



A Celebration of Active Conservation Volunteering
Working for Wellbeing of People and Place

Corofin, Co.Clare
12-13th August, 2016

General Report

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INTRODUCTION

Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteers (BCVs) (who were established in 2010) firmly believe in community led conservation practices – educating local people about their environment, while also connecting with others and sharing the work load. Building strong teams and pride in place works towards sustaining a strong community culture which represents humans and nature working together in harmony. There are so many fantastic examples of how this taking place all over the country and across Europe. Working together - making our areas better places to live and ensuring they remain for future generations is hugely important, while at the same time, extremely rewarding for the individuals involved. That is why, this year we hosted a national celebration of active conservation volunteering entitled ‘**Working for Wellbeing of People and Place**’, which took place on the 12th and 13th August, in Corofin Co. Clare. The event was attended by almost 90 delegates and endeavoured to showcase the impact volunteering can have both on the ground and on a personal level – while also provide invaluable discussions on how we can mobilise these community initiatives further, through learning from experts in the field. Prior to the event, the following list of aims were drafted:

- To engage people in conservation volunteering practices
- To learn and share knowledge with other groups and individuals
- To foster links with local experts, groups and institutions
- To highlight the health benefits of volunteering
- To identify new and progressive ideas around conservation
- To have a fun, inclusive event in the Burren focused on conservation

Through advertising and promotion locally and nationally, there has been some very positive publicity and response to this unique event. Through hard work and passion for conservation volunteering - hope that over the course of the event and leading on from the event, the aims and objectives have been achieved. While it is hoped it has provided the opportunity for all our delegates to be encouraged to continue building strong teams, networks and support in the conservation volunteering arena, now and into the future.

Friday Evening

The event was launched on the Friday evening with a welcoming reception, which saw 20 organisations from all over Ireland (working in areas relevant to the event) showcase their work and network with each other. It was officially opened by Burrenbeo Trust's BCV Coordinator, Kate Lavender. Proceeding Kate were keynote addresses from Duncan Stewart (Eco Eye & Chairman of Green Foundation Ireland) and Stuart Brooks (CEO of John Muir Trust & chairman of the IUCN), which were chaired by Dr Brendan Dunford. This event endeavoured to encapsulate everything that's exciting about conservation volunteering! It sought to give people the chance to learn about various conservation groups, hear from experts in health and wellbeing, food sovereignty campaigning, conservation practices, while also experience active conservation fieldtrips out in the beautiful Burren and much, much more. Over the two days, each session highlighted the poignant and valuable impact connecting with nature can have – while it also encouraged participants to share ideas and their passion with one another. Speakers and facilitators straddled the food, environment, nature, health, wellbeing, conservation and community arena, demonstrating how these concepts all are so deeply interlinked.

Key Points: Duncan Stewart

1. Climate change is effecting us all and our environments, there is a need for more bottom up approaches to conservation and action locally in order to preserve environments and habitats for future generations.
2. 55 million years ago was the last time there was a similar rate of extinction of birds. Our counts of native species are down 40% since 1950, with only 150 breeding pairs of curlews left. Their survival is heavily dependent on functioning eco systems and appropriate services.
3. There is a desperate need for action and it has to come from the people on the ground – we cannot depend on policy to change our environments.
4. Communities need to take ownership. Local businesses whom depend on tourism need to come together and support initiatives locally – place the money back into their local areas – invest in their environments and their people. Projects are crippled by the lack of funding, this could potentially be a solution to this problem.
5. The challenges we face today can be addressed if we focus more on 'Place-based learning' and engage communities and people with the landscapes and communities



in which they are embedded – generating pride of place and a more resilient and sustainable future.

6. We can become misled by the neoliberal economic model which forgets about the real life needs at a local level.
7. We shouldn't just talk – we should be excited to get out there and get doing – becoming conservation volunteers or supporting our communities in other ways.
8. We can achieve great things if we take opportunities like this conference to come together, network and spark relationships which evoke change.
9. We need to build resilience in our communities to face the shocks that are potentially coming down the line. We need to strive towards more sustainable energy resources and means – much like our European neighbours.

Key Points: Stuart Brooks

1. There are huge benefits associated with connecting with nature, with numerous case studies and evidence to back this up.
2. John Muir Trust was first established 34 years ago and had only 4 people working for it. It is a conservation charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing wild places across the UK.
3. These 'wild' places which it protects are aesthetically and biodiversity protected, in a way in which people play a key role in their conservation.
4. People are instilled as 'guardians' of places to some scale.
5. The Trust survives through partnerships and as a land owning trust, enabling communities to be a part of the success story.
6. Scottish national party have a clear vision for enabling communities to buy land and take ownership of their landscapes, thus the national policy framework perpetuates their rights and responsibilities as land owners. This is the long term objective for conservation. Collective understanding of communities makes this more sustainable.
7. Heritage lottery fund – works to marry national heritage objectives with cultural heritage objectives.
8. Why do people volunteer or bring their work teams to these landscapes? What is their motivation? There is much research to support this, but many argue that there is a spiritual connection to a particular place; the wellbeing benefits affecting physical and mental health are being increasingly recognised; while also people feel connecting with nature provides a sense of purpose/cause.
9. John Muir Award – 35,000 young people are connecting with nature as a result. There is a need to engage with people in the wild places where they are. Nature can be perceived as the fountain of life. You can find it in most places – feeling, connecting, experiencing. Once we engage with positive experiences of nature like this, only then can we truly begin to value it and feel a need to protect it. That is why this award works off four levels of engagement: discovery, exploration, conservation and sharing. It has been advocated that connecting with nature and wild places in this



manner can change people’s lives to view things differently for the greater good – providing a sense of scale and appreciation.

10. The benefits of nature are really inspiring in this context. Conservation volunteers build the infrastructure; younger generations are provided with an opportunity to broaden their horizons; the conservation sector begins to look outside the box and focus energy at a local level. Despite nature being the centre focus, the people component is hugely significant in these success stories as well.
11. How do we scale up the individual benefits? Perhaps through generating strong community values - empowering locals and providing a sense of ownership. Education is also hugely important, that is why this type of volunteering is so unique and rewarding on so many levels.
12. We should all take a look at the Gross National Happiness Index – in understanding the value, need for and importance of this type of volunteering for landscapes, but also volunteers, we need to understand that the benefits it can have are not associated with making money. They are all about the core value of connecting with nature and communities – which for us as individuals has a far greater value overall.

Saturday Morning Talks

On Saturday morning, three blocks of talks occurred at the same time (nine talks in total) and were divided by theme. Below is the list of themes and the speakers along with coordinators for each. These talks were designed to provide us with a wide and varied discussion on really poignant, relevant and much needed conversations in the conservation volunteer arena. They focused on the importance of community; the benefits for the volunteer; and the importance of the volunteer for conservation.

Session	Speakers	Coordinators
1. Volunteering and Community	Kate Lavender; Fergal Anderson and Manu Russo; Susan Vickers	Kate Lavender and Ritchie Jones
2. Nature: Wellbeing of People and Place	Valentine Seymour; John Duncan (GP); David Staunton	Brigid Barry and Grainne Barron
3. Creating Experts on the Ground	Ruth Hanniffy; John Murphy; Sophie Price	Eileen O’Connor and Anne Mullen

Some key discussion points from the talks are outlined below. These points were kindly recorded by coordinators in each session.

Block one: Volunteering and Community

Speaker 1: Kate Lavender (Burrenbeo Trust)

1. This presentation covered how the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers was set up, how they run and the projects that they carry out.

2. The importance of recognising achievements when conservation volunteering was highlighted as well as some of the challenges faced by the BCV group.

Speaker 2: Fergal Anderson and Emanuela Russo (Leaf and Root)

1. The concept of food sovereignty was discussed and how people today have moved away from eating local produce and recognising the true value of the food that they eat.
2. Their model of a community volunteering for a local farmer, paying a fair price for the food produced and eating seasonally was described and how this should be the way forward with producing food.

Speaker 3: Susan Vickers (Clean Coasts)

1. The talk covered all the different initiatives set up by Clean Coasts to engage local communities in caring for their shoreline.
2. It also raised the importance of education particularly with regards to how to dispose of waste correctly to stop it from ending up in the sea and eventually on our beaches.

Block two: Nature: Wellbeing of People and Place

Speaker 1: Valentine Seymour (University College London)

Key Points

1. Human nature relationships have a benefit to health, in particular in relation to volunteering and citizen science.
2. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) established in the UK in 1959, and works with people, helping them to discover, improve and enjoy their local natural environments and in so doing, helping to create connected communities. Of particular success is TCVs “Green Gym” program (currently 600 in UK) which aims to improve people’s health and wellbeing whilst creating green spaces for communities to enjoy, through active conservation.
3. Valentines project looks to analyze of the impact this volunteering has on the TCV volunteers, with regard to their willingness to undertake further volunteering, and whether volunteering impacts or improves their relationship with both nature and their communities.
4. Valentine ultimately wishes to use this information to help develop a framework/tool that is adaptable to the volunteers, and not the other way around.
5. Data from the TCV database shows over 90% of people only attend a single session, yet there is value in measuring these attendees also.
6. The Green Gym structure is important and consistent with sessions usually lasting 3hrs and consisting of a warm up, gentle exercise or labour, a tea break which is very

important for the social interaction element of the sessions and then a second labour session.

Speaker 2: John Duncan (GP)

Key Points

1. There is clear and undisputed medical evidence that sedentary behavior has negative health consequences including increased risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, obesity and mental health problems.
2. Both the HSE and the NHS already routinely endorse exercise through programs such as the GP Exercise Referral Programme.
3. Furthermore social interaction is increasingly seen as key to thriving, as isolation is linked to heart disease and premature death particularly among men – The Men’s Shed movement has been fantastically successful at tackling male isolation.
4. Green exercise has been studied over the past six years and though studies are small scale, they have indicated that there is increased participation in overall exercise levels after exercise, the studies also appear to show that green exercise is perceived as easier than normal exercise.
5. However the scale limitations to this research mean that within the medical world, the qualitative evidence (*i.e.* people’s feelings of increased wellbeing) is not enough to be definitive about the medical results, it is somewhat difficult to fund and undertake quantitative studies on the possible positive side effects of green exercise and conservation volunteering.
6. However it can be inferred that community engagement and a move away from sedentary lifestyles will have positive physical and mental health side effects and due to this logic, green exercise is gaining traction within the medical world, despite the lack of long-term studies.
7. Does the exposure/length of time spent in nature have an impact on the benefits gained – difficult to define giving the above mentioned constraints.
8. Does the act of volunteering give more benefit than just the idea of being in nature: Conservation volunteering is a complex therapy and the social interaction element may be key?

Speaker 3: David Staunton (Walk Inniú)

Key Points

1. Nature helps us to self-regulate, re-wilding and reconnecting to nature can be a powerful tool in counseling/psycho-therapy, particularly in nature deprived areas such as inner-city Dublin.

2. This form of eco-therapy where patients use the outdoor spaces to explore and find or make sense of their feelings adds an extra element to traditional psycho-therapy.
3. David believes that care for our natural world is the highest form of self-care we can practice/provide for ourselves and that ultimately nature will give us the resilience to face any adverse situation and heal.
4. There are a few other practices setting up with similar ideals as the idea gains traction, therapy can be both individual and group based.
5. One of the reasons eco-therapy might be so successful is that as the therapist and patient walk and talk, they are largely standing shoulder to shoulder rather than face to face, they may be less intimidating for a patient and may offer the patient an opportunity to be more open, perhaps also trust is built more effectively outdoors?

Block three: Creating Experts on the Ground

Speaker 1: Ruth Hanniffy (The Vincent Wildlife Trust)

Key points:

1. Volunteers have a key role to play in contributing to and undertaking projects. In VWT there are only 2 staff members but due to significant input from volunteers including the BCVs they have successfully completed several key projects.
2. They carry out habitat maintenance at important roosting sites for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. Not only can volunteers help with clearing overgrowth and upkeep of buildings, but they can also attend to assist with emergence counts.
3. The Pine Martin population assessment was completed with the help of volunteers. DNA analysis from hair samples collected by volunteers and staff allow for identification of numbers of individuals but also genotype mapping.
4. The third large project that relied heavily on volunteer input was assessing the Irish Stoat population
5. Benefits of volunteering mentioned- you get up close with some of Ireland's rare species and family members attending can result in a shared experience that last.

Speaker 2: John Murphy (Birdwatch Ireland)

Key Points:

1. Birdwatch Ireland Clare Branch was established in 1990 to cater for large number of Clare members.
2. Monthly outings are free to attend and everyone is encouraged to come along anytime.
3. There is a website and blog - murfswildlife.blogspot.com for more details.
4. There are many projects to get involved in but especially in recording sightings of several endangered species.
5. Members can attend weekend training events.
6. Birdwatch Ireland depend on the general public for sightings and tracking of birds and are heavily involved in working with communities – educating them about species and creating citizen scientists on the ground.

Speaker 3: Sophie Price (Leave no Trace)

Key points:

1. For the Leave No Trace ethos to work – education is key and forms a vital component of the working strategy that the project runs off.
2. All guidelines are backed up by research and are science based.
3. This project acknowledges the need to build good partnerships with other organisations to spread the ‘leave no trace’ message further.
4. There are various ways to get involved, either as an individual or as a business.
5. There are any projects in progress i.e. the Imprint Project. This is a European project with focus on leaving a positive footprint and evokes the message – ‘Think globally, Act locally, Change Individually’.
6. Leave no Trace is active in the Burren – in partnership with Geopark, working on developing messages for tourists.

Discussion points

1. Education is critical.
2. All projects feeding into scientific knowledge base in some way – link to citizen science aspect of volunteering.
3. Work of volunteers greatly appreciated and acknowledgement that many projects rely heavily on volunteers.

Conversations around Conservation

After the talk sessions, a ‘world café’ style workshop was held in the main hall. This session was facilitated by Mary Hawkes Greene. During registration and prior to attending the conference, delegates were asked to submit what they felt was the most common ‘challenges’ of conservation volunteering. These challenges were then grouped and coded by theme. From these, 7 themes were identified and thus 7 tables were set up to correspond with each theme. Delegates were invited to sit at a table which they found related most to them and discuss possible solutions to the proposed challenges at had with their peers. They then had to feed back their discussions to everyone in the hall.



The themes were:

- Fundraising and Finance
- Organising ourselves better
- Building and sharing a knowledge base
- Enthusing and sustaining volunteers
- Promoting out work to others and generating engagement
- Influencing government and key agencies
- A farmer’s perspective on conservation volunteering.



Results

Finance and Fundraising

- Collaborative working: working with similar organisations to access bigger funding – such as universities etc. Try advocate to work on more citizen science projects and get the involved in the bigger picture. This will not only provide a platform for your group, but it will make potential funders more aware of you and your work also. Community university relationships need to be enhanced hugely – there may be potential for larger research grants etc in the future.
- Accessing corporate responsibility: Engage large corporate bodies in your work. Provide opportunities for them to volunteer and conduct ‘team building’ exercises. Try generate a role of responsibility on their behalf. Try get them to sponsor an intern if not willing to volunteer.
- Volunteer worth: It is important to have a value on your volunteers. This can aid fundraising – once it is displayed how much each volunteer is contributing to savings on a large scale. TCVs in the UK value their volunteers at £50 a day.

Organising yourselves better

- **Defined roles:** There is a need to have enough core members to ensure there is a shared burden of the workload, however there needs to be an emphasis placed on identifying roles and responsibility within this groups in order to achieve goals.
- **Consistency:** Keep activities and events as consistent as possible i.e. have an event on the same day each month (1st Sunday of the month etc), over time people will know about it and will schedule it into their diaries. It provides a seamless model for organising volunteers which does not rely on endless administration.
- **Information:** Ensure that you have enough details about your group or a particular event. Sending the right message to people and providing them with correct information from the onset is vital. You cannot assume that people know or understand what you are doing or what you are aiming to achieve. If coordinating an event – people must have up to date information, be notified if there are any changes etc. Email and social media are an efficient way of doing this, however a free text alert works well also. ‘Reminder: Conservation volunteering event on this weekend (with details)’ etc.

Building and sharing knowledge

- **Events:** Pop up information, walks, talks, stands at festivals, hosting workshops – these are all wonderful ways of disseminating information, while also not necessarily costing a lot of money do so. Community talks – giving something back, while also getting your message out there is another fantastic method.
- **Social Media:** as well as your (minimum) weekly updates, you should be striving to have media content building – for example, videos and podcasts uploaded. Build content and provide people with the information you are aiming to spread. You cannot assume that people will read a large blurb, but they may be more willing to watch a 5 min video. It’s more engaging and exciting, while also selling your message more clearly.
- **Working with Experts:** information and knowledge being shared has to be informative and trusted by people. Providing a platform where information disseminated is from ‘experts’ in the field gives it much more sustenance. Try use experts to fill in the gaps in your area – information like this can be provided in a practical ‘learn by doing’ manner or by providing helpful online resources etc.

Enthusing and sustaining volunteers

- **Plan Yearly:** Build a calendar which is easy to access and people get to know about. Aim to have regular and rolling events. Build a database of photographs and short videos etc which give you an idea about what you are doing. Within this have a good range of projects for people to engage with. Have annual events to celebrate the groups and thank them for all their hard work, while also showcase all they have done throughout the year. Within your group, make sure the volunteers know your clear objective and aims. Actively ask for ‘volunteer commitment’.
- **Leadership:** Train the trainers – this keeps things up to date and interesting for everyone involved. Provide opportunities for older volunteers to lead. Make sure you have good leadership which is not conflicting in messages and communication. Always encourage anonymous and honest feedback.

- Build an ethos of volunteers: Intrinsic connection to give for the environment; you are reaching the mainstream; caring for the environment is the greatest form of self-care etc.

Promotion and engagement:

- Identify your audience: Make sure that you have a clear indication of who your target audience are and what you want to get from them. Narrowing this down can help you focus more strategically on actively getting them involved and interested in what your group or organisation is doing. Although it may be a daunting task – it is hugely important to do.
- Interactive and enjoyable: Try to keep all communication and encounters with individuals or groups as interactive and energetic as possible – this not school, people are not there because they have to be there, they are there because they want to be there. There is a need to keep them feeling that this time is well spent and rewarding.
- Giving back to volunteers: Always ensure that you are giving your volunteers something back. A cup of tea, a thank you – this is all crucial. It doesn't have to be a lot, just significant enough for them to want to give their time again in the future.

Government and Policy:

- Educate local Stakeholders: Politicians, IFA/farmers, civil servants/ agencies – tell them about what you are doing, why you feel there is a need and what value it will have at a local and national level. Get them to interact with your idea and make them see why you think it is so important.
- Networking: Bring volunteer agencies together and make them aware of public participation networks /other forums which is there to help. There is a strong need to build awareness around the environmental pillar of society.
- Experts: Have experts involved and on board to support your work and give it good grounding and strength. Use examples of good practice to demonstrate positive outcomes.

Farmers Perspective on Conservation Volunteering

- The experience: You have to create an experience for people to want to join you and volunteer. It is not enough to tell people that it is a worthwhile exercise – they need to enjoy it. Routine: Always ensure that there is a solid routine in place that your volunteers are familiar with. It is important to be consistent – this way you are far more likely to have people just attend if they have a bit of spare time unknowingly.
- Good food and have fun: Moyhill community garden provide yoga and give volunteers vegetables to take home. The farmers believed that it is essential to reward volunteers for all their hard work – they must feel like they are getting something back as well as giving. It is a payment in kind.

Fieldtrips

On Saturday afternoon, four active conservation fieldtrips took place out in the Burren. These were divided to complement overall themes of the programme and to correspond with the BCV's projects. During this time, there was also an option to assist with the preparation of food in the kitchen for the community feast.

Fieldtrip	Location	Leader	Coordinator
Responsible Tourism and Managing Impacts	Ballyreen	Mary Howard	Kate Lavender
Stone Walls and Beyond	Cooloorta	Rory O'Shaughnessy	Anne Mullen
Butterfly Monitoring	National Park	Eileen O'Connor	Ruth Hollingsworth
Measuring the Past	National Park	Clodagh and Michael Lynch	Ritchie Jones

Responsible Tourism and Managing Impacts

Leader: Mary Howard (Burren Guided Walks)

The Burren is a unique and spectacular landscape which is located in one of Ireland's most idyllic settings. Tourism is one of the largest industries in the Burren, but there is a need to promote more responsible tourism. Identified as one of the highlights along the 'Wild Atlantic Way', this can have some serious consequences for the conservation of the area. With heavy passing traffic, a lack of facilities and amenities in some of the key 'photographic' hotspots - areas of the Burren are being heavily impacted upon. This fieldtrip aimed to identify some of the key needs for more resources, while also examined the role and responsibility of the tourist, identifying the 'what not to do' when visiting this unique space so that it can continue to be enjoyed by future generations to come.



Stone Walls and Beyond

Leader: Rory O'Shaughnessy (Archaeologist and Stone Mason)



As we well know, the Burren is renowned for its magnificent limestone pavements and rich heritage in which the iconic dry stone walls are embedded throughout. These walls are a constant reminder of the unique and historically important built landscape which surrounds us and gives us the Burren its unique identity. Dry stone walls are constructed using an ancient building technique, which is unique to the geography of their origin – a skill which is still being used and practiced today in the Burren. They are built from carefully positioned interlocking stones placed on top of each other and do not use any adhesive building materials such as mortar to support them, hence the name -

‘dry stone walls’. Pressure from the stones at the top and the way in which the stones are interlocked ensures the self-supporting stability of the wall.

Everywhere you look there are dry stone walls in the Burren but each one is different depending on its function, the local stone available and most importantly the craftsmanship of the person building it; leaving signatures of many generations before us strewn across the landscape. This magnificent craft has withstood the test of time for hundreds of years, however sadly some of these walls have fallen into disrepair in recent times - running the risk of pieces of Burren history being lost forever. There are numerous reasons for this i.e. livestock damage, feral goats, increased tourism, age, aging communities and diminishing rural population among other factors. In order to maintain this hugely significant part of the Burren’s identity – it is important to be active with our conservation efforts. This fieldtrip provided delegates with the opportunity to learn the skill and craftsmanship of dry stone walling.

Butterfly Monitoring

Leader: Eileen O’Connor (Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteer)

There can be nothing lovelier than a walk in the summer sunshine watching the butterflies pass from flower to flower, but did you know that butterflies are far more important than you may have realised? Not only do they play a vital role in pollinating our flowers and are an essential part of the food chain, the study of them can also provide data used to monitor climate change.

34 different species of butterfly were found in Ireland (resident and migratory), and these are increasingly under threat from environmental change from our ever increasing population and changes to land use, and changes in our climate. Of these 34 species in Ireland, one is now extinct, six are threatened with extinction and another five species are now of ‘Near Threatened’ status. In addition to this, other data has shown that since 1990 we have lost 30% of our grassland butterfly populations. All of us can help to add to the data being collected about Irish butterflies and this fieldtrip showed delegates what exactly to look out for.



Measuring the Past

Leaders: Clodagh and Michael Lynch (Archaeologists)

Much of the Burren holds an unknown amount of unrecorded forts, mound walls, wedge tombs etc. many of which are not being protected and are being damaged in some cases due to lack of awareness and are becoming overgrown with hazel scrub. In order to work towards conserving the archaeology of the Burren, over the last few year the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers have been working with the Field Monument Advisor, Michael Lynch and his

archaeologist wife, Clodagh. This exciting fieldtrip brought delegates to a site in which had not yet been excavated and gave people the opportunity to learn more about the it, but also experience the work of an archaeologist for an afternoon.

Community Feast

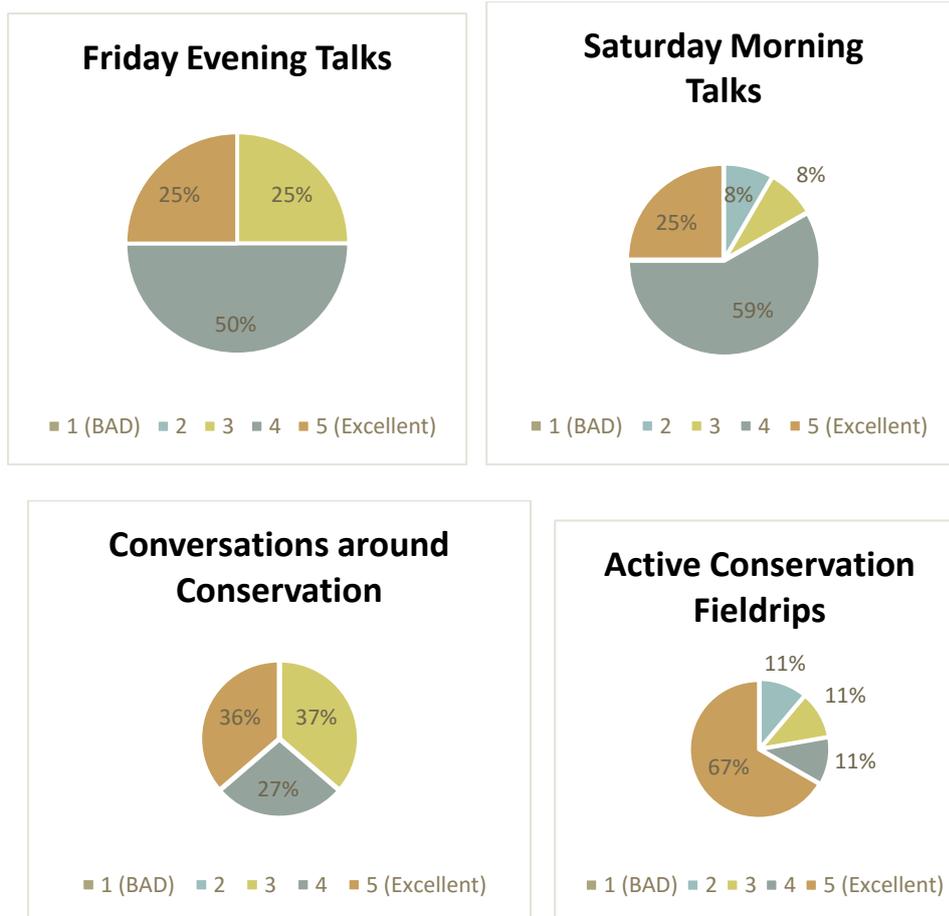
To close the event there was a spectacular community feast of which 95% of the produce was sourced locally and generously donated by delegates. This beautiful produce was prepared by William McIlhinney (Wild Strands) and was shared with 67 people. William and the wonderful team of volunteers (including his daughter Niamh and friend Rose) worked tirelessly all day to prepare for the grand finale and really pulled off a delicious and momentous treat for everyone. The idea of this

feast was to bring people together, build friendships and share with one another. It provided an ample opportunity to reflect on the event and build relationships with other organisations and community groups further. For many, this was one of the highlights of the event. It was a great way to celebrate active conservation volunteering and reward people for all their hard work on their fieldtrips. It aimed to use food as a metaphor for building a strong community culture, which relies heavily on hard work but with huge rewards, much like conservation volunteering.



FEEDBACK

In an online survey, participants were asked to give feedback on the event. They rated each part of the event from 1-5. Here are some of the results to date:



COMMENTS

1. *Thank you for your warm and positive feedback. I can honestly say it was a real pleasure to be part of an event which has both inspired and motivated me. I would also like thank you, your team and all the volunteers who made this event so special for me to be to a part of. The professional approach to everything that you are doing and your warmth and welcome made a real impression on me. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and Burren Beo most sincerely for having faith in me and providing with a platform to showcase what I believe in and in what Wild Strands promotes. I hope we have the chance to work again in the future. [William McIlhinney, Community Feast Chef]*
2. *From this weekend I have been deeply moved by the enthusiasm and community spirit of all those who attended and organized the event. I have taken away with me new perspectives of people's connections to nature, both its preservation and its central place in our communities, as well as gathering solutions to universal challenges which many of those in the conservation volunteering sector can often face. I have also learnt about the importance of the 'community' in working together collaboratively to learn*

and share from each other as well as to help make a difference both locally and collectively to bring about future change. [Valentine Seymour, Speaker]

3. *This weekend was filled with insightful discussion and vital connection with both 'human and non-human nature'. Having met you all, I rest assured knowing that the Burren is fortunate in having such good human company. [David Staunton, Speaker]*
4. *Thank you to all the team of willing helpers for putting your energy into making this event such a great success for everybody, bula bos le gach duine muile buiochas [Delegate]*
5. *It was clear that a lot of hard work went into organising the event, well done – I really enjoyed it from start to finish! [Delegate]*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers and Burrenbeo Trust would to thank everyone that made this event a huge success. The speakers, facilitators, fieldtrip leaders and the numerous volunteers for offering their time. The delegates for their enthusiasm and energy. Clare Co. Council and the Dept Communications, Climate Action and Environment for part funding the event. And finally a massive thank you to the conference coordinators for pulling the event together and all their hard work: Brigid Barry, Áine Bird, Brendan Dunford, Mary Howard, Ruth Hollingsworth, Ritchie Jones, Richard Morrison, Anne Mullen, Kate Lavender, Eileen O'Connor and Elaine Williams.

APPENDIX 1: Event Programme

A Celebration of Conservation Volunteering

Working for Wellbeing of People and Place

Friday 12th August

Corofin Community Hall & the Burren

- 13.45 – 15.30** A Walk in the Beautiful Burren with National Park Guides (Optional)
Meeting point: 13.45pm sharp @ Burren National Park Information Point, Church Street, Corofin. Depart at 14.00 pm. Walk starts at 14.15pm.
- 17.00 – 18.00** Registration
- 18.00 – 19.00** Information Sharing (stands, posters, networking)
Welcoming reception with refreshments (Provided by Burrenbeo Trust)
- 19.00-19.15** Welcome Address
Kate Lavender, Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteer Coordinator
- 19.15 – 20.00** Duncan Stewart: ‘Our communities and their role in active conservation’
‘Eco Eye’ Presenter and Chairman of Green Foundation Ireland
- 20.00 – 20.45** Stuart Brooks: ‘Wellbeing and the Conservation of Wildplaces: lessons from the John Muir Trust’
CEO of John Muir Trust and Chairman of the IUCN
- Session chaired by Dr Brendan Dunford (The Burren Programme)

Saturday 13th August

Corofin Community Hall & the Burren

9.30 – 11.00 3 x 20 min talks (Pick one block to attend)

Volunteering and Community

Room: 1

1. A Shared Responsibility: Conservation Volunteering in the Burren
(Kate Lavender, Burrenbeo Trust)
2. Food Sovereignty in Ireland-feeding communities from the landscape.
(Fergal Anderson & Emanuela Russo, Leaf and Root)

Nature: Wellbeing of People and Place

Room: 2

1. Measuring nature’s impact on health: developing a citizens science framework
(Valentine Seymour, UCL, UK)
2. Getting outdoors: the Health Benefits
(Dr John Duncan)

Creating Experts on the Ground

Room: 3

1. Volunteers and The Vincent Wildlife Trust
(Ruth Hanniffy, The Vincent Wildlife Trust)
2. Banner Birds Beginning to End
(John Murphy, Birdwatch Ireland)
3. The powerful role of

- 11.00 - 11.30** **Tea and Coffee**
- 11.30 - 12.45** ‘Conversations around Conservation’ (Main Hall).
An interactive group workshop exploring the challenges & sharing solutions in the conservation volunteering context.
Facilitated by Mary Hawkes Greene (Burren Centre for Creative Leadership).
- 12.45 - 13.30** **Lunch**
Lunch can be purchased by attendees in the local shops, teas and coffees only will be provided in the main hall
- 13.45** Car share departs
- 13.45 - 16.45** Active Conservation Fieldtrips

Fieldtrip 1:

Responsible Tourism & Managing impacts

Location: Ballyreen (Wild Atlantic Way)

Leader: Mary Howard

Fieldtrip 2:

Stone Walls & Beyond – an integral part of our heritage

Location: Coolorta

Fieldtrip 3:

Butterfly Monitoring – An over the shoulder look at walking a butterfly transect (Family friendly)

Location: Gortlecka Cross

Fieldtrip 4:

Measuring the Past

Location: Gortlecka Cross

- 16.45** Car shares depart and return to hall for community picnic
- 17.30 – 18.30** Community Picnic (Bring and Share)
Corofin Hall. Food will also be prepared by William Mc Elhinney (Wild Strands) from local foraging and community gardens to share with everyone.
- 18.30 – 19.15** Reflection and Feedback
Facilitated by Stuart Brooks and Brendan Dunford. .
- 19.15 – 19.20** **Close of event**
Kate Lavender (BCV Coordinator)

- End of Event -

This event was funded by:



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Department of Communications,
Climate Action & Environment



Comhairle Contae an Chláir
Clare County Council

APPENDIX 2: BIOGRAPHIES: Speakers and Workshop Leaders

ANDERSON, Fergal and **RUSSO**, Emanuela. Fergal Anderson and Emanuela Russo live near Loughrea in County Galway. They run Leaf and Root farm, which operates one of Ireland's new CSA projects. Fergal worked with the international Peasant movement La Via Campesina for a number of years in Brussels and Emanuela is the editor of the International Nyeleni newsletter for Food Sovereignty. www.leafandroot.org www.viacampesina.org www.nyeleni.org. Talk title: Food Sovereignty in Ireland – feeding communities from the landscape.

BROOKS, Stuart. Following initial training as a fine artist Stuart went on to study geography at Newcastle University where he was introduced to upland and peatland ecosystems. Stuart joined the Scottish Wildlife Trust in 1995 supporting a European peatland project. It was there that Stuart co-authored a peatland management handbook and was involved in a large range of habitat and species conservation initiatives in many countries around the world, eventually leaving the Trust in 2009 as their Director of Conservation. He joined the John Muir Trust, a UK charity concerned with protection of wild places, as its Chief Executive in 2009. He has held various positions on conservation and land management bodies and is currently the Chairman of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) United Kingdom National Committee and Vice Chair of its Peatland Programme. Stuart was brought up in Stamford, Lincolnshire. He now lives in Dunblane with his wife and three children. www.jmt.org Title of his keynote address: Wellbeing and the Conservation of Wildplaces: lessons from the John Muir Trust

DUNCAN, John. John Duncan is a practicing GP working from his own surgery in Lahinch, Co. Clare and is a business member of the Burrenbeo Trust. He enjoys caving, canoeing, fell running and generally being in the outdoors with his family. He has a personal interest in the health benefits of outdoor activities. John has been an active member of the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers for the past 8 years. Talk title: Getting Outdoors – the health benefits.

HANNIFY, Ruth. Ruth is the Ireland Projects Support Officer with The Vincent Wildlife Trust. Her background in Zoology and Wildlife Management & Conservation involved studies of the lesser horseshoe bat in Ireland and the habitat preferences of small mammals in the UK. She has worked in the field of river restoration and the biodiversity of riparian and estuarine habitats in the UK. As a native of Galway she is delighted to work towards the conservation of Irish mammals with the VWT. Talk title: Volunteers and The Vincent Wildlife Trust

HAWKES GREENE, Mary. Mary Hawkes Greene is President and founder of the Burren College of Art, a college that draws on the power of the Burren as a creative source. She is committed to extending the remit of the College as a centre for universal creativity, helping those who may not consider themselves artists to access and optimist latent creative ability. Her work at the intersection of art and leadership led to establishing The Burren Centre for Creative Leadership at Burren College of Art, providing opportunities for individuals and groups to find creative solutions in the current volatile leadership environment. Workshop Title: Conversations around conservation – challenges and potential solutions in the conservation volunteering context

HOWARD, Mary. Mary is a walking guide based in Fanore, Co.Clare. She has been an active member of the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers since 2010. From her archaeological volunteer work she was inspired to complete a diploma in Archaeology, and these days can often be seen volunteering on various archaeology digs and surveys across the Burren. Through working and living along the coastal Burren, Mary has first-hand knowledge of some of the increasing impacts of the tourism numbers on the landscape. Workshop Title: Responsible Tourism and Managing Impacts.

LYNCH, Michael and Clodagh. Clodagh and Michael have been working in archaeology in the Burren for over 15 years. They have surveyed numerous monuments in the Burren including many previously unrecorded sites. Their main interest is in prehistoric archaeology and their recent excavations at Fanore More and Doolin are part of their research. Much of this work has been carried out with the assistance of the Burren Conservation Volunteers Michael is the Field Monument Advisor for Co. Clare. Workshop Title: Measuring the Past. The workshop will cover the basic essential elements of monument survey with a visit and hands-on survey of two recently discovered small cairns in the Burren National Park.

MC ELHINNEY, William. William is a heritage in schools specialist. He specializes in foraging, especially along the coastlines of Donegal. His company is Wild Strands. He will be preparing wonderful food from donations delegates provide from their gardens/home to share with everyone at the community feast.

MURPHY, John. John is a leading member of the Bird Watch Ireland, Clare Branch. He is formerly the biodiversity officer for Co. Clare and currently works as a Senior Ecologist with a Kerry Engineering firm Malachy Walsh and Partners. His talk will cover the historical records of birds in Clare to present day, exploring the potential for a small select species in the county in 2016 and into their future. His talk will also highlight the important role of NGOs like BWI and the significant volunteer work carried out by communities which helps maintain our Irish birdlife. Talk Title: Banner birds beginning to end.

O'CONNOR, Eileen. Eileen has been involved in conservation work since she joined the Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteers (BCV) in 2011. In 2012 she attended the Butterfly Transect workshop provided by the BCV/Burrenbeo Trust and subsequently established a joint transect with another BCV member near Mullaghmore. Data collected from this transect feeds directly to the Irish Butterfly Monitoring scheme. She is a founding member and current chair of the BCV Committee. Eileen is a Chartered Physiotherapist working full time in the HSE. Workshop Title: Butterfly Monitoring: An over the shoulder look at walking a Butterfly Transect: This workshop will walk a transect on a trail near Mullaghmore, catch, identify and record butterflies. The field trip will also address how to record incidental butterfly sightings and submit data to the Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme.

O'SHAUGHNESSY, Rory. Rory is a heritage specialist and descends from one of the oldest clans in the Burren Lowlands. A graduate of NUIG and UCC he divides the year as a tour guide, stonemason and an educator and has been involved in devising, delivering and tutoring on numerous and diverse courses in the heritage field from genealogy to archaeology. Workshop Title: Stone walls of the Burren and beyond –an integral part of our heritage.

PRICE, Sophie. Sophie has worked in the tourism industry in Ireland, Italy, Switzerland and the UK before completing a PhD on the challenges facing tourism enterprises in the west of Ireland. She is a lecturer in Adventure Tourism Management at the Institute of Technology Tralee and currently coordinating the International Adventure Conference there this October. Her research interests include outdoor education, tourism entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism and event management. She is very involved with Leave No Trace Ireland as an advanced trainer and is currently involved in a project in partnership with Failte Ireland on implementing Leave No Trace in the tourism industry. Talk title: Be inspired by leave no trace! - The powerful role of communities and volunteers who embrace the leave no trace ethos to inspire and protect Ireland's natural environment

SEYMOUR, Valentine. Valentine is a PhD Student from University College London. She has a varied background in the environmental field, including conservation management, ecology, participatory engagement, health and wellbeing. As part of her PhD she is working with The Conservation Volunteers exploring health related impacts and volunteering patterns. Talk Title: Measuring nature's impact on health: Developing a citizen science framework.

STAUNTON, David. David Staunton, an integrative counselling psychotherapist who works through an ecotherapeutic lens is the co-founder of both Walk Inniu (walkinniu.ie) and the Ecopsychology and Ecotherapy Association of Ireland (eeai.ie). Having worked extensively with services in Dublin supporting people affected by homelessness, addiction and poor mental health, David strongly believes in the growth, healing and learning benefits from working in nature. Talk Title: Heart, Mountain, Ocean & Soul We generally feel better after a walk and from being outdoors – but do we know why? What do we understand of our own therapeutic relationship with nature and how can this knowledge benefit us in our everyday lives? Discover how ecotherapy is developing in Ireland and how nature can help us towards improved emotional self-regulation.

STEWART, Duncan. An award-winning architect and television producer, Duncan Stewart has been a leading Irish advocate for environmental, health and conservation issues for over 40 years. A champion for environmental and architectural conservation since his student days, for the past two decades Duncan has also been a popular television personality in Ireland. His early shows 'Our House' and 'About the House' leaned on his architectural background as he promoted the values of quality Irish craftsmanship, efficient and sustainable materials and the value of energy conservation. Duncan's current television programme 'Eco Eye', now in its fourteenth series, is driven by his interests in the protection of our environment, Ireland's biodiversity, supporting local communities and the communication of climate issues.

VICKERS, Susan. Susan's background is in environmental biology (particularly contamination and pollution), and she holds a masters in environmental sustainability. She has worked in the environmental sector for over 15 years, and has been with An Taisce since 2012. Susan works with the many CleanCoasts groups looking after the coastline in the South & West. Susan will be talking about the Clean Coasts Programme, in particular the role of volunteering and community engagement initiatives that has led to the expansion of the Clean Coasts programme. Title of Talk: Coast to Coast: Communities Caring for our Shorelines

Coordinators

BARRY, Brigid. Brigid manages Burrenbeo Trust, Ireland's first landscape charity and a leading advocate for communitybased learning nationally. Brigid's passion is connecting communities with their place. Through her work Brigid coordinates over 40 programmes for the organisation. When she is not working, she is studying medicinal herbalism and finding ways to incorporate that into her work as well. Prior to Burrenbeo, she was the Biodiversity Officer for County Clare and had also spent 10 years working in community conservation abroad.

BIRD, Áine. Áine is the Communications Officer for the Burrenbeo Trust. She develops and coordinates the organisation's place-based education programmes for children and teenagers. With a background in botany, she has a masters in Science Communication, and is currently undertaking further postgraduate study in Education at NUI Galway with a focus on place-based education. Prior to Burrenbeo Áine was an education officer in Glenveagh National Park and previously worked with Eco-Unesco and TASC.

DUNFORD, Brendan. Brendan is the Manager of the Burren Programme, a locally-targeted, results based approach to 'farming for conservation'. Brendan initially came to the Burren to do a PhD which explored the relationship between communities, farming and heritage in the region. He is a co-founder of the Burrenbeo Trust – a response to the ongoing need to raise awareness and appreciation of the

Burren landscape and its care. He is an Ashoka Fellow for Ireland and is instrumental in the 'Change X Burren' pilot project which seeks to enhance community wellbeing. His interests relate to the relationship between people and their places and ways through which this relationship may be revived and enhanced for the benefit of both.

LAVENDER, Kate. Kate is the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer Coordinator as well as the Programmes Officer for Burrenbeo Trust and has a degree and masters in geology and a PGCE in secondary Geography. Kate coordinates approximately 300 conservation volunteers and up to 20 conservation days out for volunteers a year. She also works with over 450 children each year through our Burren Wild Child which is key in developing future community stewards in the Burren amongst the younger generation. Prior to joining Burrenbeo she was a secondary geography teacher in the UK.

WILLIAMS, Elaine. Elaine is Burrenbeo's Community Engagement Officer and is the main coordinator of this event. As part of the role as Engagement Officer, she aims to seek all available opportunities to showcase and highlight the great work of the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers. She is currently undertaking a PhD in the Discipline of Geography, at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Intrigued by the rich and interactive society which is present and visible within the Burren, her research aims to explore how various communities connect with their landscape through association with Burrenbeo Trust, and from that identify the core wellbeing benefits and outputs of such engagement for these communities. Prior to her PhD, Elaine has worked with various community groups through her roles as Outreach Officer for the Discipline of Geography at NUIG and as the ChangeX Burren Coordinator exploring solutions to challenges in the rural environment. For more information, contact elaine@burrenbeo.com.

Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer Committee (BCVs): Organisation, planning and implementation of this event involved extensive input, time and consideration from the BCV Committee. Members include:

- Ruth Hollingsworth
- Eileen O'Connor
- Richard Morrison
- Mary Howard
- Richie Jones
- Anne Mullen
- Kate Lavender