



Restoring Active Blanket
**Restoring Active Blanket
Bog In Ireland**

A nature conservation project jointly funded by the European Union DG-Environment and Coillte under the EU Life-Nature programme.

Coillte cordially invites

to the launch of the project by

**Mr. Joe Walsh TD
Minister for Agriculture and Food**

On: Thursday 3rd June, 2004 at 3.00pm

At: Eskeragh Bog, Crossmolina, Co. Mayo,

Assemble at Crossmolina GAA Grounds at 2.15 pm
(See Car Parking Note enclosed)

Refreshments will be served after the launch at Hiney's in Crossmolina.

RSVP before 2nd June, 2004

Tel: Lorna/Caroline (071) 9162663

Email: caroline.white@coillte.ie or lorna.d.fahey@coillte.ie

Press Release

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3rd June 2004

Minister Joe Walsh launches Bog Life

Mr. Joe Walsh, Minister for Agriculture and Food, today launched Ireland's largest bog restoration project at Eskeragh, Co. Mayo. Coillte have been working on this €4.2 million restoration project since 2002, restoring 14 bogland sites, most of which are located in the West of Ireland. Speaking at the launch, Minister Joe Walsh said "Coillte's Life-Nature Project is the first of its kind in Ireland to be run by a key Natura 2000 land-owner and stakeholder. The demonstration site at Eskeragh will provide a focus for raising public awareness of the major habitat restoration project being carried out by Coillte on over 1,200 hectares of blanket bog mainly along the western seaboard".

Bogs or peatlands are rich and diverse wetlands that represent a valuable environmental resource and Ireland's bogs are among the richest in Europe. Many of our rare and threatened species are associated with bogs, including merlin, otter, red grouse, dragonfly, and mosses and lichens. As wetlands that accumulate peat over thousands of years, intact bogs also have a very important role to play in reducing global warming, because they act as a carbon store.

Bogs originally covered vast areas of Ireland and, over the years, these bogs provide important sources of fuel and employment for local communities. In the 1970's and 1980's, forestry plantations were established on many bogs, with a view to deriving further income from these areas. The result of all of these landuse activities is that most of our bogs have been hugely altered by drainage (i.e. drying out), peat removal and/or forest growth. They are no longer the wetland habitats they once were. Today, it is increasingly recognised that any remaining bogs – especially those that have not dried out – have very high environmental value and should be conserved as wetlands. Furthermore, some of the areas that were planted with forest have not dried out and should be restored to their original condition as wetland habitats. Coillte has identified over 1,200 hectares of its properties lie on peatlands that have the potential to be restored. [Coillte consulted with National Parks and Wildlife on the selection of suitable sites for restoration.] The restoration work carried out under this project includes: blocking drains to re-flood the bog and recreate wetland conditions, remove planted trees and trees naturally regenerating onto the bog and fencing to exclude grazing animals.

The Site at Eskeragh is one of five demonstration sites for the project and work there is well advanced, this includes removal of the trees, drain blocking, water level monitoring and boardwalk construction for viewing the site. Many groups from the UK and Scotland have visited this site and are impressed with progress which is obvious due to the presence of characteristic bog vegetation especially bog cotton and mosses. Similar progress has been made at most of the 13 other sites, visit www.irishbogresorationproject.ie for details.

This bog restoration project is one of many initiatives that Coillte is currently undertaking as part of its Nature Conservation Programme which was initiated in 1998. Speaking at the launch, Martin Lowery, Coillte Chief Executive said "Nature Conservation is a very important part of forest and land management and Coillte is delighted to receive funding from the EU LIFE-Nature Programme to carry out this project". The Project is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU LIFE-Nature Programme and will run until 2006. The EU LIFE-Nature Programme was launched in 1991, to contribute to the implementation of EU nature protection legislation and in particular the establishment of the 'Natura 2000' networks of sites for the conservation of Europe's most remarkable flora and fauna. A European Commission spokesman said that the Commission was very pleased to be associated with a project of this type in Ireland.

Coillte is committed to the sustainable management of its forests, demonstrated by the achievement of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification which confirms that the forests are well managed. For more information log on to www.coillte.ie.

For further information, contact:

Ms. Caroline White, Public Relations, Life Project, Coillte, Cranmore Rd, Co. Sligo,
Tel: 071-9162663, Mobile: 087-7647462, email: caroline.white@coillte.ie.

Additional Information:

For more information on this project and a list of the sites, visit www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie.

Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, is a commercial forestry company operating in forestry and related businesses including forest nurseries, wood products, land based business including modular timber housing and SmartPly an OSB mill based in Waterford. Coillte owns and manages over 400,000 hectares of land. This includes in excess of 10,000 hectares of candidate SAC areas, including EU priority habitats such as blanket bog, raised bog, limestone pavement, yew woodland, alluvial woodland and bog woodland. For more information, visit Coillte's website www.coillte.ie.

The **Natura 2000** network is the cornerstone of the EC nature conservation policy. The habitats and species covered by the "Habitats" Directive (92/43/EEC) and the "Birds" Directive (79/409/EEC) are recognised as being endangered or sensitive throughout Europe. Those sites which are recognised as Sites of Community Importance are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the "Habitats" Directive or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the "Birds" Directive, and as such are then incorporated into the Natura 2000 network. The objective is to promote the conservation of biodiversity while taking into account the scientific, economic, social and cultural requirements and specific regional and local characteristics of each Member State. For more information, visit the web site of the Natura 2000 network (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/natura.htm>)

To date, approximately 149,000 hectares of blanket bog, located withing 47 sites, have been submitted by National Parks and Wildlife (formerly Duchas, The Heritage Service) to the EU as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC), in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive. The most extensive of the cSACs are located in counties Galway, Mayo, Kerry and Donegal. Coillte has undertaken this project to restore active blanket bog in the cSAC land in its ownership.

List of invitees

External Stakeholders invited to Launch - 3rd June 2004

Title	Firstname	Surname	Job Title	Org name	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4
Minister	Joe	Walsh	Minister	Agriculture & Food				
Mr	Martin	Heraghty		Agriculture & Food				
Mr	Ray	Devine	Secretary	NRGC	Castleconnor			
Mr	Denis	Strong	Region Manager	NPWS	Lagduff More	Co Sligo	Westport	Co Mayo
Mr	Cameron	Clotworthy	Ranger	NPWS	Lagduff More	Ballycroy	Westport	Co Mayo
Mr	Eoin	McGreal	Ranger	NPWS	Lagduff More	Ballycroy	Westport	Co Mayo
Mr	James	Kilroy	Ranger	NPWS	Lagduff More	Ballycroy	Westport	Co Mayo
Dr	Alan	Craig	Director	NPWS	Dept Env. Heritage & Local Gov 7 Ely Place			
Mr	Jim	Ryan	Wildlife Inspector	NPWS	Dept Env. Heritage & Local Gov 7 Ely Place	Dublin		
Mr	Jim	Kelly	Assistant Principal	NPWS	Dept Env. Heritage & Local Gov 7 Ely Place	Dublin		
Mr	Ronan	Whelan	HEO	NPWS	Dept Env. Heritage & Local Gov 7 Ely Place	Dublin		
Mr	Michael	Sweeney	Area Manager	NPWS	Raleoi, Kilmain Road	Ballinrobe	Co Mayo	
Mr	Chris	O'Grady	Principal Officer	NPWS	Dept Env. Heritage & Local Gov 7 Ely Place	Dublin		
Dr.	Noel	Kirby	Research Branch Director	NPWS	Connemara National Park Letterfrack	Co Galway		
Ms	Caitriona	Douglas		NPWS	Dept Env. Heritage & Local Gov 7 Ely Place	Dublin		
Mr	Ray	Gallagher		Western Forestry Co-op Sligo	Finiskin Industrial Estate Sligo			
Mr	Michael	Farrell			Ballinacarrow	Co Sligo		
Mr	Tony	Mannion	Chairman	Society Irish Foresters	Enterprise Centre	Ballymote	Co Sligo	
Mr	Henry	Phillips			Rathnoraigh	Ballintogher	Co Sligo	
Mr	Gerry	Lavelle	Prog. Executive	BMW Regional Assembly	The Square	Co Sligo		
Mr	Gerry	Finn	Director	BMW Regional Assembly	The Square	Ballaghaderreen	Co Roscommon	
Mr	Michael	O'Brien	Prog. Liaison Offic	BMW Regional Assembly	The Square	Ballaghaderreen	Co Roscommon	
Mr	David	Nevins	Chairman	COFORD	Agricultural Building	Ballaghaderreen	Co Roscommon	
Dr	Eugene	Hendrick	Director	COFORD	Agricultural Building	Univ. College	Beifield	Dublin 4
Mr	Joe	O'Carroll	Operations Mgr	COFORD	Agricultural Building	Univ. College	Beifield	Dublin 4
Mr	Pat	McDermott		Forestry Awards	RDS, Ballsbridge	Univ. College	Beifield	Dublin 4
Mr	John	Jackson	Chairman	IFA	Twelvickmoy, Stranorlar	Dublin 4		
Mr	Michael	Biggins	County Chairman	IFA	Ballynally, Ower	Co Donegal		
Ms	Barbara	Maguire	Executive Sec.	IFA	Farm Centre, Bluebell	Co Mayo		
Mr	Pat	Walsh	Mayo Repres.	(IFA) Farm Forestry Comm	39 Knockaphunta	Dublin 12		
Clfr.	E.	Caffrey	Councillor		Garden Street, Ballina	Castlebar	Co Mayo	
Clfr.	Brian	Golden	Councillor		Kilroe, Killala	Co Mayo		
Clfr.	Stephen	Molloy	Councillor		Scullibeen	Co Mayo		
Clfr.	Annie May	Reape	Councillor		Bridge Street, Ballina	Crossmolina	Co Mayo	

Cllr.	Eddie	Staunton	Councillor	Ballynacoy, Crossmolina	Co Mayo
Cllr.	Seamus	Weir	Councillor	Coolronan, Knockmore	Ballina, Co Mayo
Cllr.	Gerry	Coyle	Councillor	Doolough, Geesale	Ballina, Co Mayo
Cllr.	Frank	Leneghan	Councillor	Tarsaghaun, Ballycroy	Westport Co Mayo
Cllr.	Frank	Chambers	Mayor/Chairman	Main Street Newport	Co Mayo
Mr	Peter	Gill	Environmental Off	Castlebar	Co Mayo
Mr	Des	Mahon	County manager	The Mall	Co Mayo
Mr	Job	Byrne	County Engineer &	The Mall	Co Mayo
Mr	John	Carty	T.D.	East Mayo	
Mr	Gerry	Crowley	T.D.	Mulliranny,	Co Mayo
Mr	Enda	Kenny	T.D.	Derrycoosh	Co Mayo
Mr	Michael	Ring	T.D.	High Street	Co Mayo
Cllr.	Jodie	Beattie	Councillor	29 Rathmeel Lawns	Ballina, Co Mayo
Cllr.	Mark	Winters	Councillor	Clarke Road	Gurteens
Cllr.	Ray	Collins	Councillor	Killiala Road	Ballina Co Mayo
Cllr.	Mary	Kelly	Councillor	189 Greenhills Estate	Ballina Co Mayo
Mayor	Frances	McAndrew	Lady Mayor	Bohemasup	Ballina Co Mayo
Cllr.	Padraig	Moore	Councillor	Belleek	Ballina Co Mayo
Cllr.	Michelle	Mulhern	Councillor	47 Moy Heights	Ballina Co Mayo
Cllr.	Willie	Nolan	Councillor	Creggs Road	Ballina Co Mayo
Cllr.	Johnnie	O'Malley	Councillor	Church Road	Ballina Co Mayo
Ms	Orla	Fahey	Inspector	Environment Section	Ballina Co Mayo
Mr	Tom	Kavanagh	Inspector	Agriculture House	Michael Davitt H; Castlebar
Mr	John	Flanagan	Inspector	Michael Davitt House	Michael Davitt H; Castlebar
Mr	Denis	Byrne	Assistant Sec.	Leeson Lane	Francis Street Ennis
Mr	Joe	Doyle	Inspector	Johnstown Castle	Kildare Street Dublin 2
Mr	Diarmuid	McAree	Chief Forestry Insp	Leeson Lane	Castlebar Co Mayo
Mr	Mick	Prendargast	Principal Officer	Johnstown Castle	Dublin 2
Mr	John	Connelly	Senior Inspector	Leeson Lane	Wexford
Mr	Noel	Foley	Inspector	Social Welfare Bldgs	Dublin 2
Mr	Jim	Quinlivan	Divisional Inspector	Belview, Dublin Road	Oliver Plunket R; Letterkenny
Mr	Donal	Keegan	Inspector	Ross House	Mullingar Co Westmeath
Mr	Martin	Regan	Inspector	Mill Road	Merchants Road Galway
Mr	Senan	Kelly	Inspector	Government Buildings	Glenies Co Donegal
Ms	Nuala	Ni Fiatharta	Rural Dev. Centre	Athenny	Cranmore Sligo
Mr	Jim	Reidy	Rural Dev. Centre	Athenny	Co Galway
Mr	Pat	Boyle	Chief Agric Officer	Michael Davitt House	Co Galway
					Castlebar

Mr	Martin	Henry	Chief Agric Officer Dept Agriculture	Government Buildings	Cranmore	Sligo
Mr	Cyrl	Collins	Belleek Woodland Scheme	Castle Court	Ballina, Co Mayo	
Mr	Sean	Newcombe	Community Projec c/o Western People	Ballina	Co Mayo	
Ms	Susan	Fry	Hill Walking Club	Four Day Walks Office	New Antrim St	Castlebar Co Mayo
Ms	Elaíne	Devereaux	Hill Walking Club	Four Day Walks Office	New Antrim St	Castlebar Co Mayo
Mr	Mark	Garavan	Environmentalist c/o RTE	Castlebar	Co Mayo	
Ms	Fionnuala	Tynan	Breifny National School	Breifny	Castlebar	Co Mayo
Mr	Seamus	Callaghan		Carrowkillean	Crossmolina	Co Mayo
Mr	Vincent	Roche	CEO NW Regional Fisheries	Ardnaree House	Abbey Street	Ballina Co Mayo
Mr	Stephen	Neelan	Environmental Off NW Regional Fisheries	Ardnaree House	Abbey Street	Ballina Co Mayo
Dr.	Ken	Whelan	Director Marine Institute	Aquaculture & Catchment Mgr	Newport	Co Mayo
Dr.	Philip	McGinnity	Marine Institute	Aquaculture & Catchment Mgr	Newport	Co Mayo
Dr.	Russell	Poolo	Marine Institute	Aquaculture & Catchment Mgr	Newport	Co Mayo
Mr	Brendan	O'Hea	Marine Institute	Aquaculture & Catchment Mgr	Newport	Co Mayo
Mrs	Mary	Delane	Marine Institute	Aquaculture & Catchment Mgr	Newport	Co Mayo
Mr	Derek	Hambleton	An Taisce	26 Manor Avenue	Kirkstown	Co Galway
Mr	Cormac	Judge	Forest Service	Johnstown Castle Estate	Co Wexford	
Mr	Michael	McCarthy	Environment Section	Johnstown Castle Estate	Co Wexford	
Mr	John	Wilson	National Parks & Wildlife	7 Ely Place	Dublin 2	
Mr	Richard	Watson	Director Marble Arch Caves	Florencecourt,	Co Fermanagh	
Mr	Conor	Burns	Marble Arch Caves	Florencecourt,	Co Fermanagh	
Mr	Donal	Daly	Geological Survey Ireland	Beggars Bush	Haddington Rd	Dublin 4
Ms	Una	Leader	Geological Survey Ireland	Beggars Bush	Haddington Rd	Dublin 4
Dr.	Catherine	O'Connell	Irish Peatland Cons. Coun	119 Capel Street	Dublin 1	
Mr	Michael	Walsh	Teagasc	Research Centre	Atheny	Co Galway
Dr.	Eileen	McCarthy	Minerex Environmental LTI	Taney Hall, Eglinton Terrace	Dundrum	Dublin 4
Mr	Lorcan	O'Toole	Irish Raptor Study Group	Carrowtrasna	Churchill	Co Donegal
Mr	Oran	O'Sullivan	Birdwatch Ireland	Rutledge House	8 Longford Place	Monkstown Co Dublin
Mr	Martin	Heneghan	The Graduate	"Asheville", Breaffy	Castlebar	Co Mayo
Dr.	Seamus	Caulfield	Peatland Expert	28 Henley Park	Churchtown	Dublin 14
Mr	Sean	Cosgrove	Eco-Forestry	Corr na Mona	Co Galway	
Dr.	Declan	Little	School of Engineering	Galway Mayo IT	Dublin Rd	Galway
Mr	Michael	Viney	Tree Council of Ireland	Tullaghbawn	Louisburg	Westport Co Mayo
Mr	John	McLoughlin	Chief Executive O Irish Wildlife Trust	Cabinteely House	The Park	Cabinteely Dublin 18
Mr	Russell	Anderson		Garden Level	21 Northumberland	Dublin 4

Mr	Kieran	McLoughlin
Mr	Frank	Flanagan
Mr	John G	Ryan
Mr	Tom	Ryan
Mr	Ciaran	McGill
Mr	Noel	Cassidy
Mr	Ciaran	Doyle
Mr	Sean	McGuinness
Ms	Sarah	Standish
Mr	Barry	Lambe
Mr	Joseph	Fenton
Mr	John K	Kelly
Mr	Sean	Carney
Mr	Martin	Lodge
Mr	Frank	Drea
Mr	Patrick	Drea
Mr	Jimmy	Martin
Mr	Jackie	Regan
Mr	Frank	Murphy
Mr	Michael	Donnellan
Mr	Philip	O'Reilly

Ministers Speech

CELEBRATORY LAUNCH OF A MAJOR HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT: "RESTORING ACTIVE BLANKET BOG IN IRELAND"

Jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the LIFE-Nature Programme

I am very pleased to be here today to perform the celebratory launch of this major habitat restoration project jointly funded by Coillte and the EU LIFE-Nature Programme for the promotion of nature conservation. The project "Restoring Active Blanket Bog in Ireland" is focused on the restoration/conservation of over 1,200 hectares of blanket bog in Coillte's ownership mainly along the western seaboard.

The peatlands in the West of Ireland are among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog to be found in Europe. Along with the bogs of the Flow Country and the Isle of Lewis in Scotland, these form the heartland of the world's blanket mire resource. Since 1997 more than 135,000 ha of active blanket bog, located mainly in the Atlantic seaboard counties of Ireland, have been proposed for inclusion in the EU's Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

This strategic project, which began in July 2002 and will end in June 2006, is the first of its kind in Ireland to be run by a key Natura 2000 land-owner and stakeholder. As such, it reflects great credit on those in Coillte who seized the opportunity to prepare the funding application and steer it through a very demanding and competitive evaluation process towards eventual approval by the European Commission in July 2002. Using its own land, Coillte is carrying out an extensive restoration programme on 14 sites involving over 1,200 ha. Actions include fencing to gain control of grazing on open bog areas, drain blocking to restore the integrity of the bogs' hydrological systems, cutting down of mostly uneconomic forest plantations on 500 ha of bog that is still capable of natural regeneration and the removal of naturally regenerated trees.

Major operational work to date includes:

- Removal of over 300 hectares of conifer trees
- Blocking drains on 269 hectares of bogland
- Fencing of 279 hectares and
- Removal of 134 hectares of natural regeneration

Major work under the communication actions include, distribution of project brochures, construction of project website, networking with groups from the UK and Scotland on other LIFE project's and a number of managers training courses on bogland background, flora, fauna and restoration techniques.

It is important here to thank the project manager, his project team and the project management group to date in progressing this very valuable work.

These actions will help to create the right conditions for natural bog regeneration. Special emphasis is given to sites in County Mayo where the full range of bog types occur from lowland to mountain blanket bog. Five sites have been selected as demonstration sites where there will be a focus on public awareness through demonstration days, interpretation and boardwalk access. A fine example of a demonstration site is Eskeragh where we stand today – with its safe off-road parking facility for visitors and this excellent boardwalk enabling visitors to see up close the project actions while ensuring their own safety and protecting the bog surface. I would like to thank the local Site Manager – Mr. Joe McEvey and his team for their work here.

This habitat restoration project will build on draft conservation management plans for the project sites, the development of which by National Parks and Wildlife (formerly Dúchas The Heritage Service) was previously supported by EU LIFE funding. The project is being managed by Coillte with various actions sub-contracted as necessary; Coillte is being assisted by a project advisory panel including peatland experts from National Parks and Wildlife and the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (the leading Irish NGO dedicated to bog conservation). The project is also being supported by the experience of LIFE-Nature blanket bog restoration projects in the United Kingdom. To all of these experts, I am sure Coillte will join with me today in saying a heartfelt thanks for their help with an excellent project well on its way to completion.

As part of Coillte's commitment to sustainable forest management, it was awarded the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) Certificate for well managed forests, in which context the company has committed, over time, to set aside 15% of its land holding to be managed for biodiversity. This LIFE-Nature project complements this policy by facilitating habitat restoration on 14 environmentally sensitive afforested bog areas. The overall aim of the project is to demonstrate that the restoration of suitable active blanket bog sites is one of the real management options on appropriate afforested peatlands.

I commend Coillte for taking this opportunity to work with Government, the NGO sector and the EU in continuing its policy of sustainable forest management. I am pleased to hear that they have also applied for funding for the restoration of Raised Bogs and understand that this proposal is at an advanced stage in the approval process.

Appendix 12.5 – Left to Right, after blocking a drain

Martin Lowery (Coillte Chief Executive), Brendan McKenna (Coillte Board Chairman) and Minister Joe Walsh TD who officiated at the project launch at site no. 7 – Eskeragh, Crossmolina, Co. Mayo.



Include photo. of group
at launch