

This aim was achieved in conjunction with Teagasc who supported the project by allowing the project to access this information and technology. This resulted in the provision of both a parish map and individual farmers' maps. Further information on this element is provided in more detail later in this report under Introduction of Innovative Habitat Mapping.

3. To assess the quality of a subsection of the habitats as classified in accordance with the habitats guides elaborated in Julie Fossit's book, 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland';

The operation group reviewed a set of 25 measures to implement as part of the farm plans and these were reduced to 15 measures appropriate to the habitats identified in the area. See appendix.

The measures were provided to the farm consultant and was an influencing factor in identifying the measures to be adopted by the farmers, with an emphasis on a balance between biodiversity and water quality.

4. To safeguard habitats farmed and not used for farming e.g. hedgerows, field margins, riparian margins; to improve their quality; and to develop new habitats e.g. ponds, wetlands, multi-species swards, copses, indoor and outdoor bird boxes.

Following on from the previous aim, 16 farmers adopted a bespoke number of measures to implement. The measures implemented were:

- 370 trees
- 20 fruit trees
- 2 solar water pumps
- 1 pasture pump
- 3 ponds
- 1 mob grazing measure
- 11 owl boxes
- 35 bird boxes
- 3 bee scrapes
- 5600 hedging plants
- 630 tonne of lime

5. To enhance and create biodiversity corridors (hub and spokes) in the community.

The implementation and delivery of the farmer's measures has resulted in identifying, establishing, restoring and repairing habitats and an improved biodiversity environment in the community. It should be noted that the farmers were already very protective of their habitats and this project has greatly improved and in some cases repaired damaged habitats.

The PHAB Project undertook to:

- Animate participation of farmers, listen to their views and facilitate them to inform decisions;

This occurred through public gatherings, one-to-one consultations and information dissemination. Details are listed under heading specific aims section 1. Examples of dissemination are listed in the appendix.

- Engage local agriculture contractors;

Through a procurement process, where possible, and mindful of value for money in delivering public money, local contractors were invited to engage in the procurement process and were successful in delivering goods and services.

- Create wider community awareness of biodiversity and stimulate change of practices;

A community survey was initiated at the commencement of the project and at the close of the project to capture learning from the process. Alongside this the information sessions for both farmers and the community as a whole, initiated positive learnings for the community as a whole. The outputs of these information sessions are outlined in Specific aims section 1, whereby the outputs of the sessions, in particular the farming sessions, were in line with measures adopted, e.g. the soil health session resulted in lime spreading. The barn owl session resulted in the provision of owl boxes.

- Capture photographic evidence of activities and habitats; Parish Habitats & Biodiversity (PHAB) EIP Application 5

Throughout the project events and measures delivered were captured via photographs and social media. Examples of these are provided in Appendices to this report

- Engage with Glenroe Community National School and support it to develop a project on biodiversity awareness;

The school was a very positive support to the project both in its participation and in sharing information on the PHAB project as a whole with the wider community. The project presented the school with a series of information plaques for the biodiversity garden in the school. There was a very positive response from the school children to a visit by the Barn Owls to the school as initiated by the PHAB project. An important element of the project was to bridge the gap between farmers and the community as a whole. The children are the next generation to live in Glenroe-Ballyorgan. Lessons learned in the classroom are taken home and adopted by the entire household. Likewise some of the farmer's children attend the school and they will be the next generation to farm in the area.



Photograph 4: Presentation of biodiversity plaques to Glenroe National School

- Run a two day Easter Eco Camp for children to increase awareness of biodiversity for parents and children;

Due to Covid restrictions events could not occur at Easter but instead across the autumn period, namely the Forest School Event. A Forest School is a child-centred learning process, providing hands-on experiences in the natural environment. It's creative and can increase a child's confidence as they problem-solve and learn to manage risks. The forest school is run by qualified primary school teachers and has the aim of giving children the opportunity to play, explore and grow beneath the shelter of the trees.

This activity was planned by Ballyhoura Development staff in collaboration with representatives from the parent and Toddler group. The event was held on the 4th of November during the school holidays and there were two sessions to maximise attendance.

- Undertake ongoing PR/information sharing via the Glenroe-Ballyorgan community text network, the community email, the community newsletter, the community Facebook page and local press and radio, as relevant, as well as through the OG partners and the collaborators;

Throughout the project the engagement and support of the Community Council included the dissemination of information to the area. The community text service, the community email service and the use of Glenroe Hall were key factors in the success of the project. Local social media and the Ballyhoura Development website and social media pages also were positive supports. "Traditional media" i.e. the newspaper were also very supportive to the PHAB project, sharing articles on the project and promoting events.

- Provide training for participating farmers using participatory methodologies - workshops, discussion groups, study visits with a focus on visual, practical and demonstration; use of events to seek the views of farmers and to influence OG decisions relating to activities and measures;

Information on the workshops and their outputs are provided in more detail elsewhere in this report. The workshops included:

- Soil Health workshop delivered by Teagasc and attended by 14 Farmers
- Hedgerow management and biodiversity corridors delivered by Biodiversity Officer from Dairygold and attended by 15 farmers
- A visit and talk by The Barn owl Project, to 25 farmers and community members as well as a visit to the local school.
- There was an overview of the overall PHAB project delivered in Mitchelstown in September. This included an overview by Ballyhoura development and presentations by representatives of Teagasc, Lawpro, a participating farmer and a project officer from the Bride Project. The event publicised the PHAB EIP to the wider community. It was attended by 35 people which included participating farmers, potential farmers for future projects and the general public as a whole.
- Visit from Project Officer from the Bride Project.

- Use a one page expression of interest for participation in the capital measures;

BD in cooperation with the Operational Group created and agreed upon an expression of interest form which was provided to interested parties and resulted in the recruitment of 16 farmers to participate in the project. See appendix.

- Use simple two page on-farm biodiversity plans;

BD in cooperation with the Operational Group through a procurement process engaged a consultant to engage with the Farmers to:

- Meet with participating farmers individually to establish appropriate measures to identify, establish, restore and repair habitats
- Deliver individual farm plans
- Deliver mapping specific to identifying location of measures as outlined in farm plans

These initiated and identified suitable measures for the farmers to implement.

- Develop a suite of capital measures with criteria for implementation and payment;

Appropriate Measures were agreed by BD with consultation with the operating group (cognisant of potential duplication with other schemes) and agreed with the consultant in delivery of farmers' measures.

- Issue clear guidelines regarding measures, funding, completion targets and payment;

BD as lead partner engaged with each participating farmer, on a one-to-one basis and in group sessions to outline the exact measures, procurement procedures and delivery guidelines which would support the farmers for eligible payment for measures delivered.

- Undertake evaluation and seek to learn lessons with a specific focus on biodiversity enhancement

As mentioned above a survey completed by the community at both the commencement and conclusion of the project highlighted the learnings of the project.

Project Budget

The PHAB Project budget was €95,000 in total, with almost 70% of the budget allocated to Implementation costs, including implementation of measures. In practice, the project spend was almost entirely in line with the projected budget lines. There is a small underspend of €2,762 from the total budget, which will be repaid to the Department.

Monitoring

The PHAB EIP was implemented in accordance with all relevant policies, procedures and processes which govern the implementation of all projects and programmes implemented by Ballyhoura Development, including any specific requirements of the funder.

BD supported and engaged with the Operational Group (OG) on all aspects of the project

Project management & Compliance

Ballyhoura Development convened the Operational Group on a regular basis as the project progressed. BD engaged with the OG on the progression, opportunities and challenges of the project as they arose. The OG met formally on 22 occasions, the majority of which were in person. Alongside this, there were a number of informal meetings at various junctures when challenges arose or clarifications were sought. One example was a meeting with a mapping expert from Teagasc to seek clarity around the data supplied in the Parish Habitat Maps.

Representatives of the OG also met at various stages to seek clarity with the Agri Consultant on the progression of individual farmer's plans and the Parish Habitats Assessment. The OG and the BD project officer were in constant communication throughout the project. The level of expertise of Operational Group ensured any challenges could be overcome. Its principal motive was to ensure the aims and objectives of the project were being implemented and delivered.

The role of the Ballyhoura Development Officer was to manage the project at all its stages, ensuring the aims and the objectives of the project were being achieved, KPIs were being delivered timely and budget being managed. This was supported by the accounts team in BD.

Implementation of farmer's measures

The role of the Project Coordinator was to engage with, support, advise and ensure that farmers were delivering the measures and activities they had committed to achieving. This was achieved through:

- Supporting the farmers in procurement activities.
- Agreeing measures with the individual farmers and securing their agreement
- Connecting with the contractors to ensure correct measures were supplied/applied
- Gathering supporting documentation for and from the farmers. Eg quotes, invoices, receipts signed, claim forms.

- Visiting the farms to view the implemented measures.
- Supporting the farmer with the claims process
- Where delays arose engaging with relevant parties.

This level of support resulted in the budget allocated for farmers' measures being entirely spent. Farmers received trees for their farms as part of National Tree Week in spring 2023. Farmers were consistent in attending the information events (mentioned in this report) as well as attending community events.

This approach supported the funder of the project when updates on the project were sought. It ensured that accurate and timely information on the project's progression could be provided, e.g. mid-year reports.

Importantly the process resulted in an excellent relationship with the farmers which will result in future participation in similar schemes.

Procurement

BD managed the procurement process for the goods and services delivered in the project, namely the farmers' measures, training and consultancy delivered throughout the project. This was an integral part of the role delivered by BD, since all procurement was undertaken in compliance with BD's Purchasing and Procurement policies which are stringently enforced across the organisation. This ensured the project was delivered cost effectively. It also supported the claims process for all stakeholders. The Project Coordinator engaged with the Operational Group, the farmers and the suppliers in this process. Where possible local suppliers were requested to tender.

Claims Process

While the quality and accuracy of the documentation supplied by the farmers upon claim stage was in no doubt, some suppliers of goods/services needed to provide more accurate invoices/receipts. In some cases this delayed claims being reimbursed to the farmers.

One case in particular was lime spreading. The weather turned very wet at end of 2022 and 4 farmers were unable to deliver that measure due to dangerous and wet ground conditions. While they had paid for the lime the supplier was unable to deliver an invoice on time. This delayed the entire claim of the respective 4 farmers as well as 2 other farmers who did not have a lime measure but were unfortunate to be in same batch of claims to the Department as the 4 other farmers.

There was no reason why those 2 could not have been paid and the 4 farmers paid for the non-lime measures for which they had correct documentation for. This left some unease with these farmers and members of the OG.

One farmer who was first to submit documentation in October of 2022 was last to be paid in May 2023.

A recommendation for the future is to ensure a clearer and smoother claims process.

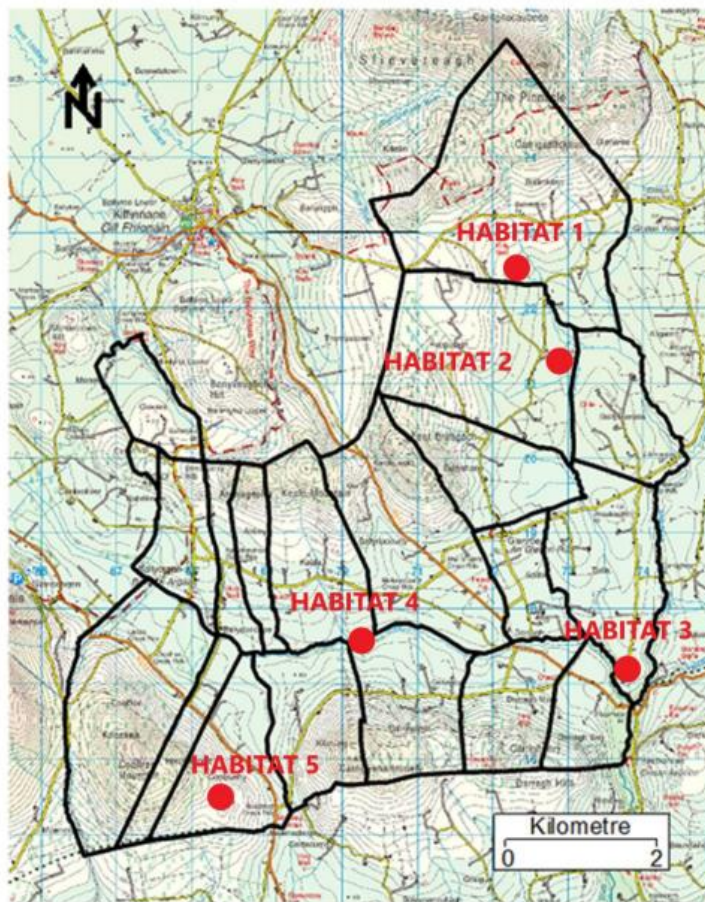
Promotion and Dissemination

As mentioned above, throughout the project, the engagement and support of the Community Council supported the dissemination of information to the area. The community text service, the community email service and the use of Glenroe Hall were key factors in the success of the project. Alongside this local social media and the Ballyhoura Development website and social media pages also were positive supports. "Traditional media" i.e. the newspaper were also very supportive to the PHAB project, sharing articles on the project and promoting events.

This range of communication methods resulted in good attendances at information and dissemination events, as outlined earlier in this report

This Parish Habitat Assessment was completed by using Fossitt method and was carried out on five sites within the Glenroe-Ballyorgan area. The assessment identified the different habitats within the habitat location and to provide baseline data on the condition of the habitats and the level of biodiversity value in the area. Within the assessment area, agriculture is the main activity within the area. A proportion of the survey area consisted of improved agricultural habitat which is of low ecological importance. There were however, habitats of greater species richness within the assessment area as follows:

Glenroe - Ballyorgan EIP Catchment Area



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Map 1: Glenroe-Ballyorgan EIP Catchment Area

Semi Natural Grassland. Dry calcareous and neutral grassland GS1 This category is used for unimproved or semi-improved dry grassland that may be either calcareous or neutral, but not acid. It is associated with low intensity agriculture and typically occurs on free-draining mineral soils of various depths.

Wet grassland This type of grassland can be found on flat or sloping ground in upland and lowland areas. It occurs on wet or waterlogged mineral or organic soils that are poorly-drained or, in some cases, subjected to seasonal or periodic flooding. On sloping ground, wet grassland is mainly confined to clay-rich gleys and loams, or organic soils that are wet but not waterlogged.

Improved agricultural grassland This category is used for intensively managed or highly modified agricultural grassland that has been reseeded and/or regularly fertilised, and is now heavily grazed and/or used for silage making. It includes regularly-reseeded monoculture grasslands and rye-grass leys that are planted as part of an arable rotation.

Oak-birch-holly woodland Native, semi-natural broadleaved woodland that occurs on acid or base-poor soils that may be either dry or humid, but not waterlogged. Stands are usually dominated by Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*), or mixed stands of Sessile and Pedunculate Oak (*Q. petraea* and *Q. robur*) or their hybrids. Other common trees include Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).

Upland blanket bog Upland blanket bog occurs on flat or gently sloping ground above 150 m and is widespread on hills and mountains throughout Ireland. The 150 m limit serves to distinguish upland from lowland blanket bog but is loosely applied.

Recommendations

- There are ways to improve habitats and biodiversity in an agricultural landscape. Reducing inputs such as chemical fertiliser with help promote the growth of other plant species.
- Avoid reseeding species rich grassland, these fields may be more valuable as they are in future Department of Agriculture schemes.
- Allowing hedgerows to grow up and installing field margins have a huge beneficial value to increasing biodiversity and habitats on farm.
- Educating farmers on the impacts of intensive agriculture on biodiversity and habitat loss.
- Farmers in the Glenroe- Ballyorgan area should be encouraged to join the Department of Agriculture ACRES (Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme).

Introduction of Innovative Habitat Mapping

Teagasc, the Environmental Protection Agency and Ordnance Survey Ireland have developed a new national land cover map for Ireland. This mapping layer, which is operated through a GIS application, will be able to carry out large scale habitat mapping of an area with a high degree of accuracy. A layer will be publicly available to view, but for this project, Teagasc were assured unique access to it to interact with the layers and carry out accurate habitat mapping for the community of Glenroe-Ballyorgan and for the farms of participating farmers.

This access was originally expected early in the project, however, it was only made available to the project in Quarter 4 of 2022. This factor delayed major elements of the project namely, delivery of farm measures, an information session around the mapping activity and in particular, the final event. Upon receipt of the mapping data the Operating Group were keen to seek clarity around the analysis and application of the data. The project coordinator established an online meeting between the Teagasc mapping expert and the Operating Group. Following on from this it was possible to publish the farmers' maps and the parish map for display in the community hall in Glenroe.

In the original project proposal it was anticipated 50 farmers would receive individual habitat maps for their farms. This was too ambitious. In reality only 12 additional farmers sought maps. This was due to both the delay in receiving the mapping data but also farmers prioritised the delivery of measures on their farms.

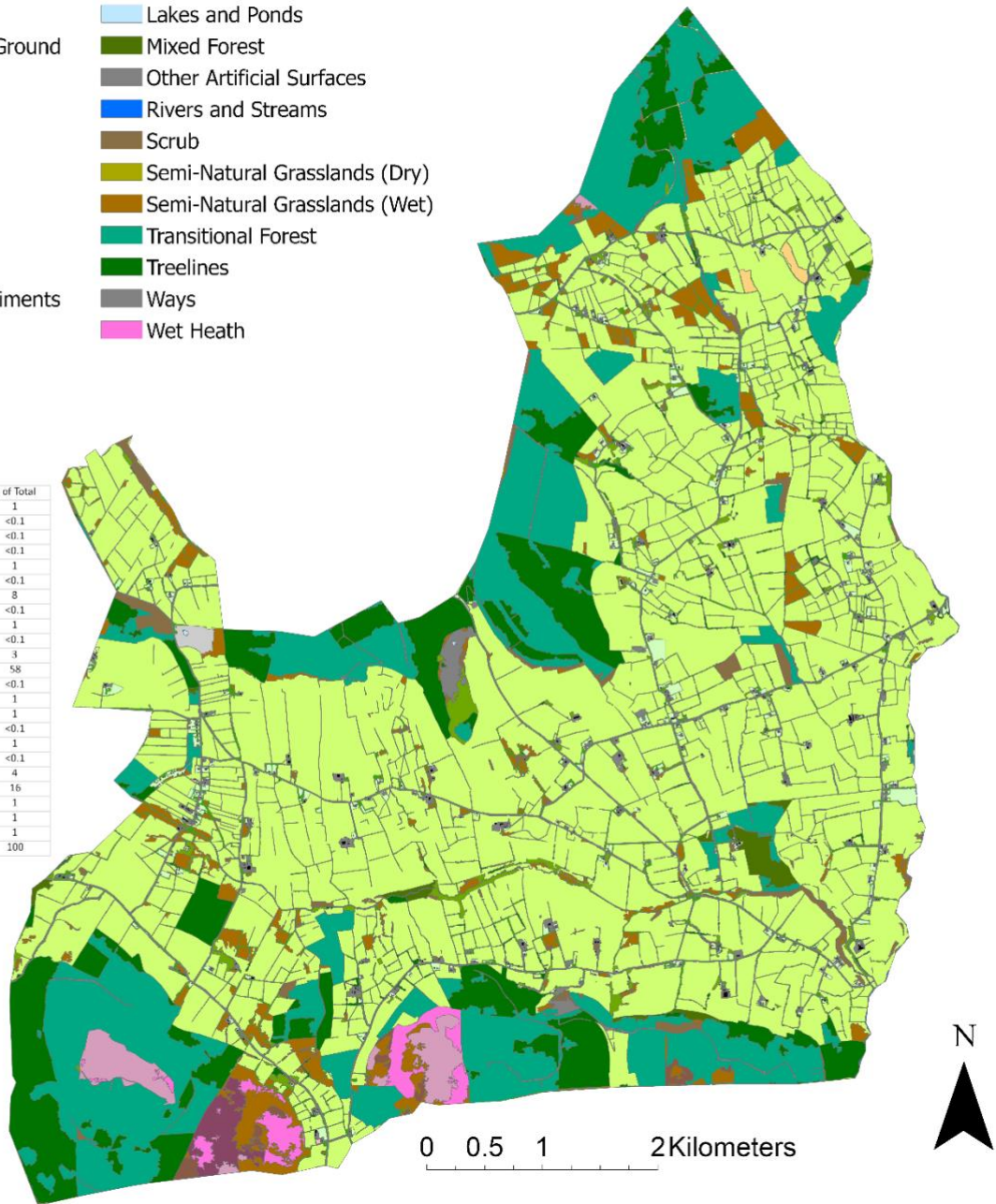
Glenroe Habitats EIP

Land cover Types

Based on National Land Cover Map of Ireland 2018, TE.

- Amenity Grassland
- Bare Soil & Disturbed Ground
- Blanket Bog
- Bracken
- Broadleaved Forest
- Buildings
- Coniferous Forest
- Cultivated Land
- Dry Heath
- Exposed Rock and Sediments
- Hedgerows
- Improved Grassland
- Lakes and Ponds
- Mixed Forest
- Other Artificial Surfaces
- Rivers and Streams
- Scrub
- Semi-Natural Grasslands (Dry)
- Semi-Natural Grasslands (Wet)
- Transitional Forest
- Treelines
- Ways
- Wet Heath

Habitat	Area (Ha)	% of Total
Amenity Grassland	53	1
Bare Soil & Disturbed Ground	0	<0.1
Blanket Bog	22	<0.1
Bracken	12	<0.1
Broadleaved Forest	42	1
Buildings	14	<0.1
Coniferous Forest	398	8
Cultivated Land	5	<0.1
Dry Heath	49	1
Exposed Rock and Sediments	6	<0.1
Hedgerows	155	3
Improved Grassland	2770	58
Lakes and Ponds	0	<0.1
Mixed Forest	26	1
Other Artificial Surfaces	58	1
Rivers and Streams	12	<0.1
Scrub	50	1
Semi-Natural Grasslands (Dry)	0	<0.1
Semi-Natural Grasslands (Wet)	184	4
Transitional Forest	753	16
Treelines	31	1
Ways	63	1
Wet Heath	37	1
TOTAL	4688	100



Map 2: Glenroe-Ballyorgan Habitats EIP

Closing Event

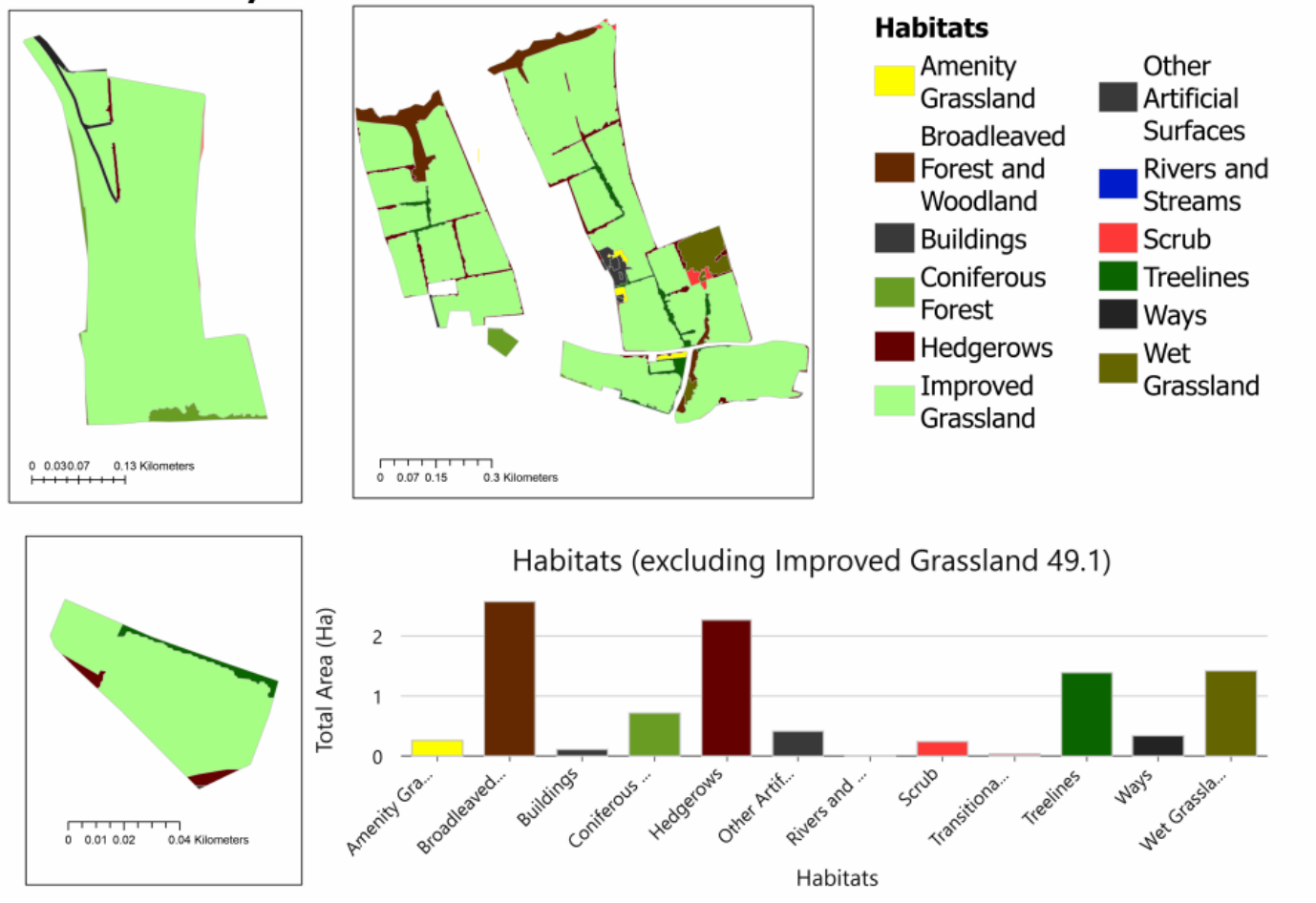
Due to the delay in receiving maps the final event was delayed until Friday 12th of May. Due to a number of factors there were 12 people in attendance, the majority of whom were participating farmers. At this event BD presented an overview of the project and the actions delivered. A member of the Operating Group outlined the participation of the schools and the community in the project. The farmers who sought maps were presented with these and the Parish Map was launched and unveiled in the Community Hall Glenroe.

In the previous weeks the participating farmers had received an allocation of trees as part of National Tree Week. These were welcomed by the farmers who are still very positive about future projects.

The previous week Rhiannon Laubach from BD, along with the Chairperson of the Operating group, presented the primary school with information plaques for the biodiversity garden in the school grounds.

There was a very positive atmosphere at both events with a positive message of the community wishing to participate in future biodiversity and habitat projects.

McSweeney farm habitats



Map 3: Sample of Farmer Map

Challenges

- This was initially a 1 Year-Project. It has been outlined at various stages of the project that there needs to be a longer timeframe for planning and animation as well as delivery of actions
- The purpose was to learn from the project, with a view to build and expand upon the results for future initiatives. It is disappointing that there is not a follow up project based upon the success and goodwill of the PHAB EIP Project.
- Covid19 led to long delays throughout key actions of the project. Once the Covid crisis passed more public events were possible, resulting in the project becoming more visible to the public.
- Procurement was lengthy and onerous in the view of some of the stakeholders, however, the involvement of BD as lead partner smoothed this process.
- Project management and administration challenges included the project being more time and administration intensive than originally anticipated.

- Habitat mapping time delays as outlined in this report
- Trying to fit a project's timeline (theory) to real life farming year (practical). The delivery of some measures were challenged by the time of year in which they can be delivered, e.g. clover in spring, hedging in autumn.
- Ensuring measures implemented are not a duplication of other agri-schemes. Towards the end of the project there were other agri schemes open with similar measures, making it challenging for farmers to identify new measure in those schemes.

Successes

- Positive story- rural community learning and engaging with its biodiversity resources. This was very evident at all public events. There is a strong knowledge and appreciation in the community of their natural environment.
- Bridging landowners with broader community. It is very timely to acknowledge that cooperation between the general public and agriculture is important. Both parties gained an understanding of each other.
- Engagement of the broader community, in particular, the school children was very positive. They are the custodians of the environment in Glenroe-Ballyorgan into the future.
- Great relationship with farmers throughout the project and there is interest in the core group of farmers coming together in the future to form a Biodiversity Discussion Group, to meet regularly and identify and animate for future programmes.

Appendix 1: PHAB Measures

Proposed Measure	Payment Rate
Multi species grassland	€296/ha
Biodiversity Plot	€600/ha
Bog/Wetland Retention	€600/ha
3M Field Margin	€2/M
3M Riparian Buffer (wild flower/bee pollinator)	€5/M
Planting new Hedgerows	€5/M
Critical Source Area Trees/ Grove of trees	€10/tree
Treeline Margin	€5/M
Traditional Orchard	€24/tree
Exposed Rock Management	€600/ha
Pond	€800/pond
Bird Box	€6/box
Bat Box	€13/box
Solitary Bees Scrape	€50
Rodenticide Alternative	€60
Pasture pump	€340/pump
Protection of water courses	€1.50/M
Farmer suggested measure	TBC
Clover field	TBC
Mob Grazing	TBC
Liming	€12/ha

Vale Star, Thursday, 27th October 2022.



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INFORMATION DAYS

The Parish Habitats and Biodiversity (PHAB) EIP project supports farmers to enhance biodiversity and habitats across Glenroe-Ballyorgan Parish including the catchment of the Keale and Ahaphuca Rivers and in the uplands of Glenroe-Ballyorgan.

The project involves deploying an innovative habitat mapping technology to map the habitats of Glenroe-Ballyorgan, and assessing the quality of a subsection of the habitats.

Farmers are supported to identify and implement capital measures to safeguard habitats (both farmed and not farmed), improve habitat quality, and create new habitats and biodiversity corridors.

The project also engages the wider community to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity.

As part of this programme Two Information Sessions emphasising the importance of Biodiversity are being organised as follows:

Hedgerow Management and Managing Linear Biodiversity Habitats on your farm

Hedges, watercourses and field margins are important linear features that define the Irish farming landscape and provide food, shelter and movement corridors for our native wildlife. These habitats are vital for biodiversity, and also provide other important benefits including shade and shelter for livestock, pollination, flood prevention, water quality protection and carbon storage.

These benefits are commonly known as ecosystem services.

Farmers can take simple and practical actions to ensure that the linear biodiversity habitats provide for nature and their farms

Hedgerows are a means of managing linear biodiversity habitats on your farm

If you are unsure of where the best place to start is when it comes to the management of Linear Biodiversity Habitats - Ciara Donovan, farm sustainability advisor with Dairygold, will outline steps that can be taken

Date - Thursday next November 3rd

Venue - Farm of Tom Hyland, Tully, Glenroe, Co. Limerick V35YP44

10.30am to 1.30pm

Barn Owl Project Information Day/Talk

Friday November 11th 12 noon-3pm - Glenroe Hall (V35xn35)



If you are a farmer, or a member of the community interested in encouraging barn owls on your property or in your area, this talk is for you.

The Barn Owl Project is currently working in the area documenting potential Barn Owl nest sites.

These events are open to everyone.

Contact John Hassett to register

Email jhassett@ballyhoura.org or Telephone 087-6555260



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Ballyhoura Development Parish Habitats and Biodiversity information day

The Ballyhoura Development Parish Habitats and Biodiversity project is a European Innovation Partnership project which supports farmers to enhance biodiversity and habitats across the Glencree-Ballyhoura parish, County Limerick.

The project involves using innovative mapping technology to map the habitats of Glencree-Ballyhoura, and conducting a habitat quality assessment of a subsection of those. Farmers will receive training and support to agree and implement a range of capital measures to protect habitats, improve habitat quality, and to create new habitats and biodiversity corridors.

Measures have been agreed with the farmers and the project team to draw up farm plans tailored to each individual farm, specifying appropriate biodiversity measures and their proposed location on the farm. Measures may include bird and bat boxes, bee scrapes, pollinator plants, farm ponds, native trees and hedgerows, and increased field margins.

Farmers will receive financial compensation for implementing these measures.

Information Day Glencree-Ballyhoura Parish Habitats and Biodiversity project (PFIAB) takes place on Wednesday, September 28th from 10am to 1pm in the Hitegrove Hotel, Mitchelstown.

INFORMATION DAY

The project is a pilot programme with a view to future CAP opportunities. Therefore the project is open to everyone involved in environmental initiatives or are thinking about an environmental initiative involving a number of stakeholders.

SPEAKERS
A number of speakers will share their experience of the project to date with a number of speakers as follows:
John Hassett, Ballyhoura Development will share insights and progress of the PFIAB project to date.

Local farmers share their experience. Padraig Fitzgerald, Teagasc will outline the habitat analysis and mapping used.

Buairí Ó Conchúir, Local Authorities Water Programme will discuss water quality the role of the Local Authorities Water Programme and look ahead to future requirements of the CAP.

Tony Watson of the BRIDE Project will outline the aims, objectives and learnings of the BRIDE programme.

This information session is open to everyone to attend. To book, contact John Hassett, Ballyhoura Development on 087-455266 or email jhassett@ballyhoura.org.

2022 NDC AND KERRYGOLD QUALITY MILK AWARDS



The Connelly family from Tuam in County Galway were recently crowned winners of the 2022 NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards, otherwise known as the 'Dairy Oscars' which rewards excellence in sustainable dairy production across Ireland. Farming with their four daughters, Aoife and Vanessa Connelly are fifth-generation farmers, relatively new to dairy farming having made the transition just four years ago. 12 additional finalists received awards across a number of categories including sustainable grassland management, renewable energy innovation and environmental management, including the Maher family farm in Cappamore, Co. Limerick (supplier to Dairygold). (Pic: Clare Keogh)

Dairygold confirms August Milk Price

Dairygold has maintained the August Quoted Milk Price at 67.66p, based on standard constituents of 3.3% protein and 3.6% butterfat, inclusive of bonuses and VAT.

This milk price equates to an average August farm gate milk price of 64.8p, based on average August milk solids, achieved by Dairygold milk suppliers. The Quoted Milk Price for August based on EU standard constituents of 3.4% protein and 4.2% butterfat is 62.7p.

MONITOR THE MARKETS
A company spokesperson commented that "dairy markets have continued to be flat in recent weeks as we now see the effect of inflation on demand. Market returns remain at historic highs and this is reflected in the continuous strong milk price being paid. The Society will continue to max-

imize the value of milk returns to recognise the significant increases in input costs to milk

suppliers this year. The Dairygold Board will continue to monitor markets closely and

review milk price on a month by month basis".



THE LISDUFF SALE ON SATURDAY, 8TH OCTOBER

155 HEAD consisting of: 40 FRESHLY CALVED HEIFERS, 85 IN-CALF HEIFERS (all genotyped) calving JAN/FEB '23 and 30 HEIFER CALVES. ALL the in-calf heifers are IN-CALF to SEXED SEMEN

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Contact: Kevin Casey 087-2268392
or Niall O'Connell 087-6650655

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Each Wednesday at 11.15am.
Intake opens 8am.

All sales can be viewed online via www.livestock-live.com

Licence No 002369

PHAB project starting in Glenroe-Ballyorgan



By **Donal O'Regan**

29 Jul 2021 1:35 PM

Email: news@limerickleader.ie



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Donal O'Regan donal.oregan@limerickleader.ie

A GROUP of Limerick farmers have embarked on an innovative project which commences next week.

Farmers in Glenroe-Ballyorgan will be the beneficiaries of the European Innovation Partnership Scheme which funds projects that allow farmers, scientists and other experts to collaborate together to develop new practices that are environmentally friendly and economically sustainable.

The Parish Habitats and Biodiversity (PHAB) project will support farmers to enhance biodiversity and habitats across Glenroe-Ballyorgan Parish including within the catchment of the Keale and Ahaphuca Rivers and in the uplands of Glenroe-Ballyorgan in County Limerick.

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John Hassett @JohnHassett... · 03 Nov 22

Great advice on Hedgerow Management and Biodiversity by Ciara Donovan of @DairygoldCo_Op for the @BallyhouraDev Parish Habitats & Biodiversity(PHAB) EIP in Glenroe Ballyorgan today #Biodiversity #VisitBallyhoura





GlenroeSchool @CnsGlenroe · 11 Nov 22

We had a wonderful information session with Aidan and Susan about Erin the Barn Owl this morning. Thanks to John from

[@BallyhouraDev](#) for facilitating the visit



Parish Habitats And Biodiversity Pilot Project Hailed as ‘Positive Story’

A pilot scheme where 15 farmers from the Glenroe and Ballyorgan areas worked with Ballyhoura Development CLG to improve biodiversity on their farms has been hailed as ‘a positive story’ and a possible model for future larger-scale EIP (European Innovation Partnership) funded schemes.

The 12-month Parish Habitats And Biodiversity (PHAB) pilot, which was extended to 15 months, and managed by Ballyhoura Development CLG, saw 15 farmers plant 1,550m of hedgerow along with 95 fruit trees and 140 native trees; spread 585 tones of lime to reduce fertiliser use, install 15 owl boxes, 35 bird boxes and 3 ponds, as well as putting in 3 pasture pumps and 1 solar pump to help protect waterways. A project team helped each farmer to draw up a farm plan appropriate to their land, and farmers were given financial compensation for all the measures they introduced.

Ballyhoura Development officer John Hassett, himself a farmer, speaking at a presentation on the project on the 28th of September in The Firgrove Hotel, said that everyone had learned a lot from the pilot and that a similar model could be brought in to cover a much larger geographic area. *"In the next CAP there will be €36.5 million to support farmers to put measures like these in place,"* John Hassett said. *"We're looking at the opportunities that communities and farmers can leverage from the new emphasis on biodiversity and sustainability in the CAP."*

He said there was a will amongst farmers to make positive changes that improve the ecology of their land. *"Farmers are the custodians of biodiversity in their communities,"* Mr Hassett said. *"All the farmers I met are very cognisant of the health of their land. It's not in our interest to damage the land we live on."*

Continuing, he said: *"Over the past 100 years, a strain has been put on the environment by policies of intensification. Now we're pushing our environment to its limits. Down the line, the days of cheap oil and cheap fertiliser will be gone and instead of being dragged kicking and screaming, it's in farmers' interests to learn to work in ways that benefit the environment."*

(A previous article published in The Aonadhú, 29 Sep 2022 by Eilic O'Byrne)

PHAB is a collaborative project, led by **Ballyhoura Development**, in partnership with Glenroe-Ballyorgan Community Council, **Ballyhoura Heritage & Environment**, **Teagasc**, the **Local Authorities Water Programme**, the **Technological University of the Shannon (formerly Limerick Institute of Technology)**, and the **Irish Farmers Association**.

To find out more about the project, follow the below link:

[The Parish Habitats and Biodiversity \(PHAB\) Project](#)



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara



Latest

Limerick Festivals and Events Grant Scheme

This competitive grant scheme, offers the opportunity for funding under three Strands, for Festivals and Events taking place from 1st October 2023 and 30th September 2024.

Closing Date: Wednesday 7th June 2023

Rural Social Scheme Supervisor

Rural Social Scheme Supervisor will be responsible for managing a large team of Scheme participants throughout the Ballyhoura area.

Closing Date: 2nd June 2023

Ballyhoura Development Summer Networking Forum

On Tuesday May 30th, Ballyhoura Development will host the summer networking forum and invite all community members to attend.

Most read

Jobs Board

A weekly round-up of job opportunities and vacancies in the Ballyhoura area compiled by the Local Area Employment Service.

Contact Us

Contact details for Ballyhoura Development offices.



Ballyhoura Development CLG · 20 Oct 22

The Parish Habitats and Biodiversity Pilot Project, where 15 farmers from the [#Glenroe](#) and [#Ballyorgan](#) areas worked with [@BallyhouraDev](#) to improve biodiversity on their farms has been hailed as ‘a positive story’. Read more on our website:



ballyhouradevelopment.com

Parish Habitats And Biodiversity Pilot Project Hailed as ‘Positive Story’





Ballyhoura Development CLG · 22 Nov 22

As part of the Parish Habitats and Biodiversity #PHAB EIP project, a free Soil Health on Farms workshop will focus on simple and practical actions that can be taken to ensure and maintain soil health on farms. OPEN TO ALL!! @EIPAGRI_SP @teagasc t.ly/1hao



