



RRBI - Restoring raised bogs in Ireland  
LIFE04 NAT/IE/000121



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Project description:

Background

The peatlands of the Irish Midlands are among the most important raised-bog systems remaining in Europe. Raised-bog habitat was once extensive in Ireland, covering an estimated 310 000 ha. However, before their ecological value was appreciated, peatlands were considered wastelands, which should be converted to more productive uses. Their total area was reduced to a mere 18 000 ha.

Most of the loss has been through the extraction of peat for household fuel, electricity production and the manufacture of horticultural products. Afforestation has also resulted in habitat loss, but on a smaller scale, with about 2% of the original peatland area planted.

Coillte initiated a Nature Conservation Strategy in 1999, taking into account national and European biodiversity and nature conservation requirements. Since 1997, 11,831 ha of high raised bog has been proposed for designation in candidate SACs under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

The company has also run the following three LIFE Nature projects:

- 02 NAT/IRL/8490 Restoring Active Blanket Bog in Ireland
- 04 NAT/IE/121 Restoring Raised Bogs in Ireland
- 05 NAT/IRL/182 Restoring Priority Woodland Habitats in Ireland

Objectives

This LIFE Nature project aimed to restore 571 ha of raised bog on 14 sites in the central plain of Ireland to a favourable conservation status. Furthermore, by extending the area of raised bog, the project sought to enlarge the area free from the effects of afforestation and thus increase the likelihood of recolonisation with Annex 1 habitat types.

The project intended to target the effects of the cutting of turf from peatland for fuel and damage from trespassing livestock. It also planned to reduce hazard risks for adjoining landowners and the risks of fire damage to the project sites, notably through vegetation clearance on vulnerable high risk perimeter areas.

The project hoped to have a demonstration role, particularly for forest managers, showing effective techniques for bogland restoration on afforested sites, principally tree removal and drain blocking. Dissemination of the project results both nationally and throughout the EU would also hope to increase current knowledge in the area of afforested bogland restoration.

## Results

The project achieved all its objectives and milestones. The beneficiary managed this in the face of some initial obstacles, notably exceptionally wet weather and local opposition to the cutting of fire lines into the natural vegetation.

The project team removed trees and shrubs from 450 ha of targeted bogland. In some areas, vegetation was removed using an innovative attachment to a Hitachi tracked excavator and left in windrows. They also blocked drains - including with plastic piling and peat - on 427 ha of cleared or open bog to elevate water levels and restore the natural hydrological balance of the peatland.

Although the team was not able to block some perimeter drains, the accomplished actions still achieved the targets of restoring 571.2 ha of raised bog on 14 sites to a favourable conservation status and extending the area of raised bog by almost 450 ha. Future progress might still be possible, depending on successful implementation of a Cessation of Turbary Scheme operated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of Ireland.

The project erected 7 775 m of fencing around 320 ha of carefully targeted bogland to eliminate trespassing livestock. Maintenance actions were continued throughout the project duration to tackle naturally regenerating vegetation and consultations undertaken to control of turf-cutting rights.

There were already signs of the recolonisation of the project site by Annex I species by the end of the project. Raised-bog vegetation was seen to be returning as the sites became gradually wetter. All sites were improving, with particular changes observed in sites with the best existing ground conditions and appropriate surrounding vegetation.

The long-term prognosis for the project site is promising. The project has developed links at local and national levels that are likely to continue the work of the conservation efforts in the future. It has also excelled in the dissemination of its work and results, notably through its website which provides interesting and useful information and the construction of information panels and

boardwalks on the project site.

The project is a demonstration of what could be achieved on a wider scale in Ireland and other Member States. It was visited by projects from Finland and Latvia.

Further information on the project can be found in the project's layman report and After-LIFE Conservation Plan (see "Read more" section).

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Habitats - Bogs and Mires

Keywords

forest management, land restoration, restoration measure, conflicting use, drainage system, ecological assessment, landscape conservation policy, renaturation, wetlands ecosystem, site rehabilitation, public awareness campaign, policy integration, forestry

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- COM(2001)162 - "Biodiversity Action Plan for the conservation of natural resources (vol. I & II)" ...
- Directive 92/43 - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora- Habitats Directiv ...
- Decision 93/626 - Conclusion of the Convention on Biological Diversity (25.10.1993)
- COM(95) 189 - "Communication on the judicious use and conservation of wetlands" (12.12.1995)
- COM(98)42 - "Communication on a European Community Biodiversity Strategy" (05.02.1998)

Target Habitat types

- 7110 - Active raised bogs
- 7120 - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration
- 7230 - Alkaline fens
- 91D0 - Bog woodland

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Coillte Teoranta - The Irish Forestry Board
Type of organisation	Public enterprise
Description	Coillte is an Irish State-owned company - owned by the Ministry for Finance and the Ministry for Agriculture and Food - operating in forestry, land-based businesses and related processing operations.
Partners	None

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE04 NAT/IE/000121
Duration	01-OCT-2004 to 30-SEP -2008
Total budget	2,500,000.00 €
EU contribution	1,875,000.00 €
Project location	Midlands(Ireland) West(Ireland) Border(Ireland)

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Read more:

Project web site	<a href="#">Project's website</a>
Publication: After-LIFE Conservation Plan	Title: After-LIFE Conservation Plan Year: 2008 No of pages: 11
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report Year: 2008 No of pages: 12
Video link	<a href="#">"Restoring Raised Bog" (20')</a>

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