

Burren LA participatory approach

The Burren Learning Area (LA) team is led by James Moran of the Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo), in the northwest of Ireland. The project draws on the long-standing collaboration that has been built with the key stakeholders in the area: Burrenbeo Trust (LA Lead Partner), The Burren Programme, and the Burren Irish Farmers Association.



The team is adopting a participatory approach to project implementation where stakeholders are directly involved in gathering information and sharing knowledge. A range of methods are used, including informal bilateral meetings, group discussions at farmer training events, and workshops. The participatory process was made easier in the Burren by the fact that the Burren programme or its predecessor BurrenLIFE have been in operation since 2004, and a participatory, farmer-centred approach was central to their success. During this time, members of the HNV-Link team have been working in the area and establishing relationships and building up trust between a diverse group of stakeholders. These relationships have been built up over many years and provide a sound basis for the participatory approach adopted by the HNV-Link team.

Starting from the project application stage, the HNV-Link team consulted with key stakeholders on the design of the HNV-Link project. During project development and initiation, the team also held discussions with a broad range of actors including: Teagasc (national farm advisory service), nature conservation authorities and local higher education institutions. The role of Burrenbeo Trust is particularly instrumental since it is a well-respected non-governmental organisation in the Burren dedicated to connecting people and place bringing together a wide range of stakeholders who care for the Burren.

To date, the team has focused its efforts on the co-creation of an HNV Vision for the Burren. For this, the team engaged with stakeholders for gathering existing baseline information and developing a business as usual scenario. Combining this data with the HNV innovation assessment facilitated the identification of innovation gaps. Solutions to the identified innovation gaps are needed for The Burren to realise the agreed HNV vision for the area.

The Burren Winterage Festival is an annual event in the Burren that celebrates HNV farming. Part of this festival involves the Burren Winterage School, which brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to share knowledge and ideas on sustainable farming with a particular focus on HNV farmland. The HNV-Link project has used this event as an opportunity to enable wider engagement with stakeholders and also as a place to host workshops focused on HNV-Link activities. This engagement facilitated the participation of a wide range of national and international stakeholders in the HNV-Link knowledge co-construction and sharing process. The project built on initial contacts at this event and subsequently set up bilateral meetings, the innovation seminar, and further discussion on the project at farmer training events as part of the Burren Programme.



Table 1 List of key HNV-Link activities (up to April 2018) which together detail the participatory approach adopted in the Burren

Activity	Number of Participants	Date
Burren Winterage School	110	Oct 2016
Burren farmer training (including HNV-Link introduction and questionnaire)	180	Oct 2016
Interviews with key stakeholder representatives	5	Jan-Mar 2017
Burren learning landscape symposium with HNV-Link input	45	March 2017
Burren Innovation Seminar	60	July 2017
Burren Winterage School and HNVF Innovation Fair	200	Oct 2017
Burren farmer training (including HNV-Link info update)	250	Nov 2017

Links

Baseline assessment process

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGYwr2lYUx8>

Report from the innovation seminar

<http://www.hnmlink.eu/download/BurrenInnovationseminarfinalreport.pdf>



Minister Michael Creed meets farmers from the HNV-Link seminar



Field walk at the Burren Winterage School

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