

BURRENBEO TRUST



THE HARE'S CORNER FINAL REPORT

Project Id: LLOC5006

29 March 2023

burrenb^{eo}trust
connecting people and place

GLEBE ROAD
KINVARA, CO. GALWAY

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2021, Burrenbeo Trust launched The Hare’s Corner - a project that offers landowners practical and hassle-free support in enhancing biodiversity on their land through creation of habitats such as ponds, native orchards, mini-woodlands and – more recently – the provision of Plans for Nature. By March 2023 this project will have supported the creation of 90 mini-woodlands (consisting of 2,278 endangered Burren pine trees and 7,796 native companion trees), 50 ponds for biodiversity, 110 mini-orchards (consisting of 700 heritage apple trees from Irish Seedsavers), and 30 professionally produced ‘Plans for Nature’ for landowners in Co.Clare– a wonderful investment in the natural infrastructure of the County.

‘The Hare’s Corner’ is co-ordinated by the Burrenbeo Trust, a local landscape charity and to date has been funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) through The European Innovation Partnerships Initiative (EIP)/Locally led schemes, by the EU Recovery Instrument Funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022 as well as the Clare County Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service through the LBAF fund.

We are grateful for the EIP funding of **€71,760** which we received and which played a crucial role in delivering results for biodiversity – **156 Hare’s Corners** around Co.Clare - through The Hare’s Corner initiative. The other key result of this project has been the high level of collaboration involved and the added value that has been gained as a result. The broader ‘Hare’s Corner’ project was developed with support from DAFM, the Burren Programme, Clare Co Co, the NPWS, the Farming for Nature Project, the Burrenbeo Trust and others. This allowed us to optimise the use of funding for work on-site as the cost of much of the ancillary work on engagement, publicity, best practice resource development, IT and accountancy work etc was shared. It also means that the Hare’s Corner itself can be used as a funding vehicle for future environmental work on land in Clare and elsewhere.

The Hare’s Corner Biodiversity Measure	Total actions between Aug 21 – Mar 23 Phase 1: June 21 – April 22 Phase 2: June 22 – March 23	Actions funded through EIP Phase 1: June 21 – April 22 Phase 2: June 22 – March 23
Mini-woodlands	90 mini-woodlands (consisting of 2,278 Burren pine trees and 7,796 native trees) Phase 1: 34 mini-woodlands Phase 2: 56 mini-woodlands	90 mini-woodlands (consisting of 2,278 Burren pine trees and 7,796 native trees) Phase 1: 34 mini-woodlands Phase 2: 56 mini-woodlands
Mini – orchards	102 mini-orchards (consisting of 848 heritage apple trees) Phase1: 44 mini-orchards Phase2: 58 mini-orchards	42 mini-orchards (consisting of 350 heritage apple trees) Phase 1: 0 mini-orchards Phase 2: 42 mini-orchards
Ponds for wildlife	50 ponds Phase 1: 30 ponds Phase 2: 20 ponds	10 ponds (consultancy towards) Phase1: 0 ponds Phase 2: 10 ponds
Provision of ‘Plan for Nature’ site assessment and report	30 reports Phase 1: 0 reports Phase 2: 30 reports	12 reports Phase 1: 0 reports Phase 2: 12 reports
TOTAL Hare’s Corners	272	154

Project website link: burrenbeo.com/thc, Social Media links: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Linkedin](#)

SECTION 2: PROJECT DESCRIPTION



(Image: The Hare's Corner project launch with Minister Hackett, Burrenbeo Trust team and representatives of Clare County Council, Burren IFA and Irish Seedsavers)

The Key Objective as laid out in our initial application form for the EIP fund was to restore the endangered Burren pine, *Pinus Sylvestris* by creating new native pine dominated woodland habitats on species-poor farmland sites in Co.Clare. Our secondary objectives were; to foster partnerships and networking between landowners and biodiversity experts; between likeminded organisations working to protect biodiversity in Co.Clare and to inform future agri-environmental initiatives from the learnings of this project.

Original Target: It was envisaged that through this 1-year project we would enable planting of 2,000 endangered Burren pine trees and 6,000 native trees to create mini-woodlands on 20 farmland sites in Co.Clare. These targets were exceeded by judicious use of budgets.

Partnerships and their added value: We received funding support from Clare County Council (LBAF) for creation of ponds and planting of mini-orchards which enabled us to go one step further and offer landowners a menu of biodiversity actions they could choose from in the first call for applications for The Hare's Corner which was announced in August 2021.

An overwhelming 165 applications were received before the initial deadline of 6th of September 2021 with over 90% applicants interested in availing of all three of the Hare's Corner measures: mini-woodlands, ponds, and mini-orchards. A detailed follow-up questionnaire to assess the suitability of the individual sites for each measure was then sent to all applicants to which we received 66 responses. To shortlist applicants we used a set of scoring criteria which prioritised species-poor, non-designated sites so that there was no overall biodiversity loss and/or impact on any pre-existing heritage value of the place. Priority was also given to landowners who were not participating in another National Agri Env't Scheme (GLAS, REAP).

Once the applications were screened it was agreed to widen the Burren pine woodland offering to the maximum number of shortlisted applicants by reducing the initially planned ‘minimum number of trees’ per participant. We promised to provide training, guidance and the trees but no fees were offered to landowners for participating in this initiative.

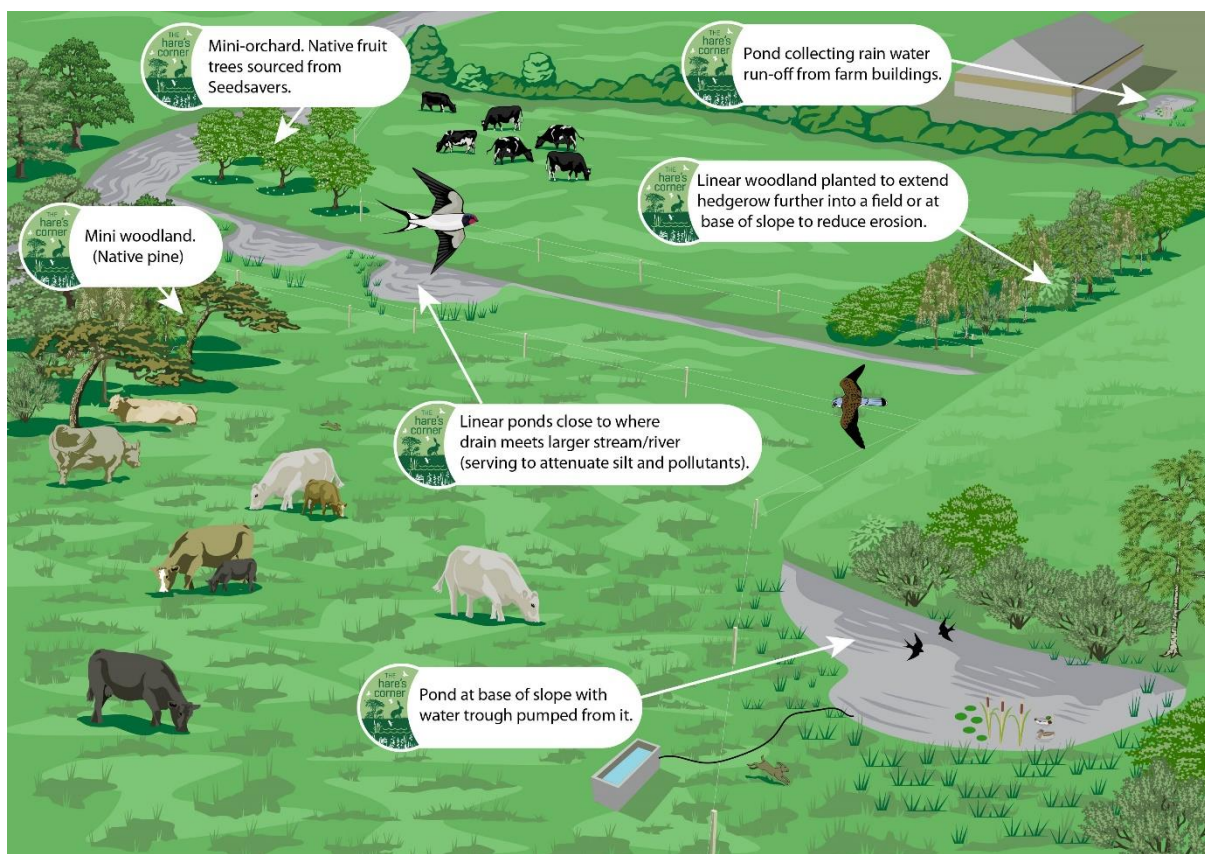
Objectives met through The Hare’s Corner Phase 1:

By the end of phase 1 in December 2021, and half way through the timeline for the EIP project, 90% of our targets for the EIP were met. Of the 2,000 pines and 6,000 native trees, 1,800 pines and 5,423 native trees had been planted by 34 different landowners in Co.Clare. Clare County Council funded the ponds (50) and the orchards (350 trees on 44 sites) actions under this phase of The Hare’s Corner.

We managed to make cost savings in the EIP budget due to high level of demand which allowed us to enter co-funding arrangements with the landowners involved.

We got approval from EIP to use the savings made (€37,900 out of €71,760) to cater to some of the existing demand, and offer some additional biodiversity actions in order to enhance the learning outcomes and environmental impact of this project.

Enhanced Objectives for The Hare’s Corner Phase 2



We were given approval to deliver new measures within the existing budget of EIP fund. These measures included additional mini- woodlands, ponds, orchards and ‘plan for nature’ reports.

In June 2022 a second call for applications was announced for The Hare’s Corner inviting landowners in Co.Clare to apply for support to carry out one or more biodiversity actions.

A total of 121 applications were received with 60-80% people applying for all the actions. Applications were once again screened for site suitability through a detailed questionnaire and where possible, in-person site visits.

Objectives met through The Hare's Corner Phase 2:

In February 2023, as this second round of The Hare's Corner comes to a close, an additional 56 mini-woodlands (474 pine trees and 2373 native trees), 66 orchards (506 apple trees) have been planted, 20 more ponds for wildlife have been created and 'plans for nature' have been produced for 30 landowners in Co.Clare. Altogether between the first two phases of this project, 270 Hare's Corners have been created in Co.Clare, 156 of which were funded by the EIP and the remainder through the Clare Co.Co. LBAF fund.

SECTION 3: MINI-WOODLANDS



Call for Applications: The project invited landowners to dedicate an area of up to 0.1ha of species-poor, non-designated land for the creation of a native woodland habitat for planting a mixture of native Irish trees including the endangered Burren Pine trees and companion broadleaved species, with guidance and trees provided by us.

Selection process: We went to great lengths to ensure a fair, transparent, and efficient site selection process which helped us target the best potential planting sites. This 2-stage process saw landowners complete on-line surveys which automatically generated a shortlist of sites (based on agreed selection criteria). This was funded through the Digital Innovation Project led by Clare Co. Co.

Tree sourcing: As they are derived from a small, rare, and isolated population of parent trees, the native pine saplings are not widely available. We worked with a nursery who have a guaranteed supply of certified saplings, grown from seeds that are collected with the permission of NPWS. The companion trees of native provenance were sought from Fermoy Woodland Nursery which was chosen after receiving quotes from three different Irish vendors.

Knowledge sharing: Woodland planting was informed by best practice and expert advice. Online webinars and Q&A session was organised with professional forester and pine nursery manager, Bernard Carey. Woodland management resources were shared with all participants.

Tree Distribution: Trees were organised in advance for each participant with the help of Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers. Two tree distribution days were hosted in 2022 where landowners from Clare could come and collect their trees in their allotted time slots. They signed a certificate of agreement committing to planting and managing their woodlands according to best practice guidance and to keeping us updated on the progress of their woodlands.

Results/KPI: 2,278 endangered Burren pine trees and 7,796 native trees were planted on 90 sites around Co.Clare as a result of The Hare's Corner woodland initiative.

Audits: A post-planting audit was conducted with Phase 1 participants (34) through an online questionnaire as well a random selection of 20 in-person audits. We received positive feedback overall with following key learnings;

1. Majority of participants strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the guidance and support on woodland planting received through The Hare's Corner
2. Majority of participants strongly agreed they were satisfied with their experience of planting trees with over 60% of participants going on to do additional works to protect the trees through fencing or tree guards.
3. All pine trees had done exceedingly well.
4. There was 5-20% losses on the native companion species on certain sites.
5. Majority of participants were happy to help as ambassadors for the project going forward.

Some quotes received in the feedback:

'I had a planting meitheal with friends and neighbours. Wonderful way to engage and educate people about the project.'

'It inspired me to plant more'

'I didn't prepare properly - had intended to plant them in a particular location and then after the webinar discovered that area wouldn't be very suitable so had to make last minute adjustments! However they are all doing well now so thanks to you all'

Future management: Funding by Clare Co.Co towards communications work of The Hare's Corner allowed us to map our actions and make them available on our website. Our plan going forward is to

maintain a relationship with the participants of the project by hosting continued maintenance training, networking events and if funding were available, to reward successful management.



Map of the 34 mini-woodlands created through Phase 1 of THC

SECTION 4: ORCHARDS



Orchard tree distribution days at Irish Seedsavers Association in Jan 2022 and Jan 2023



Clarecastle community group planting an orchard and first blossom at a Hare's Corner site.

Call for Applications: The project invited landowners to dedicate of minimum 75 sqm to accommodate a minimum of 6 fruit trees supplied by Irish Seedsavers.

Screening: 119 applications were received in total for orchard planting throughout the first two phases of The Hare's Corner. Out of these, 110 landowners were shortlisted to receive the heritage apple trees. Remote site assessments for all the sites were carried out to record specific site details and agree on the number of trees and the size of the orchard with the site owners. The sites were spread out around Co.Clare and vary also in the site ownership as the project sought to engage not just farmers but private landowners as well as community groups.

Guidance and tree distribution: Two training webinars were hosted with the help of orchard specialists Jeremy Turkington and Cillian Boyd from Irish Seedsavers. Landowners were advised to plant on species-poor, free draining, non-designated, improved grassland sites where there would be no overall biodiversity loss and/or impact on any pre-existing heritage value of the place. On the apple tree distribution day, each participant was guided to choose the most suitable trees for their site. Both hard and soft copies of guidance documents on planting were shared with the participants. The landowner participated in the project based on a commitment of a suitable site, willingness to plant and protect the orchard from potential threats and assurance that this site will be maintained for the next 3 years and that they will keep us posted on its progress.

Results/KPI: 102 mini-orchards (consisting of 848 heritage apple trees) were planted as a result of this project at sites around Co.Clare. The EIP funded 350 of these at 42 sites.

Audits: A post-planting audit was conducted with the participants through an online questionnaire as well as in-person audits with randomly selected 20 sites. We received positive feedback overall with following key learnings;

1. Majority of participants were satisfied with the guidance and support on woodland planting received through The Hare's Corner.
2. Majority of participants were satisfied with their experience of planting.
3. Majority of participants were happy to help as ambassadors for the project going forward.

Some quotes received in the feedback:

'good tips given, good variety of trees recommended for my location and all my trees survived despite the location being very exposed and open, close to the sea etc.

'I followed all instructions and all apple trees looks healthy and leaves blooming on all eight trees. Excited. Thank you!'

'After speaking to the team I changed a little the location of the trees to ensure more shelter and glad I did as all have survived. The addition of seaweed dust I feel greatly helped the growth.'

Future management: Funding by Clare Co.Co towards communications work of The Hare's Corner has allowed us to map our actions and make them available on our website. Our plan going forward is to maintain a relationship with the participants of the project by hosting continued maintenance training, networking events and if funding were available, to reward successful management.



Map of the 34 mini-orchards created through Phase 1 of THC

SECTION 5: PONDS



Call for Applications: The project invited landowners to dedicate an area of at least 5x5m (25m²) for the creation of a pond/pond complex. 122 applications were received in total in response to the two calls for applications during 2021 and 2022.

Selection process: We went to great lengths to ensure a fair, transparent, and efficient site selection process which helped us target the best potential pond sites. Scoring criteria for ponds prioritised species-poor, non-designated sites so that there would be no overall biodiversity loss and/or impact on any pre-existing heritage value of the place. Priority was also given to landowners where benefits for biodiversity can be enhanced using readily available water sources thereby requiring minimum intervention. A shortlist of 70 sites were visited by Burrenbeo's Field Technical Officer Karen Van Dorp and Wetland specialist Féidhlim Harty in 2022, to record specific site details and agree on works that need to be carried out with the site owners. After the in-person site assessments, 50 landowners were offered support for creating a pond habitat.

Participants: The sites are well spread out around Co.Clare and also strongly vary in the types of wetland features that will be created through this project. Some examples include - a pond in the middle of a typical dairy farm which is connected to drain/s and hedgerows, a mosaic of 'wetland' habitats from a shallow summer pond to a deep shadowy winter pond with an island of willow trees in the middle, pond created by blocking one of the drains in an improved grassland site, pond created from rainwater run-off from farm buildings, and in some cases enhancing an already wet

field with some digging and rewetting to create a pond system. There is deliberate variation also in the site owners as the project seeks to engage not just farmers but private landowners as well as community groups.

Site Assessment, advice, and micro-funding: In addition to on-site advice, the participants attended online webinars with hydrologist Feidhlim Harty, and were given guidance documents on the design and construction of ponds. We provided funding for costs towards machinery or labour work (a maximum of €700 including VAT based on receipts and photographs of the ponds).

Results/KPI: 50 ponds for biodiversity were created in Co.Clare as a result of The Hare's Corner woodland initiative through 2021 and 2022. EIP funded consultancy costs for 10 of these ponds.

Audits: An audit was conducted with the participants through an online questionnaire as well as in-person audits with 20 randomly selected sites. We received positive feedback overall with following key learnings;

1. Majority of participants were satisfied with the guidance and support on pond creation received through The Hare's Corner
2. Majority of participants were happy to help as ambassadors for the project going forward.

Some quotes received in the feedback:

'We received simple and clear instructions on how best to construct our pond with our contractor.'

'People were very knowledgeable and helpful.'

'The construction went very smoothly overall. The only small obstacle was to communicate the details of what the pond should look like in order not to end up with a square hole in the ground. A training session for contractors might be helpful.'

Future management: Funding by Clare Co.Co towards communications work of The Hare's Corner has allowed us to map our actions and make them available on our website. Our plan going forward is to maintain a relationship with the participants of the project by hosting continued maintenance training, networking events and if funding were available, to reward successful management.



Map of the 30 ponds created through Phase 1 of THC

SECTION 6: PLAN FOR NATURE



One of the learnings from Phase 1 of The Hare’s Corner was a huge demand from many landowners to access specialist advice on how they could manage their land better for biodiversity - to best understand what habitats already exist on their land and how they could do more to protect or enhance these. We decided to pilot a new measure called ‘plan for nature’ with the idea of providing a visit by an ecologist and a simple, visual report on recommendations made by them to enhance sites for nature.

Call for Applications: The project invited interested landowners to submit accurate information on locations and area size for their site and their motivation for applying for this measure. We received 95 applications for this measure from Clare landowners in our Phase 2 call.

Selection process: As this was a pilot measure, we made a short list of applicants based on the strongest made cases for their motivation and to allow for as much variety of sites as possible – variety in site sizes (1 to 43 acres), land uses (farming, plantations, recreation) and land ownership (farmers, small gardeners, private business, educational facilities).

Site visits and reports: Burrenbeo’s Hare’s Corner officer accompanied ecologist Sharon Parr to the sites to investigate pre-existing habitats, understand the landowners needs and priorities and limitations. A list of 10 recommendations was drawn up on how habitats can be enhanced for wildlife in specific areas of the site as well as for the overall site. Findings from the visit, recommendations, tips along with links to additional resources were put together in a ‘plan for nature’ for the landowner.

Results/KPI: 30 landowners received the ‘Plan for Nature’ site visits and reports. 12 of these were funded by the EIP.

Audits: We plan to conduct an audit of all the applicants for this measure in 6 months’ time to evaluate its success and learn if recommended actions were taken by the landowners.

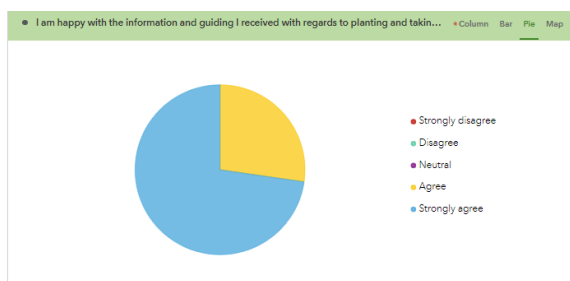
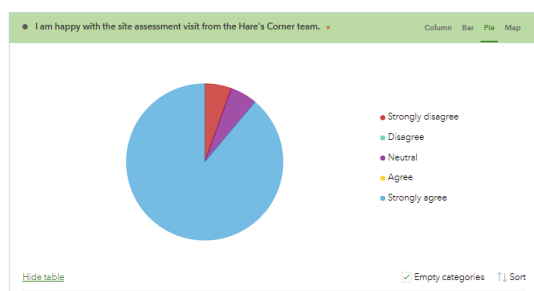
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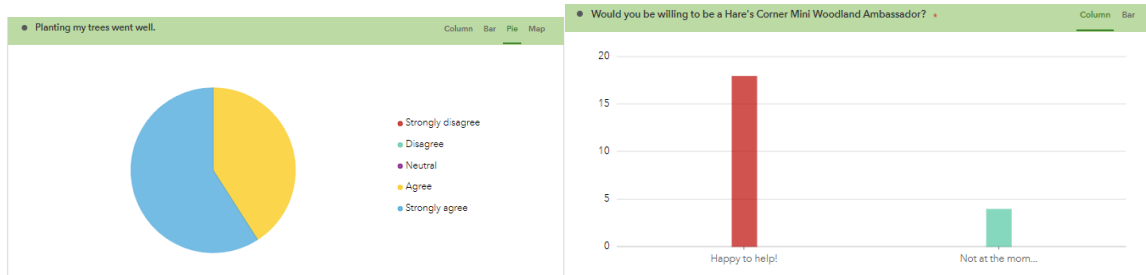
SECTION 7: EVALUATION

We expect that the support given to over 90 landowners to carry out actions for biodiversity through The Hare’s Corner will ensure that these new sites are managed for biodiversity in the best way possible.

A survey of 37 applicants from The Hare’s Corner Phase 1 gave us the following encouraging feedback. Survey for the Phase 2 applicants will be conducted in 6 months’ time (June 2023) to allow for adequate time to check success of the actions.

Survey Analysis (37 respondents)





The survey pointed to overall satisfaction in the participants on the support they received and their actions taken for biodiversity. Some of the qualitative feedback received through the survey as well as site audits is highlighted below

Comments on site assessments:

1. *We received simple and clear instructions on how best to construct our pond with our contractor.*
2. *An essential step in the whole process.*

Comments on pond construction

1. *The construction went very smooth overall. The only small obstacle was to communicate the details of what the pond should look like in order not to end up with a square hole in the ground. A training session for contractors might be helpful.*
2. *Perfect for swampy ground as it fills quickly*
3. *I put two layers of carpet under the liner*
4. *A list of pond plants would be good.*

Comments on tree distribution day

1. *It was incredibly efficient and well organised!*
2. *It was a lovely sociable hour. Very enjoyable.*
3. *Excellent organised*
4. *Brilliant and motivating*

Comments on woodland guidance

1. *found Bernard's talk very informative and interesting. It brought home the importance of taking ownership of these trees and ensuring their establishment. 1*
2. *I enjoyed Bernard's talk and was fascinated to see the fungal mycelium on the Burren Pine trees and how well they were thriving on his woodland soil mix.*

Comments on woodland planting

1. *Seemed fairly straight forward and trees seem to be growing 1*
2. *Our excavator driver was excellent. He is experienced in working with foresters. He created planting mounds from drains that he excavated in the field to encourage water flow to the pond.*
3. *Just finding the time is always a challenge, but it was a pleasant couple of mornings in the sunshine.*
4. *It inspired me to plant more*
5. *I was delighted to be able to put so many native trees onto my land and can't wait to see them maturing. The pickup was very late in the planting season and I really struggled to plant all the trees by myself quickly. My ground is so difficult to dig.*

6. *I think in the future it might be an idea to include appropriate tree guards and protection with the package similar to the UK Woodland Trusts tree packs for schools and communities.*
7. *I had a planting meal with friends and neighbours. Wonderful way to engage and educate people about the project.*
8. *I didn't prepare properly - had intended to plant them in a particular location and then after the webinar discovered that area wouldn't be very suitable so had to make last minute adjustments! However they are all doing well now so thanks to you all*

Comments on orchard tree distribution day

1. *worked fine our trees were available for us at seed Savers on the Agreed date & Time and lovely cup of tea that we shared with Brendan Dunford and team*
2. *Well organised, nice to meet people and faces to names. Good advice given.*
3. *There was a lovely, friendly and welcoming greeting on our arrival*
4. *Lovely sociable morning. Really enjoyable.*
5. *It was lovely to combine it with a visit to Irish Seedsavers. It would have been nice if we could have known which varieties were available beforehand, so that we could request those as we arrived. 1*
6. *Everything ran smoothly from parking to pickup to info.*

Comments on Orchard guidance

1. *We were provided with the seaweed dust for plating and the trees seems to be very healthy.*
2. *The initial webinar was useful and an information sheet was provided on collection day with lots of guidance.*
3. *Super advice*
4. *plenty of Info provided - we even got to understand the word Rootstock*
5. *I find I received all necessary information possible to prepare the ground and plant the trees to maintenance of the orchard. So so very grateful. Checking on the trees daily.*
6. *I enjoyed Jeremy's talk and presentation. ISSA do wonderful work and it's always great to intersect with them.*
7. *good tips given, good variety of trees recommended for my location and all my trees survived despite the location being very exposed and open, close to the sea etc.*

Comments on orchard planting

1. *We are limited to using areas of well-drained soil. Only one has died, the others are thriving.*
2. *Time is always a challenge, but spent a lovely time planting the apple trees. 1*
3. *Our site should have been better prepared in advance of planting. We didn't clear enough space around the trees and weeds have been difficult to control*
4. *No problems*
5. *I have to make time for more preparations*
6. *I got some mycorrhizal fungi from Feidhlim a bit later, so made a hole at the base of each tree and put a solution of it into the root system. The trees are doing really well and some have blossoms on them!*
7. *I followed all instructions and all apple trees looks healthy and leaves blooming on all eight trees. Excited. Thank you!*
8. *got lots of children involved from neighbouring estate , national school and pre school*
9. *After speaking to the team I changed a little the location of the trees to ensure more shelter and glad I did as all have survived. The addition of seaweed dust I feel greatly helped the growth.*

We hope to measure effectiveness of the project through continued remote and where possible in-person audits. Landowners taking part in the project are selected on the basis of their

assurance that their Hare’s Corners will be maintained for the next 3 years and that they will keep us posted on its progress.

Development of an innovative digital system (funded through the Digital Innovation Project led by Clare Co. Co) to facilitate every stage of this pilot project – from application to actions and payments- means that any future information gathering on the progress of the project sites is possible and the sites can be continued to be supported for biodiversity actions.

SECTION 8: VFM

One of the best results of this project has been the high level of collaboration involved and the added value that has been generated as a result. The broader ‘Hare’s Corner’ project was developed with support from DAFM, the Burren Programme, Clare Co. Co., the NPWS, the Farming for Nature Project, the Burrenbeo Trust and others. This allowed us to optimise the use of funding for work on-site as the cost of much of the ancillary work on engagement, publicity, resource development, IT work etc was shared. It also means that the Hare’s Corner itself can be used as a funding vehicle for future environmental work on land in Clare and elsewhere.

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SECTION 9: FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD OF THE PROJECT

(PERIOD 1ST JUNE 2021 TO 28TH FEBRUARY 2023)

INCOME

GRANTS RECEIVED FROM DAFM							71760	
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>								
ADMINISTRATION WAGES AND PRSI (SHARE)						15377		
ADMINISTRATION COSTS - PHONE AND BROADBAND						332		
IMPLEMENTATION WAGES AND PRSI (SHARE)						16926		
ECOLOGISTS - PLANNING FOR NATURE						6160		
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT/HYDROLOGIST FOR PONDS						3739		
NATIVE WOODLAND TREES						4906		
BURREN PINE TREES						10220		
NATIVE ORCHARD TREES						14100		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE							71760	
EXCESS OF INCOME OR EXPENDITURE							0	

SECTION 10: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

This project has been very impactful on a number of levels – in terms of engaging a range of stakeholders, of generating awareness and knowledge, of identifying suitable sites and most importantly, of carrying out works to improve biodiversity in Co. Clare. The following are some of what we feel are key project results:

Collaboration

One of the best results of this project has been the high level of collaboration involved and the added value that has been gained as a result. The broader 'Hare's Corner' project was developed with support from DAFM, the Burren Programme, Clare Co Co, the NPWS, the Farming for Nature Project, the Burrenbeo Trust and others. This allowed us to optimise the use of funding for work on-site as the cost of much of the ancillary work on engagement, publicity, resource development, IT work etc was shared. It also means that the Hare's Corner itself can be used as a funding vehicle for future environmental work on land in Clare and elsewhere.

Stakeholder Engagement

We worked with a wide range of stakeholders during quite a short project timeframe – from Government Departments (DAFM), to Local Authorities, Farm Organisations (Clare IFA), Farm Advisors (via the Burren Programme), Media Outlets (from RTE to Local Radio), local NGOs and wetland experts.

Development of Promotional Materials

We developed a logo, illustrations, and publicity material – mainly targeting landowners to visually convey to them the purpose of the project and how it might apply to their land. These resources will have value beyond the lifetime of this wetlands project.

Development of Best Practice Guidelines

Working with Féidhlim Harty we produced simple drawings and guidelines, as well as links to more detailed information, on how to go about selecting pond sites, carrying out site works, and maintaining pond sites afterwards.

Publicity and Communications

We publicised the project widely – on RTE Radio 1's countrywide programme, on Clare FM, in local newspapers, on social media and through a web page (www.burrenbeo.com/thc). We organised a very successful project launch with Minister Pippa Hackett which included representatives from IFA, Clare Co. Co. and others.

Training of staff and landowners

We organised on-site meetings for landowners to discuss pond projects and an on-line zoom session (now available on You Tube) for woodland and orchard planting. These also helped build in-house capacity for the Hare's Corner project team.

Development of selection process

We went to great lengths to ensure a fair, transparent, and efficient site selection process which helped us target the right actions at the right place. This 2-stage process saw landowners complete on-line surveys which automatically generated an ordered list of sites to prioritize (based on agreed selection criteria). This was funded through the Digital Innovation Project led by Clare Co. Co.

Site Assessments and audits

The Hare's corner officer along with wetland ecologist Féidhlim Harty visited a number of sites in to meet the landowners, select sites and discuss planned works for ponds. Site audits were also conducted on 20% of the participant sites to assess the success of the actions. These in combination with post-action surveys will continue to inform and improve the future phases of The Hare's Corner project.

Biodiversity Actions:

This project has made an important contribution to the biodiversity of Co.Clare by enabling the creation of 156 Hare's Corners – including 90 mini-woodlands (consisting of 2,278 endangered Burren pine trees and 7,796 native trees), 46 mini-orchards (consisting of 350 heritage apple trees), 10 ponds for biodiversity, and 10 'Plan for Nature' reports.

Payments for Work done

Best practice in accounting procedures was in place for payments issued for work done. Two signatures from the Project Team are required to certify all items of expenditure for payment and once payment is approved, payments are made via EFT. All invoices have an identifier number printed on either by the supplier or issued by the administration. Costs are recorded by the Project admin under appropriate subcategories. All these records are maintained digitally in the chosen accounting system and all original invoices / associated paperwork will be kept on file in the project office.

SECTION 11: LESSONS LEARNED / ACTIONS TO CARRY FORWARD

Comprehensive templates have been developed from this pilot project, outlining a methodology and quantifying the unit cost, the required resources to promote the project, project administration, follow up, support, survey, co-ordination and the necessary help and advice provision for successful

outcomes. Valuable know-how has been gained from promoting the biodiversity actions to farmers and landowners, scoping the opportunities that may exist and earning the landowner interest and confidence to undertake a Hare's Corner project.

This means that the Hare's Corner itself can be used as a funding vehicle for future environmental work on land in Clare and elsewhere.

We have learned that there is a huge appetite amongst the landowners to make more space for nature and given the right advice and confidence most landowners are willing to contribute their time, labour, and money towards taking these actions. Ease of access to training, clear guidance, continued networking and training opportunities and minimal paperwork have been key to success of the project so far.

Actions to Carry Forward:

Addition of biodiversity actions: We hope to keep improving The Hare's Corner offerings to landowners through the learnings of the first two phases of the project. It is hoped that more actions can be offered to landowners in addition to the existing ones such as – habitat connectivity, bog restoration, wildlife boxes, seed boxes and bee banks.

Finetuning of application and site selection process: The applications process for the future rounds will continue to evolve to get the necessary information from landowners in the most efficient way possible and make the screening process more streamlined.

Enhanced guidance: We hope to improve our guidance content to make it even easier for landowners to undertake actions. This will include development of best-practice guidance for machinery operators contracted by landowners (in the case of pond creation), offering workshops on planting and pruning trees (for orchard participants) and developing videos for best practice in woodland planting.

Sharing our model with interested networks outside of Co.Clare: We aim to reach out to networks outside of Co.Clare to roll out similar biodiversity actions in other counties.

Actively seek both public and private investment in The Hare's Corner : Through simple, accessible and transparent reporting and accounting structures, we aim to make The Hare's Corner model easy for both public bodies and private businesses to invest in to support biodiversity actions in their local areas.

SECTION 11: DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT FINDINGS

Media

We publicised the project widely. The Hare's Corner featured on 10 different media platforms including Clare FM, Clare Herald, That's Farming, Irish Farmers Journal, Clare FM, Agriland, RTE Radio1, Clare Champion. Farming Independent. We regularly posted content from the project on Burrenbeo's social media pages on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. We maintain a web page (www.burrenbeo.com/thc) to reflect the up to date results of the project as well as resources and useful information.

Public bodies

The results of the Hare's Corner project thus far have been shared with representatives of **The Heritage Council, Biodiversity officers network, the Wild Atlantic Nature Life team and with a number of private sector investors** with the view of adopting it in areas outside of Co.Clare.

The Hare's Corner was profiled at the **National Biodiversity Conference 2022**, the **Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss**, at numerous Public Events/Presentations, and internationally in an Austrian Magazine on farming for nature.

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