

Case Study

Project Background

Traditionally our rural farmed landscapes would have been a diverse agricultural system with an assortment of smaller fields consisting of meadows and open pasture with hedgerows, small woodlands, orchards and cereal plots. As agriculture developed and became mechanised, and for the most part intensified, this patchwork mostly disappeared. With this we lost the diverse structure that existed in the landscape and its associated biodiversity. Some sites remained however and acted as important refuges for wildlife. The term 'Hare's Corner' was a farming expression given to an awkward corner of a field or an area of rough ground which wasn't intensively farmed, but instead 'left to nature'. The Hare's Corner project aims to revive this tradition, which will support biodiversity on farms and in the wider countryside.

The Problem

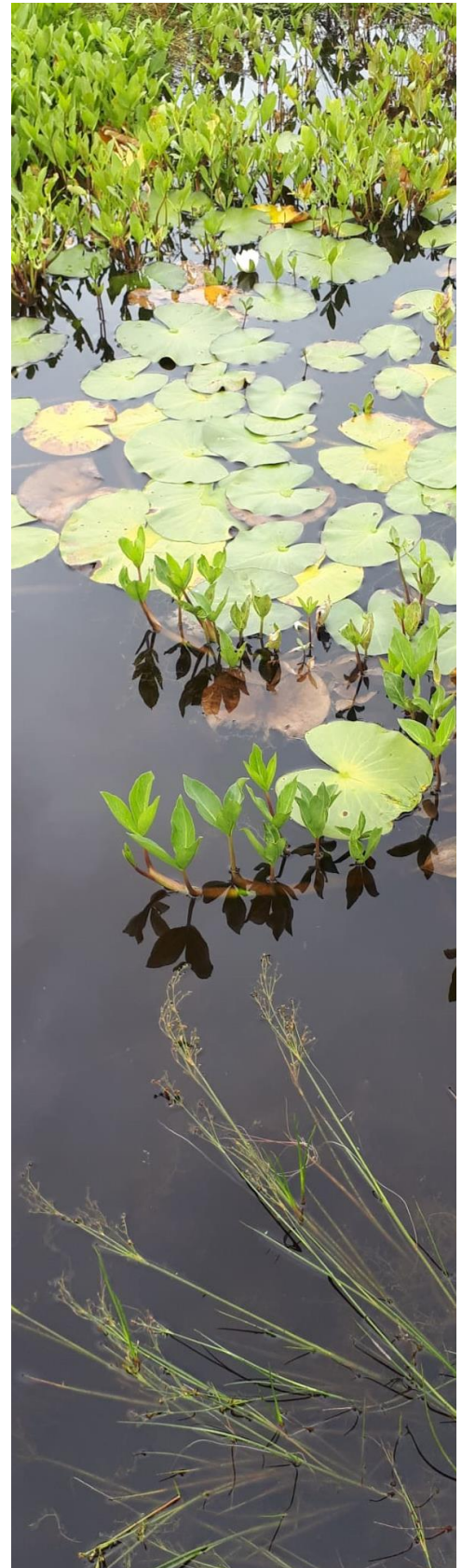
Most of Ireland's terrestrial lands are farmed to some extent or other, from intensively managed arable lands to extensively farmed pastoral systems. Intensification, expansion, mechanisation and specialisation of agriculture has resulted in habitat loss. Between the years 1970 and 2000, it has been estimated that approximately 23% of species diversity once associated with European farmland has been lost. Biodiversity on farms has been displaced through activities such as land drainage, reclamation, specialisation and overgrazing, and now species poor habitats prevail including improved grasslands, drained wetlands and tillage areas.

Project Aims

The Hare's Corner is an initiative to help landowners make more space for nature on their lands through habitat creation such as mini woodlands, mini orchards, or ponds, or to devise a 'plan for nature'.

Project Plan

Participation in The Hare's Corner involves no cost to the landowner, and paperwork is minimal. All trees, materials and contractors used will be locally sourced, helping to boost the local economy, while responding to the biodiversity and climate crises.



Project Stages

- Landowner expresses interest in taking part via an online application
- Landowner ensures site being proposed is suitable and commits to the criteria set out in each conservation measure
- Applicant selects one of the four biodiversity measures pond, mini orchard, mini woodland or a plan for nature
- Hare's Corner Team assesses site suitability and eligibility
- Hare's Corner Team organises training, guidance, micro-funding (e.g. machinery costs for pond digging), professional services (e.g. hydrologist, ecologist), materials (e.g. trees) as appropriate to the measure involved.
- Applicant gives assurance that this site will be maintained for the next 3 years and to keep the Hare's Corner Team posted on the sites progress.
- Priority and preference is to be given to landowners not currently part of or in receipt of agricultural environmental grants. Preference is also given to applicants who represent a community space (e.g. community gardens, schools).

Who is involved?

The Hare's Corner is a biodiversity initiative coordinated by the Co. Clare-based landscape charity, Burrenbeo Trust. Originally launched in 2021 as a pilot project in Co. Clare and funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) through the European Innovation Partnerships Initiative (EIP) by the EU Recovery Instrument Funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022, it involved Clare County Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Funding is now from a combination of private and public sector. In Mayo, the Burrenbeo Trust is linking up with LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage via the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The funders for the 2023 roll-out in Mayo include the NTR Foundation and Lifes2Good Foundation.

Project Summary

Pranjali Bhave, Project co-ordinator at the Burrenbeo Trust commented:

"The Hare's Corner is designed to be a simple, hassle-free way to support landowners in responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis we find ourselves in. The level of interest we have seen in this initiative gives us great hope on what can be achieved by people on the ground with just a small amount of support. The impact of the project so far – in terms of benefits to nature and the well-being of people across Clare who have benefited – has been amazing."

Malcolm Noonan, Minister of State Minister for Heritage & Electoral Reform at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage stated:

"The Hare's Corner shows that all of us can do something for nature and the climate. Many people are confused as to what they can or should do, and how to do it, and The Hare's Corner meets this need by providing the encouragement, advice and micro-funding to enable people to do their bit. These small measures can make a real difference for nature – but also for our own wellbeing."

Useful Links

See website for more information: <https://burrenbeo.com/thc/>



WILD ATLANTIC
NATURE LIFE



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

See our website for more case studies: <https://www.naturacommunities.ie/>