



BURREN LA INNOVATION SEMINAR REPORT

Kilfenora Hall, 13th July 2017.

“A Vision for Sustainable High Nature Value Farming in the Burren: The Burren will be an increasingly attractive place to live and farm, a place where farm families enjoy the support and respect of society as they produce quality food and deliver valued services, thereby sustaining the Burren’s rich heritage for the benefit of all.”

Report Compiled by James Moran and
Brendan Dunford



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Burren LA Innovation Seminar Report

1 SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF INNOVATION SEMINAR

The Burren innovation seminar took place at Kilfenora Hall on Thursday the 13th of July. The objectives of the seminar were to:

- Discuss and agree on a vision for High Nature Value (HNV) farming in the Burren.
- Identify the main barriers to realizing this vision.
- Identify the key innovations required to overcome these barriers and create new opportunities.
- Discuss the development of a dissemination strategy to promote key innovations.

A total of 60 participants attended, including local farmers (15) and a range of national and local organisations including the Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Burren Farm Advisors incl. Teagasc, Burren Programme, Burrenbeo Trust, Burren Geopark Project, Burren Ecotourism Network, Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Local Authorities, Leader Group, IT Sligo and The Heritage Council.

High Nature Value (HNV) farmland are defined as “those areas in Europe where agriculture is a major land use and where that agriculture supports, or is associated with, either a high species and habitat diversity or the presence of species of European conservation concern, or both”. They are an important component of European agriculture, notably in terms of biodiversity, cultural landscape, territorial cohesion, quality products and employment. However, abandonment, degradation, economic and social marginalisation are long-standing challenges for the associated farming systems which are under considerable pressure.

The seminar and the HNV LINK project were introduced by Dr. Brendan Dunford. It was first highlighted that the seminar takes place at an opportune time with the presence of the Council of Europe officials as part of the 5-year review of the Burren’s ‘European Diploma for Protected Areas’ Award as well as the celebration (later that day) of the recent EU LIFE 25th anniversary award for the BurrenLIFE Project. The Seminar was organised to also coincide with a Burren Programme Steering committee meeting, thus facilitating the attendance of a range of National stakeholders.

What is HNV LINK? This is an EU Horizon 2020 funded project that runs from 2016-2018. HNV-Link brings together 10 areas throughout the European Union where HNV farming systems are prevalent. These “learning areas” are used to evaluate opportunities and solution (innovation examples) which can simultaneously improve the socio-economic viability and environmental efficiency of HNV systems. The project identifies what works in specific places and what methods would also be applicable in other areas or contexts. The ten learning areas with their range of HNV characteristics and innovations have the potential to act as innovation hubs for HNV farming.

For details see: <http://hvnlink.eu/about/>



It was emphasised that the seminar would be about the future of farming in the Burren. The Burren is currently a change-leader but many challenges – and a significant window of opportunity - remain. What can be done to ensure a brighter future for young people and attract them to a life in farming? He highlighted the HNV LINK project and the potential benefits of the network of Learning Areas involved in HNV LINK, and acknowledged the opportunity this brings to share knowledge, ideas and experiences.

The context for the seminar was set with short presentations by Michael Davoren (Burren IFA), Sharon Parr (The Burren Programme), Aine Bird (Burrenbeo Trust, Burren Charter) and Carol Gleeson (Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark project).

Michael noted that farmers have always responded to the challenges of the day and are ready to deliver whatever the market needs, be it food and/or biodiversity. But to meet these challenges farmers need support and need to know where we are going to be in 20 years' time.

The Burren programme was highlighted by Sharon as a truly local approach to agri-environment scheme implementation, born and bred in the Burren. There have been consistent objectives and achievements since BurrenLIFE developed out of a strong partnership. It helps to support and maintain farming as well as improving management of this landscape and its heritage. There is a need to change legislation so that this approach better fits within legislative framework. It is about incentives and encouragement, not compensation and discouragement.

Aine explained that work has previously been done on a vision for the Burren through the Burren Charter and Family Farm Surveys (111). The requirement for a strategic management plan with farming at centre has been previously highlighted in reports. There has been extensive public consultation since 2010 on what do we want and what can we do? There is a background document with a vision for the Burren outlined. Initiatives have come from this work including Burren Winterage festival; Expansion of Burren in Bloom festival; ChangeX Burren (Social wellbeing Initiative); and the learning landscapes feasibility study.

Carol described the existing ecotourism network and UNESCO Geopark programme. How can tourism act as an agent for positive sustainable development? How can tourism be an attractive option for farmers? Tourists are visiting for the landscape and want to experience it. There is now a body with 10 years of experience in tourism development and Carol highlighted willingness to share experience and offered support. The presence of the Burren food trail was also highlighted and the potential to market food products.

The rest of the seminar involved participants partaking in two workshops which are summarised in sections 2 and 3 below. Following the seminar a public event was held to celebrate the awarding of the EU LIFE Green Award to BurrenLIFE and the Burren farming community. At this event the achievements to date of the Burren programme were acknowledged and the development of the HNV farming vision was outlined. Over 200 people attended this event, most of them local farmers and their families. The 'Green' award was formally presented to the community by the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Micheal Creed TD (See press release Annex 7). During his speech, the Minister announced the date for this year's Burren Winterage School to take place from the 26-28th of October in Ballyvaughan. The theme of this year's school will be "*Community-inspired innovation for sustainable farming systems*".



2 AGREED HNV VISION OF BURREN LA (WORKSHOP 1)

The context for workshop 1 was outlined in a short presentation by James Moran (Annex 1). This included a summary of the Burren LA baseline assessment findings; business as usual scenario + presentation of proposed HNVf vision. The participants were then divided into 6 groups of 10-12 per group with a facilitator/recorder assigned to each group. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- *Do you agree with this vision?*
- *What would you remove or add?*
- *What do you think are the main barriers to achieving this vision?*
- *4 themes: Social/institutional; regulation and policy; farming techniques/management; markets/products*

The proposed vision presented to participants was:

'Burren farmers, working in partnership with the wider community, earn a good living and enjoy a high quality of life as esteemed providers of a range of valuable goods and services based on an exceptional landscape and heritage'

2.1 Feedback from Workshop 1

Detailed feedback from each group is presented in Annex 2.

Because of this feedback, the proposed vision has been amended to include reference to the Burren as an attractive place to live and to bring the term sustainability to the fore. The revised wording is:

"A Vision for Sustainable High Nature Value Farming in the Burren: The Burren will be an increasingly attractive place to live and farm, a place where farm families enjoy the support and respect of society as they produce quality food and deliver valued services, thereby sustaining the Burren's rich heritage for the benefit of all."

The main barriers to realising this vision were identified as:

- Bureaucracy – too much paperwork, restrictions (eg planning)
- Access to land – includes inheritance/succession issues but also farmers attachment to land and their reluctance to rent or sell land
- Poor social opportunities especially for young farmers – less people, more machinery, fewer social outlets
- Poor infrastructure – broadband, roads, community facilities
- Limited skills and confidence among (some farmers) to undertake alternative enterprises
- Poor viability of current systems and their limited product range – mainly weanling beef
- Lack of a coherent, long term approach to the management of the Burren
- Poor overlap between two main industries – farming and tourism
- Lack of off-farm employment opportunities close to the farm
- Security and short term (5 years or less) nature of public funding



3 IDENTIFIED INNOVATIONS AND INNOVATION GAPS (WORKSHOP 2)

The recorders at the break discussed feedback from workshop 1 and a brief summary of workshop 1 feedback were presented at the start of workshop 2.

The context for workshop 2 was outlined in a short presentation by James Moran (Annex 1). This included an introduction to the concept of HNV innovations (solutions and opportunities/significant improvements); some inspiring examples of innovations from other HNV LINK LAs; and an outline of some existing innovations in the Burren.

The participants were then divided into 4 groups (to cover 4 themes) with a facilitator/recorder assigned to each group. Each group was assigned one of four innovation themes: social/ institutional; regulatory/policy; farming techniques/management and products/markets. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- *What are the potential solutions and opportunities (innovations) needed to overcome barriers to achieving vision?*
- *Are these suggested innovations compatible with the HNV vision for the Burren?*

3.1 Feedback from Workshop 2

Detailed feedback from each group is presented in Annex 3. The main solutions and opportunities (Innovations) needed to overcome the barriers identified in workshop one by each group are summarised below under the four innovation themes. These are:

Regulatory:

- RBAPS/Hybrid Agri Environment Schemes.
- More devolved (local-level) decision-making powers to streamline regulations.
- Local Area Innovation Officers to encourage and support new ideas.
- A more strategic/integrated approach to the management of the Burren.

Farming Systems:

- Look again (has been tried previously) at marketing of Burren products and services.
- More focus on improving Burren Programme scores to increase income.
- Consolidating scattered holdings and enhancing access to holdings.
- Techniques to aid the removal of scrub – ideally without chemicals - and to use the brushings.

Social:

- Farmers hosting (guiding, accommodating) volunteers, WOOFERS, students, visitors.
- Innovations re inheritance and succession – Burren as a pilot.
- Networking among farmers, local businesses and other local residents.
- Community wellbeing initiatives (e.g. Change X Burren).

Markets/Products:

- Labelling weanlings as higher quality product.
- Publicly funded ecosystem services.



- The Learning Landscape with farmers as the main hosts.
- New products – goats, hazelnuts, biochar, gates.

4 SEMINAR CONCLUSIONS

Despite its position as a leader of change, there are remaining challenges that act as barriers to realising a sustainable future for the Burren. There was widespread agreement for the need for a vision and much agreement about the main points of the vision as it was presented in workshop 1. The main discussions took place around the need to change the language in the vision. This has resulted in the revised vision (section 2.1). Barriers to realising this vision were also identified and there was a clear willingness to identify solutions and overcome these barriers. The energy and enthusiasm of the range of participants both local and National was indicative of a willingness to support the realisation of a vision for sustainable agriculture in the Burren.

There was a steady flow of ideas from all present. There was recognition that much has been achieved in the Burren and that many innovations have been piloted in the area, but issues around rural isolation and infrastructure mitigate against a healthy future for the Burren community. It appears that answers lie in a lot of small solutions from a range of quarters, if we want farming to be an attractive option for a new generation of Burren farmers. In particular, it is clear that further work is required in the area of the regulatory framework to enable and support local communities to create local solutions. Social infrastructure and community wellbeing initiatives are required to combat rural isolation and improve attractiveness of farming as a career choice for the next generation. Improved marketing, product development and diversification opportunities are needed to realise a vision of sustainable HNV farming in the Burren.

Next steps

In closing the workshop the Chairman thanked all those present for their ideas and engagement and outlined the following steps:

This report will be circulated to Workshop attendees and further feedback will be requested, particularly on the HNV farming Vision and potential innovations.

As part of the Burren Winterage School, a workshop will be organised to build on the Seminar findings and continue the conversation on innovation

An Inventory of HNV innovations from other learning areas - solutions to overcome barriers and realisation of vision - will be compiled via the HNV LINK project

Ideas from the Burren will be shared across the HNV LINK network to help improve “socio-economic viability” and “environmental efficiency” in these areas.



5 ANNEXES:



Annex 1 Workshop presentations

*High Nature Value Farming:
Learning, Innovation and
Knowledge*



Burren Innovation Seminar Future of HNV Farming in the Burren

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This project is funded by
the European Union Horizon 2020
research and innovations programme



Network dedicated to supporting HNV farming = 13 partners; 10 Learning Areas

Innovations to simultaneously improve "socio-economic viability" and "environmental efficiency"

Learning Areas

- 1) Dartmoor (UK)
- 2) Sitio de Monfurado (PT)
- 3) Dalmatian Islands (HR)
- 4) Eastern Hills of Cluj (RO)
- 5) Western Stara Planina (BG)
- 6) Västra Götaland (SE)
- 7) The Burren (IE)
- 8) Thessalia (GR)
- 9) Causses et Cévennes (FR)
- 10) La Vera, Extremadura (ES)

Work Package Leaders

- a) CIHEAM-IAMM (FR)
- b) AScA (FR)
- c) UH (FI)
- d) EFNCP (ES)

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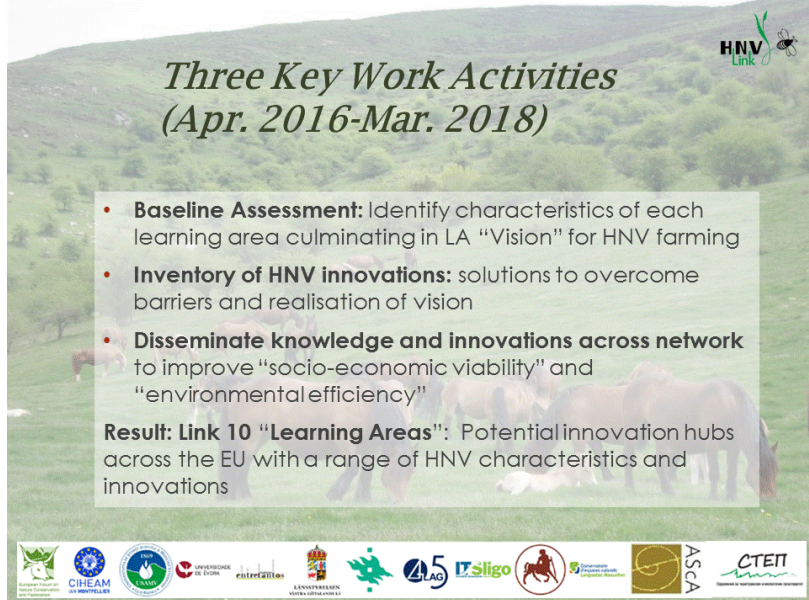


HNV Link

Challenge

- How do we increase the socio-economic viability of HNV farming systems and avoid their further degradation and disappearance?
- Could be done by collating, evaluating and disseminating innovations as tools for their development
- How to maintain the "natural value" of HNV farming, including the environmental services they provide to the society

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HNV Link

Three Key Work Activities (Apr. 2016-Mar. 2018)

- **Baseline Assessment:** Identify characteristics of each learning area culminating in LA "Vision" for HNV farming
- **Inventory of HNV innovations:** solutions to overcome barriers and realisation of vision
- **Disseminate knowledge and innovations across network** to improve "socio-economic viability" and "environmental efficiency"

Result: Link 10 "Learning Areas": Potential innovation hubs across the EU with a range of HNV characteristics and innovations



*High Nature Value Farming:
Learning, Innovation and
Knowledge*



Burren Innovation Seminar Future of HNV Farming in the Burren

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Workshop 1: Agreeing a HNV Vision for the Burren and barriers to achieving it (Innovation gaps)

- *Baseline Assessment findings*
- *Proposed HNV farming Vision*
- *Identifying the barriers to achieving the vision*

A portrait of the area

Extensive glaciated karst landscape.

Burren Uplands and Lowlands

High Cultural and natural values

Burren is privately owned and farmed, though c.2000ha is publicly owned, forming a National Park and several Nature Reserves.



A landscape shaped and maintained by people

The farming history of the Burren region – each generation adapts to meet challenges

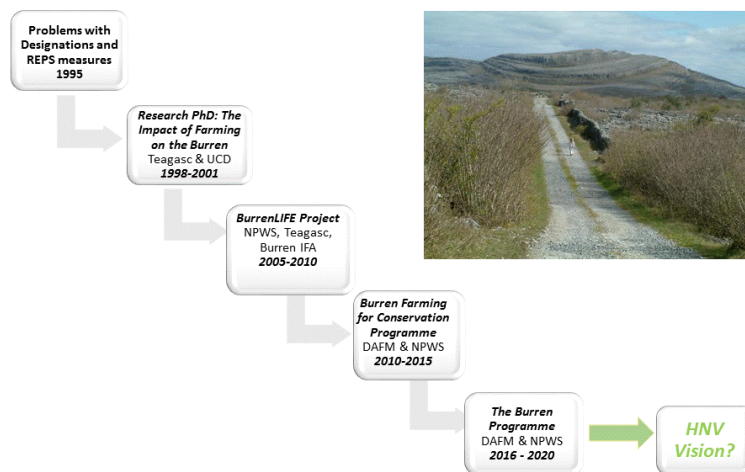


Farming Systems

- The Burren is a pastoral landscape.
- Increasingly specialised in Suckler Beef production.
- Typically farm contains an average of 30-40 suckler cows.
- Extensive grazing and farm management system essential to maintain HNV farmland landscape we see today



2000 - Today: Steps towards success

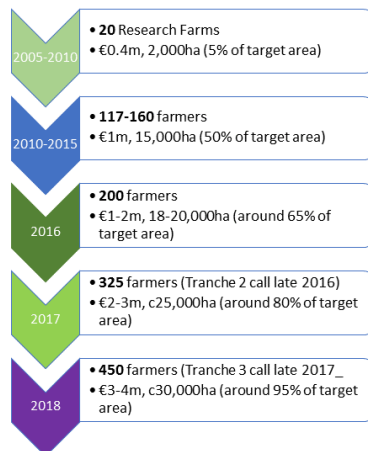


Where are we now? A situation report!

- The Burren Programme: full capacity by 2018

Challenges:

- **Social:** ageing farming population; few young farmers; loss of management knowledge and skill; labour shortage.
- **Economic:** Farm viability? Farmers currently gain very little from tourism or added value gained from livestock sales.
- **Environmental:** scrub encroachment (winterages) and intensification on green land (reclamation, nutrient input).



Range of public services



Source: winnebagoforest.org

Workshop 1: Agreeing a HNV Vision for the Burren and barriers to achieving it (Innovation gaps)

Questions

- Do you agree with this vision?
- What would you remove or add?
- What do you think are the main barriers to achieving this vision?
- 4 themes: Social/institutional; regulation and policy; farming techniques/management; markets/products



*High Nature Value Farming:
Learning, Innovation and
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Workshop 2: Identifying potential solutions and opportunities (Innovations)

- Identified barriers to achieving HNV Vision from Workshop 1
- HNV innovations/significant improvements?
- Examples of innovations from HNV LINK
- Some existing innovations in the Burren
- Identifying other potential opportunities and solutions (Innovations)
 - social/ institutional
 - regulatory/policy
 - farming techniques/management
 - products/market

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Improvements and solution required in range of areas

- Co-operation between farmers and with other local actors
- Catalysing farmer groups
- New Institutional structures enabling co-creation

- Legislation and policy reform that affects HNV farming, processing and marketing, favouring HNV innovations

- Development of new products.
- Product processing.
- Marketing of products from HNV farming systems and areas

- Development of appropriate technologies,
- Farming techniques (including locally adapted),
- Grazing management and monitoring,
- Organisation of labour

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Some Inspiration from other areas across EU



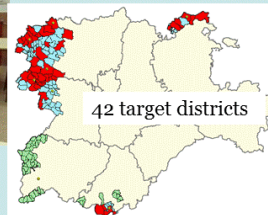
Spain Plan 42 - integrated programme for fire prevention through support for extensive grazing



Listening to farmers and making plans together



Local facilitators

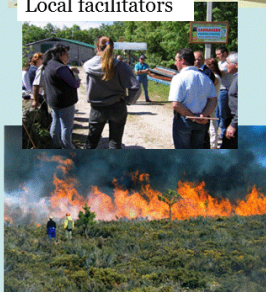


42 target districts

Improving pastures mgt.



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Trying new products

Spain: The cheese challenge - technical innovations are available



Old cheese dairy - not legal



Innovative cheese dairy - legal?

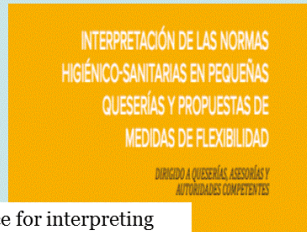
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Complemented by institutional and regulatory innovations



Training of inspectors



Guidance for interpreting and adapting the EU rules



www.hnvl
k.eu



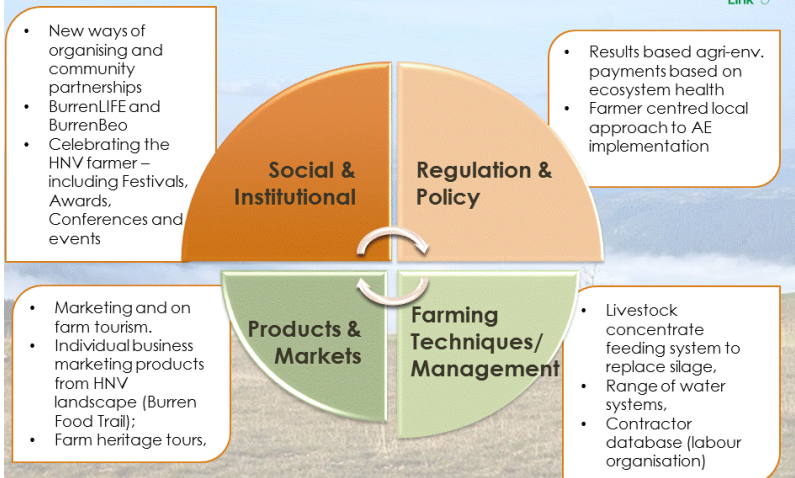
Sweden

- Europe's first mobile butchery for fully grown cattle - Hälsingestintan
- "Ethical" meat, from Swedish Learning Area, stressing HNV pasture production



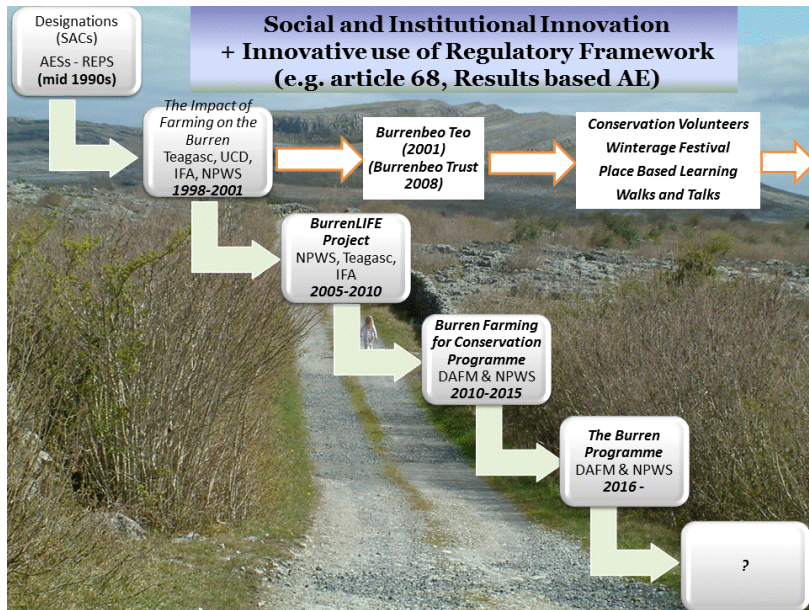
<https://www.finedininglovers.com/stories/ethical-meat-halsingestintan/>

Burren HNV Innovations



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Livestock feeding and water systems



Ecobeo: Working with the future custodians of the landscape

Free 10-week heritage course - class lectures, newsletters, quizzes & fieldtrips



Encouraging a sense of informed pride, ownership and responsibility

1200 Young Burren Experts graduated



Workshop 2: Identifying potential solutions and opportunities (Innovations)

- 4 Themes – each group considers one theme
- social/ institutional; regulatory/policy; farming techniques/management; products/market innovations

Questions

- What are the potential solutions and opportunities (innovations) needed to overcome barriers to achieving vision.
- Are these suggested innovations compatible with the HNV vision for the Burren?



Discussion and Conclusions

- Feedback from 4 thematic groups
- Concluding remarks and next steps



Additional innovations identified and innovation needs-Feedback Workshop 2

1.
2.
3.

1.
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1.
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3.



Annex 2 Detailed Feedback Workshop 1

Recorder: M Hawkes

What's missing from the Vision + The Challenges & Solutions

- Farmers are about producing **agricultural output**. The vision needs to address this central identity as well as other ecological or tourism good and services. (Avoid abstract jargon!) Sharon
- The Next Generation: there has to be a next generation to implement the vision. For a younger generation to have the confidence to take up the mantle of farming in the Burren there needs to be a **25-year road map** – not a 5-year agri-environmental commitment - with some certainty attached to it.
- New farmers: there are young people who want to farm in the Burren as a way of life but have currently no prospect of **owning land** or the prospect of earning a living wage from it.
- Amending agri-environmental scheme: Needs to be adapted so that the adjusted **acreage eligible for support** includes the 100% that needs to be maintained, not just the 65% that is currently eligible. This is an issue of Irish regulations.
- **Making farming viable**: While living in the Burren provides a benefit in kind there is need for something close to the average industrial wage to keep the next generation here. Some approaches to this include: (i) Need for **off-farm employment** in the Burren to complement farming; (ii) Make it easier to engage in part-time farming by improving **access to farms**; (iii) Farming in a more **cooperative** way; (iv) Improve **road infrastructure**; (v) **Planning laws** needs to support/favour locals to build housing and the infrastructure necessary for accommodating agri-tourism – W/C's, tea-rooms etc – without which it's not possible to monetise the tourism product; (vi) Most of the benefit of the rich resource that is the Burren is given away free or benefits the tour operators – Corcomroe Abbey, Poll-na-mbrón dolmen, martello towers, knowledge of the collar of gold, the history of Sydney Nolan (artist) and the myriad flora/fauna/monuments of the Burren. There is need to **educate farmers** in how to guide and transform these assets into real income. (vii) There should be a **small local tax** on tourism that would feed into supporting the local community.

Recorder: D Hogan

- The main suggestion around the changing the Burren vision statement was to include 'Burren farming families' instead of 'Burren Farmers'. Using the term families as opposed to just farmers is more inclusive, suggests that there is more succession involved and it highlights that farming in the Burren is a multi-generation occupation. Succession of farming activity is key to the sustainability of farming in the Burren.

Barriers in achieving the vision

- **Liveability** in the Burren needs to be highlighted, it needs to keep up with an ever-changing world.
- Enabling farmers to **diversify** their income is key to improving quality of life. Having a more diverse range of incomes for each farmer and not just beef production



- An improved **broadband system** is vital, not just for personal use but for developing businesses within the Burren. It would also allow farmers to work remotely and thus increase the amount of time that could be spent farming.
- Some suggested that having a **small business** on the side is preferable to working elsewhere full time with Farming as a part-time occupation. Building small businesses would be a better use of their time rather than a salaried position. Having a small business would increase the range of goods-and-services, a key part of the vision.
- Having a better support system, i.e. training days in entrepreneurship, small business management and innovation could increase the **spectrum of opportunities** for farmers with little business experience.
- They also highlighted issues with the planning process as barriers to setting up businesses in the Burren, development may harm the environment in some ways. In the Burren, the environment needs human activity to maintain it, blocks in the **planning process** are hindering local's ability to have a sustainable income. One example provided was of a distillery that wanted to set up in the area but it had to be moved to Salthill due to planning issues, now there are numerous jobs in Salthill that could have been gotten for the Burren.
- There were also doubts about the **sustainability of beef production** especially with trends in alternative sources of meat/more carbon friendly methods of producing meat substitutes.
- There were also doubts about the sustainability of **subsidies**
- We also discussed the feasibility of setting up in the **Burren as a farmer from scratch**. Increasing the exchange of land outside the family could increase farming activity.

Recorder: J Moran

Do you agree with this vision? What would you remove or add?

- Agree with partnership aspect and community working together. Need to be clear that partnership involves whole community farmers, people living in area, tourism providers, business, community groups. Need to have existing community groups working towards common goal. Al lot of farmers are not just farmers. History and culture waiting to be captures and need to create opportunities outside farming. Has to be broad concept of community. Alternative views also expressed: that there is a risk of dilution if take in all concerns of wider community. What has happened to meitheal?
- Overall language of vision needs to be more inspiring for young people. Maybe start with something along lines " Burren is brilliant, exciting and enjoyable place to live....."
- Need to have more full time farmers and increased pride in farming. Need for farmers markets-people want to support local area.
- At the end of the day comes down to money and ability to earn a living. Need a salary from farming. To realise this will need to do new things. There will be different products.
- Need to make language more future looking. Farming for next generation where future generations want to stay. "Sustainability" is a key word that is missing
- "Attractive place to live and work" missing
- Can it be made more local to Burren seems quite generic at moment.
- "Burren is a unique, exciting and enjoyable place to live, constantly evolving. Sustainable agriculture.....Services preserving landscape...."



Main barriers to achieving Vision

- Range of existing community groups may not be working towards common goal at moment.
- 100,000s of people currently passing through Burren and nothing left by them in area.
- What services will farmers be involved in and who will pay for them?
- Large volume of money coming into Burren but not going into farming. A need to capture some of this.
- Engaging with wider community may be limited at moment. Wider community want to help-how do we harness this sense of meitheal?
- Lack of sustainable of farm work with a reasonable distance of farm is a problem at moment
- Absence of succession planning and uncertainty for young people

Recorder: A Bleasdale

Discussion re the Vision text:

- *Representative “voices”:* farmers (x3), ag planner (x1), PhD student (x1), academic (x1), local authority (x1), DAFM (x1), NPWS (x1)
- Vision text ok, but no language in terms of the future (all worded in the present tense), therefore achieving the potential is assumed but not explicitly stated
- “esteemed” liked by farmers, but deemed to be a bit patronising by others
- Some discussion re “sustainable” (means different things to different people)
- Also some question whether the wording fully represents the actual goals: for example, if supports increased and farmers were paid more for what they do now, it might well provide a ‘good living’ but it would not materially improve the environmental dividend.
- Further rewording of Vision might be possible, but agreed by all that it was ‘probably fine’!

Barriers (some of which are not specific to the Burren):

- Inheritance and succession an issue: farmers have a difficulty in acquiring winterage
- Young farmers: why would they choose farming when there are easier lifestyles
- It is a lonely lifestyle
- Poor market returns: and one cannot intensify given the nature and status of the landscape, plus it is easy to ‘max out’ on your hill – you manage it to the highest standard but you can go no further nor raise any more cattle. Not enough for a ‘good living’.
- Infrastructural barriers (IT, broadband, technological competence)
- Increasing paperwork and administrative burdens
- Regulatory environment is rigid and not fit for purpose – frustration at all levels (farmers, advisors, policy makers)
- There is an “appetite” that is not being met (for trails, walks, farmer interactions, authentic experiences): much of this is new to farmers
- Planning issues (waste water management, housing, consents).
- The farming landscape is fragmented: holdings are not together in a single unit (transport of cattle, costs, water, passing points, access, lay-bys)



- Time, knowledge and guidance is limiting (no “one stop shop” or “clearing house”)
- Sometimes a farmer just wants to farm and doesn’t want to be “providing ecosystem goods and services”, or take up agri-tourism.
- Marketing and branding barriers (cattle may not be finished in the Burren)

Recorder: L Weekes

Broad agreement with statement with the following concerns:

- The word ‘providers’ – some are of the opinion that they are educators, custodians. Lack of grasping the concept and meaning of this sentence on what services actually are
- Should include something about the next generation

How do we ensure this vision is realised?

- Balance between The Burren being a retreat and area of beauty for so many and actually making a living here.
- Most important message was that we must ensure that conditions and circumstances are set in place that the younger generation will want to stay, work and settle In the Burren.

Barriers:

- Broadband – essential on many levels
 - for running a viable business – need broadband and decent phone reception
 - Social communication – important especially for the younger generation
 - Entertainment - important especially for the younger generation
- Planning – mainly housing
 - Legislation and regulations inhibiting anyone who wants to settle down and build a house on family land
- Roads – balance between going about our daily lives and tourism
 - No regulations or control on traffic flow or access, particularly for the large buses
 - Hard for local people to go about their daily working day with delays, particularly from the large buses on the road.
- Economics – simply boils down to economics, must be worthwhile financially to live here
 - Young people mostly see their parents with a regular job and part-time farming which is not attractive – hours too long, hard work.
 - Must be financially rewarding to farm for the long-term
 - No money in producing traditional agricultural raw materials any more.

Possible solutions:

- Improve broadband and phone services
 - Free broadband for young people setting up their own enterprises for a period of time to encourage business development



- Change in the planning regulations to allow the next generation live in their own community.
 - Instead of looking at the needs of an individual in relation to their planning application, look at the needs of the community and sustainability – broader criteria
 - A rural planning programme was mentioned in the UK to allow house building for long-term sustainability in rural areas for this very reason.
- Traffic management
 - setting up bus corridors/routes through the Burren so that the minor roads are clear.
 - Encouraging the use of mini buses instead of the large tour buses by imposing a levy on large buses using the roads
- Ensure that farming provides a good quality of life that is financially attractive.
 - To do this we need to add value to the raw materials we produce.
 - There needs to be a pool of expertise to consult when running a farm-based business which includes the academic, scientist and marketing expert.
 - Setting up something similar to a ‘food-hub’ where small producers can cooperate together to promote their produce
 - Back to broadband – must be routes to market

Recorder: T O’ Connell

‘A Vision for Sustainable Farming in the Burren where

Burren farmers, working in partnership with the wider community, earn a good living and enjoy a high quality of life as esteemed providers of a range of valuable goods and services based on an exceptional landscape and heritage.’

- The farmers are the actors and agents in the landscape
- “Good living” “High Quality”, might have connotations of being rich or ‘above others’
- Discussed connotations of ‘esteemed’, ‘respected’, ‘valued’, Group preferred either no adjective here, or “valued”.
- Valuable felt to be quite a general word
- “An exceptional”, possibly generic & ambivalent

‘A Vision for Sustainable Farming in the Burren where

Burren farmers, as custodians of this unique landscape and heritage, earn a fair living and enjoy a sustainable life as valued providers of a broad range of quality goods and services.’ Also discussed reference to High Nature Value in vision

Barriers in achieving the vision:

- Long term sustainability of external funding/ subsidising
- Sustainability of cattle farming in the medium term? (Disruptive technologies/ artificial meat)
- Aging population - Land access for future farmers – if you are not born into a local farming family how will anyone get access?
- Climate Change
- Legislation – policy restrictions, Conflicting legislations/ instructions, permissions processes, red tape/very involved process



Annex 3 Detailed Feedback Workshop 2

Recorder: M Hawkes

Comments from Farming Techniques & Marketing Table

- Scrub clearance is the last job to be done until there are more measures and mapping;
- Burren beef is attractive because of low antibiotics and cattle spending more time on unfertilised grazing. While Bord Bia plays on this with overseas visitors the benefit is not monetised in the Burren as beef is sold as weanlings. Perhaps the marketing needs to be directed towards the latter market.
- Burren Life: Make this a prime focus getting extra income by getting scores up;
- Succession: Who will replace Brendan and Sharon? It takes time to absorb the systemic knowledge they have. Taking advisers who are local to the Burren captures the rich local knowledge. Young people from the Burren need to have an interest in farming – but also a chance to go away for a time before returning.

Recorder: T O' Connell

- Labelling of Burren produce – though not as a finished product (Small amount of finishing beef in locality) but possibly as premium quality lamb/ weanlings; Mixed opinion and lots of discussion here – who benefits? Product not finished here and although premium product can't be sold as such, margins too tight and the finisher benefits more than the Winterage farmer.
- Go with the flow. Focus more on grants for environmental management than food production;
- Is there grants for making land suitable for bees/ pollinators?
- Develop the Burren as a learning landscape – not every farmer wants to be involved with tourism, but facilitate those who want to tell the story & get involved with environmental tourism; app development to tell the story
- Every farmer has an opportunity to do 'something'; part time as well as farming; setting up a small company, cheese, goats, B&B's, walling, etc. Farmers need support/mentoring in exploring other ventures & ideas they may have for setting up small businesses but are unsure of who to approach;
- Change breeds/animals – More continental cross breeds; rear goats for halal markets. Lots of discussion – emotive issue; large markets, but fencing an issue as well as disagreement over goats contribution/ degradation of the landscape. A EIP in Connemara is currently using invisible fencing with lasers and shock collars which would be of interest to potential goat farmers.
- Agreements/ money to allow tourists & visitors onto land;
- Develop local farmer's markets & selling produce locally;
- Need to improve broadband locally to encourage professionals to live here.
- Need to discuss limiting mass tourism/ large tour busses on certain roads. Consider adding a small charge to people visiting the area, a 'nature pass'.



Recorder: L Weekes*Opportunities and Solutions- Farming techniques*

This group discussed and debated on 3 main topics:

Beef production:

- Tired of being the 'poster boys' of An Bord Bia when we only produce weanlings and allow other farmers elsewhere finish our beef stock and benefit from the 'green' name.
- Buyers from as far as the midlands come to the Gort mart to buy our weanlings as they are sought after due to lack of fertiliser on the land and rearing techniques
- Need to capitalise on our own success and finish the cattle off ourselves.
- Increase the beef discussion group already set up to include more farmers who want to finish their own cattle.
- Market 'Burren Beef' ourselves

Debate on the above points - some farmers thought that finishing cattle was the way to go, others didn't think there was capacity on the land for finishing cattle and thought that going down the ecosystem service route was the solution for the future

Ecosystem services:

- We need cattle for grazing, we have put more numbers in some areas to ensure grazing levels are not below optimum and we get a good weanling product from this, but we don't have the means to finish these cattle on our lands (opinions of some not all)
- Focus instead on improving scores on our farms – watering systems, grazing, scrub clearance
- Must be properly financed to continue this in to the future
- Target environmental priorities of the Burren on our farms e.g. if the priority is to prevent the further advancement of scrub across the Burren, then give a higher financial premium for carrying out this job. This would encourage farmers to prioritise the most important issues, even if, like scrub clearance, it is not an attractive or easy task.

Future of the Burren programme and farming

- Concerns about the future of the Burren Programme in terms of replacing Brendan and Sharon when the time for retirement comes
- Need to identify and train local young people with an interest to take on the programme for the future and pass on valuable information and lessons learnt to equip them to take on this responsibility
- Making funding available to train these young people
- Finances and career prospects must be attractive to keep a young person engaged with the Burren Programme
- Attracting the next generation of farmers to stay on the farms was also a concern.
- Many young farmers go to Agricultural College and the main message they get seems to be that they will be working in agri-business part-time, this message and circumstances must change to ensure this is not the case and it is worth staying on the land



Recorder: A Bleasdale

Discussion re the solutions to barriers (in the regulatory context):

- *Representative “voices”*: farmer (x1), academic (x1), DAFM (x3), NPWS (x3)...others?
- Results based Schemes – needs to be a dedicated and separate article in the post 2020 Pillar 2 Regs; less rigidity, more adaptability, space left for ideas to develop
- More locally adapted regulations (not national) - embrace adaptability
- A “well educated social infrastructure” is required!
- Local communities need to be empowered to make their own decisions
- Water issues still have not been resolved in the Burren: enhanced LAWCO powers (with community involvement)
- A “one stop shop is needed” – but how?? Gov.Depts need to work better together (eg flooding as an example of how it hasn’t worked). There is a bureaucratic bottleneck and there needs to be supports in “navigating” this. How can the cost be lessened?
- Re food standards and hygiene: a simple implementation measure is needed (eg a navigation/guidance handbook)
- We need to interpret and translate the legislation (but not too literally....)
- Finally a model of support was identified as being necessary (supported by DAFM, Teagasc and NPWS) to deliver EIPS/LAES: to empower “local area innovation officers”.

Recorder: B Dunford

Social innovations

Lots of interesting proposals from the group (c.10 people), including:

- Exploring paid working holidays in the Burren (volunteering etc) particularly over winter when accommodation is more available and local families could host. WWOOFERS model
- Building local Volunteer corps to include transition year kids and others
- Summer camps for teenagers in the Burren
- A bed tax to support community projects
- Develop cycle routes between villages to build better networks – for locals as much as visitors
- Look at enabling succession/inheritance to encourage more young farmers – interesting US models which could be piloted here. Look at existing legal options – Aisling Meehan in West Clare would be a good person to advise.
- EU Focus group (existing?) on new opportunities to enter farming – includes ways to address most of the systemic barriers discussed earlier. These include Farm partnerships, support for Business plans, various Financial instruments etc Look into further.
- Farming land such as the Burren uplands will be more of a lifestyle choice than a financial one – enable this by providing better infrastructure such as broadband
- Best use of energy would be to focus on keeping the farmers presently here, rather than targeting new entrants of which there will be a small number?
- The loss of the younger cohort is in some ways part of the ‘cycle of life’ and is inevitable – should we therefore focus on ‘rural return migration’ – those returning in their early 40s etc



- and providing attractions to draw these people back, ‘repatriate them’ and keep them? These are also the cohort with parents/uncles etc in their 70s who are moving to retirement.
- Sport and music help to give people social outlets but more is needed for people with other interests. How do we get these farmers off the farm and socially engaged? Building networks within and outside of the farming community? Rambling houses where people could socialise?
 - Creating local jobs outside of farming so that the 2 hour commute to Shannon/Galway could be used instead to farm or to engage in community projects
 - We need to remember – and stress – how great the Burren has it as compared with other rural areas. Farmers leading walks for Burrenbeo, coming to Tea Talks, attending local BP training, winterage festivals, participating in local exercise classes – so much here that’s not elsewhere.
 - ‘Farm with me’ initiatives where people learn about farming by shadowing a farmer (apply for example to DAFM and NPWS staff – LL!)
 - WDC campaign ‘look west’ – have such a campaign for Burren farming?

In summary: steady flow of ideas from all present. Recognition that we do the social inclusion piece quite well here and have piloted a lot of innovations, but issues around rural isolation and infrastructure mitigate against a healthy future Burren community. Sounds like answers lie in a lot of small solutions from a range of quarters, if we want farming to be an attractive future option for a new generation of Burren farmers.



Annex 4 Agenda



Innovation Seminar

Workshop on the future of High Nature Value Farming in the Burren

followed by

Public reception to acknowledge Green Week Award

Time: Thursday July 13th 3pm

Venue: Kilfenora Hall

Workshop Objectives:

To discuss and agree on a vision for High Nature Value (HNV) farming in the Burren.

Identify the main barriers to realizing this vision.

Identify the key innovations required to overcome these barriers and create new opportunities.

Agenda

Welcome: Introductions and Objectives (Brendan Dunford)

1. Background/context: The future of high nature value farming in the Burren (30min):

Burren Farming (Michael Davoren, Burren IFA) 5 min

Burren Programme (Sharon Parr, BP) 5 min

Burren Charter & Education (Aine Bird, Burrenbeo) 5min

Burren Tourism and Farming (Carol Gleeson) 5 min

HNV LINK (James Moran) 10 min

2. Workshop 1: Agreeing a HNV Vision for the Burren and barriers to achieving it (innovation gaps) (45min)

Break (30 min)

3. Workshop 2: Identifying potential solutions and opportunities (Innovations) (45min)

4. Discussion and Conclusion (30min)

Close 5.30pm

Reception (7-8pm) Open to wider public. Will summarise HNV Vision and (re)present Green Award



Annex 5 List of participants



Innovation Seminar

Name	Organisation/profession
Bird, Aine	Burrenbeo Trust
Bleasdale, Andy	NPWS
Boyle, Pamela	DAFM
Brennan, Josephine	DAFM
Carkill, Thomas	Farmer
Carrucan, Patsy	Farmer & Advisor
Collins, Arthur	Farmer
Collins, Michael	Farmer
Conway, Therese	NUI Galway
Cormican, William	NPWS
Costello, Patrick J	Burrenbeo Trust
Daly, Siobhan	Farmer & Advisor
Davoren, Michael	Burren IFA
Doyle, Eamon	Burren Geopark
Farrell, Maura	National Rural Network
Feerick, Martin	Teagasc Advisor
Glanville, Emma	NPWS



Innovation Seminar

Name	Organisation/profession
Lynch, Michael	Farmer
Marrinan, John	Farmer
McConn Stern, Rita	Burrenbeo Trust
McHale, Paula	Burren Programme
Mooney, Enda	NPWS
Moran, James	HNV LINK
Moroney, Michael	Farmer
Moroney, Willie	Farmer
Morrisson, Richard	Burrenbeo Trust
Morton, Jenny	ChangeX Burren
Mulqueen, Nuala	Business owner
Murray, Margaret	DAFM
Nagle, Frances	Farmer
Nagle, Oliver	Farmer
Nagle, Pat	Farmer
O'Conchuir, Ruairi	Local Authority
O'Connell, Tim	Burren Programme



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Gleeson, Carol	Burren Geopark	O'Connor, Bernie	Farmer & Advisor
Guthrie, Tom	Farmer	O'Donnell, Richard	Farmer
Hassett, Seamus	NPWS	O'Donoghue, Barry	NPWS
Hawkes, Martin	Burrenbeo Trust	O'Flaherty, Ronan	DAFM
Hogan, Donal	Burren Programme	O'Grady, Frank	Farmer
Holmes, Tom	Farmer	Parr, Sharon	Burren Programme
Hory, Marc	Council of Europe	Roche, Christy	Farmer
Hubert, Thomas	Irish Farmers Journal	Seale, Catherine	Local Authority
Keane, Vincent	Farmer	Stronge, Denis	NPWS
Kerin, Gerard	Farmer	Ussher, Michael	Council of Europe
Larkin, Michelle	NUIG Student	Walsh, Jerome	DAFM
Lavendar-Duncan, K.	Burrenbeo Trust	Weekes, Lynda	Burren Programme
Lawlor, Hayden	Teagasc Student	Williams, Bryony	Burren Programme



Annex 6 Photos



Above and Below: Workshops at the HNV LINK Seminar in Killybegs Hall



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Above & Below: Minister Michael Creed meets farmers from the HNV LINK seminar
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Annex 7 Copy of promotional material

Oifig Faisnéise
 Áras Talmhaíochta
 Sráid Chill Dara
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135/17

13th July 2017

Creed presents EU Life Award to Burren farmers

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, has presented the Burren farming community with a special EU Life award to mark the role they have played in protecting and enhancing the unique landscape in which they live and farm. The presentation was made at a community event on Thursday evening (13th) in Kilfenora.

The Green Award is a special award organised by the European Union, which is celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the LIFE Programme this year. Since its inception in May 1992, the LIFE Programme has supported over 4,300 projects and to mark the anniversary, a competition was organised to choose the very best projects of the last 25 years. Ireland's Burren Life Programme emerged as joint winner in the nature and biodiversity category.

Speaking at the presentation, Minister Creed said: *"It is a huge achievement for an Irish project to win one of these prestigious awards, and to have been selected as the outstanding project in its category over the last 25 years is a tribute to the commitment of all of those involved."*

The Burren Programme is now an established agri-environment scheme under the Irish Rural Development Programme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and by the European Union. The number of participating farmers is scheduled to triple over the lifetime of the new Programme.



The Minister noted that this was a partnership involving many different entities, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc, the Heritage Council and his own Department, but he paid special tribute to the Burren Project Team led by Dr Brendan Dunford and the Burren farming community.

The Minister continued *"This award acknowledges two significant achievements, including the positive impact which Ireland's Rural Development Programme, funded and managed by my Department, can make to local farming communities through innovative schemes such as this. Secondly the award is rightly a source of huge pride to the farming community here in the Burren, and the team who have supported and worked with it over the last 15 years. They have created something very special, something which has caused the rest of Europe to sit up and take notice and is consistently pointed out as a model for other communities and indeed Countries to follow."*

Minister Creed also announced the dates for the next Burren Winterage School, organised by BurrenBeo Trust and funded by his Department. This will take place from 26th to 28th October in Ballyvaughan and the theme this year will be *"Community-inspired innovation for sustainable farming systems"*.



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