



Kerry Eco-Social Farming European Innovation Partnership 2022/23

End of Project Report – May 2023

Kerry Eco-Social Farming – an EIP integrated within a Voluntary Model of Social Farming, addressing biodiversity, inclusion and accessibility on farms in Kerry.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



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Figure 1: (On cover page) Many of the host farmers and social farming participants at the Meitheal on the Curran farm.

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Executive Summary

The Kerry Eco-Social Farming European Innovation Partnership Project (KESF EIP) answered the call for a locally led farm and community biodiversity initiative. This project brought an established group of farmers and an array of farm types and habitats in Kerry to deliver for biodiversity in local communities. Kerry Social Farming (KSF) is a social farming project which brings together farmers and local people with additional needs and acquired brain injuries together to complete farm activities. Host farmers in Kerry Social Farming offer their time voluntarily to facilitate farming activities for Kerry Social Farming Participants in the local community.

KSF is locally led, commencing in 2013 through works completed by South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP). SKDP currently operates in collaboration with North East West Kerry Development company (NEWKD) in order to facilitate the KSF. This model of social farming has shown innovation, resilience and meaningful connection to local peoples, along with delivering results for the primary funding body, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Operating social farms since 2014, KSF was founded on the principles of equality, social inclusion, voluntary community development and collaboration. It is currently one of two projects operating the voluntary model of social farming in Ireland. Social Farming Participants, who have additional needs, acquired brain injuries and utilising specific mental health services, work together with their host farmers on this locally-led, community-based, shared service that provides farming and social inclusion opportunities to the community.

KESF EIP was the first European Innovation Partnership Project to be integrated into a model of social farming, allowing vulnerable members of the community to get involved with farm-based nature actions, education, habitat management and monitoring. The project allowed for the linkage between Kerry Social Farming's volunteerism, disability support, inclusion and farm development, with the innovative nature enhancement of land through European Innovation Partnership.

In order to allow for this EIP report to be accessible for everyone involved, particular aspects are summarised non-technically. Regular photographs, fact boxes, graphs and maps are supplied within this report in order to facilitate the further understanding of the works completed by the KESF EIP project.

Across the entire KESF EIP project, 26 host farmers participated and 35 social farming participants across the county were engaged in nature-based actions, benefiting, birds, bats, semi-natural habitats, Special Areas of Conservation, wild pollinators and small mammals. The host farms ranged in characteristic from farm type, to dominant habitats, species populations and level of invasion from invasive non-native species.

In total, 185 training days were delivered across the project's lifespan. These training days catered to both host farmers and social farming participants, covering a wide range of nature-based actions and practices which may be useful on host farms. As a result of these informative training days and working group meetings, many different actions were completed across the county, including;

- 100 metres of 1m river buffer zone protected,
- 100 bird & bat boxes were supplied, maintained & installed,
- 85 solitary bee nesting habitats developed,
- 28.3 acres of invasive species managed (year 1 management),
- 10 tree veteranisation features developed,
- 8 small mammal wood piles & areas developed and managed,
- 4 wildlife ponds developed,
- 3.4 acres were managed for wildflowers,
- 2 km of hedgerow either developed and/ or improved,
- 2 viviparous lizard refuges installed,
- 1 cutover bog drain blocked,
- 1 section of drystone wall improved, and
- 1 section of sand martin habitat protected.



Figure 4: Drawing by Host Farmer Lisa Fingleton about bee scrapes

Non-Technical summary



With the logo expertly designed by Martin Murphy!



In 2022 they asked Luke to help...



Kerry Social Farming helps people from all different backgrounds to farm with famers who are giving their time freely. Kerry Social Farming does this through funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This funding allows the project to help the host farmers with farm upgrades and employs two farm facilitators, Rena and Evelyn, to help everyone involved.



Figure 5: Earl Leahy, Sean Riordan and support staff working together to make bird boxes

In 2021, the project team decided to apply for funding from the European Innovation Partnership programme. This allowed them to employ the project biodiversity officer, Luke, to help. Luke started with Kerry Social Farming in January 2022 and helped host farmers and social farming participants from all over Kerry get in touch with nature.



Figure 6: Luke presenting at Kerry Eco-Social Farming's Heritage Week 2022 event

Throughout 2022, Luke worked with many host farmers and participants to help nature on the farms. Some of the things that we did to help nature are: removing invasive plants, building and installing bird and bat boxes, cutting wildflower areas and developing hedgerows.



Figure 7: Pat O'Connor, John Fleming and Mary Fleming working hard on their host farm to remove Himalayan balsam

Fact box...#1

During the Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP project in 2022 and 2023 we saw a lot of invasive plants and animals across many of our host farms! One of the most prevalent species was **Himalayan Balsam**. This invasive plant, which is native to Asia, is found along river banks and roadsides across Kerry. The seedheads of this plant literally explode from the pods, allowing the seeds to be fired up to 10 metres away from the parent plant!

This report looks at how these actions were done and what lessons were learnt. We'd like to thank our host farmers, social farming participants, farm facilitators, service providers, operational groups, working group, participant parents and friends and support staff for making this all possible.

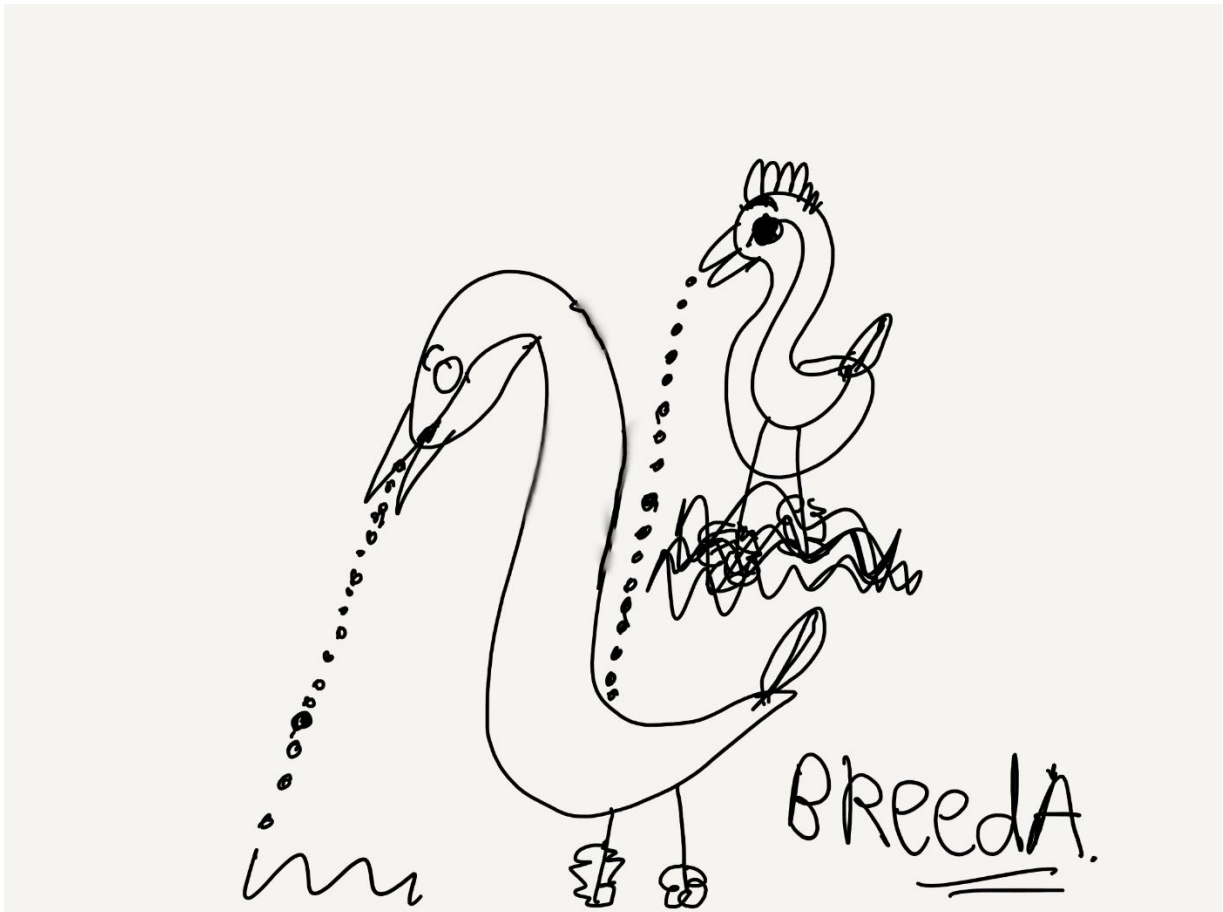


Figure 8: Drawing by Social Farming Participant Breeda O'Sullivan of wild birds

Appendix III notes the relevant terminology and definitions which are discussed within this report and associated with the overall project. These terms are particularly important when differentiating different aspects of nature, as to not cause confusion or mismanagement.

Introduction

Project Description

Kerry Eco-Social Farming Project: *an EIP integrated within a Voluntary Model of Social Farming, addressing biodiversity, inclusion and accessibility on farms in Kerry.*

This project addressed the issues of biodiversity, inclusion, and accessibility within the community through; training, habitat management and monitoring. Farmers and social farming participants had the opportunity to learn and put into practice nature-based actions, helping not only nature and those involved, but also farm productivity, through the provision of ecosystem services. These works helped farmers and social farming participants interact with a wider cohort of the community, building on the above issues locally. With the growing concern for nature and the environment, this project supported species and habitats through nature-based actions, benefiting nature, the productivity of the farm, host farmer, social farming participants and local community wellbeing.

Parent Project

Established in 2013 and operating social farms since 2014, Kerry Social Farming (KSF) was founded on the principles of equality, social inclusion, voluntary community development and collaboration. These issues, along with accessibility, are particularly evident within rural communities across County Kerry, in relation to farmers and vulnerable groups. This locally-led, community-based, shared service project provides farming opportunities to people within the county and allows farmers to give back to the community.

The Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity Project EIP-AGRI (KESF) is a project built on the pre-existing foundations of KSF and aimed to address not only those issues noted above, but also biodiversity within the farming landscape. It is acknowledged by the project that farmers are the custodians of the land and through cooperation, education and communication we can help preserve native species and semi-natural habitats in Kerry. Such preservation was shown to have direct positive effects of production on farms through eco-system services. Eco-system services are those which are produced as a result of nature-based actions. These services to society can include water filtration, pollination, pest control, carbon storage, medicinal plants for livestock, food, water storage, etc. By developing nature-based actions on our host farms, we've allowed for the farms to access these services, therefore assisting with farm productivity.

Biodiversity actions, as proven in existing EIP projects, were implemented through the project on host farms within the KSF Network. Alongside these practical actions, training was offered in an array of topics such as habitat management, pond development and nature monitoring for both host farmers and social farming participants. A system of monitoring to maintain standards in biodiversity has been provided to both host farmers and participants. The past training sessions, community events, action development and the ongoing nature monitoring and action management has/ will widen the opportunities of both host farmers and participants into potentially new avenues of business diversification, learning, nature-based farming, hobbies, ecosystem services and community contacts.

Kerry Eco-Social Farming

Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity EIP-AGRI is the first EIP to work within an existing model of social farming. This shows the ability of funded projects to collaborate, grow and develop new aspects to benefit a larger cohort of the community. This EIP allowed adults with additional needs, acquired brain

injuries and utilising specific mental health services to be instrumental in the development and monitoring of farm actions, assessment of farm biodiversity and data collection – **something which typical ‘Project to Farmer’ EIP-AGRI schemes have not yet achieved.** This project’s ‘Project to Farm, Participant, Service Provider & Wider Community’ model allows for an increased diversity of perspectives and approaches to be undertaken whilst completing farm actions, training and monitoring. These unique perspectives are highly valuable to Kerry Eco-Social Farming and KSF in order to allow for accessibility and inclusion.

This small-scale EIP was made feasible primarily through the Kerry Social Farming team who had laid the foundation via their voluntary model of social farming. Without this foundation of contacts, willing host farms, social farming participants, and service providers, the formation of this EIP would not have been possible.

The Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity Project has the potential to encourage other EIP-AGRIs to get involved with more ‘non-traditional’ actions, groups and peoples. The coming together of an array of abilities, experiences, and viewpoints has the potential to result in a stronger outcome for EIPs. Such an array of participants within a project has led to advanced innovation, accessibility, and inclusion within the space going forward. The expansion of the agricultural and ecology/ environmental science sectors for people with additional needs, and other groups, holds the potential for advanced learning, experience, and personal development for groups potentially not exposed to such aspects of rural life.



Figure 9: Hedgerow development commencing on the Lynch farm in late 2022

The Kerry Eco-Social Farming Project (KESF) supported an abundance of collaborative work with host farmers, participants from disability services and support workers from disability service providers; enhancing biodiversity and the understanding of the need for biodiversity through different cohorts and communities in Kerry. The need for greater awareness and local collaboration for farms, countryside and communities to promote biodiversity is evident. This project understood this and aimed to reach a wide cohort of people as well as a wide range of farms, in terms of farm type, and locations in Kerry. This project created a great positive change in biodiversity in the county. Though there are biodiversity projects in operation in Kerry such as, McGillycuddy Reeks EIP, ACRES. etc., this KESF project aimed to target a large geographical area and a wide cohort of people who will all be engaged on the ground in the delivery of proposed actions and monitoring of these actions on a regular basis.

Project Aims and Objectives

The aim of this project was to encourage host farmers and social farming participants to increase the area managed for nature on their farms, through habitat creation, management and improvement. The Integration of the host farmers and participants into monitoring, management and assessment of actions was key.

The main objectives of the project included;

- Assess the Biodiversity managed area for each participating host farm,
- Develop a biodiversity plan for each participating host farm,
- Deliver training to host farms and participants on topics such as hedgerow planting and management, coppicing, wildflower management, water quality management,
- Support farmers in implementing actions to provide habitat for pollinators, birds and bats,
- To promote the growth and sustainability of local wildlife and ecosystems in Kerry, and
- To build community awareness of biodiversity through host farmers, participants and service providers.



Figure 10: Host farmers in South Kerry meeting

Fact box...#2

Throughout 2022, many of our host farmers were interested in encouraging Barn Owls and other native birds of prey onto their farm. **Why is this?**

Well, our host farmers have noticed that different aspects of nature can provide different “services” for the farm. These are known as “ecosystem services”. In short, birds of prey help the farmer by keeping the invasive brown rat population under control, thus providing a service to the farmer. It is recommended that the use of rodenticide is decreased on farms, as rodenticide resistance and the accidental targeting of native rodent species are real issues.

Key Performance Indicators

The KESF project had a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to achieve. These KPIs are and their achievement are discussed in more detail below.

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators for Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP

KPI No.	Area	Target and metric	Reporting
KPI1	Project engagement	Minimum of 25 host farmers signed up to the project and 25 KSF participants identified to participate	Number of applications received from host farmers & number of farmers signed up to project actions by month 3
KPI2	Project actions	2.5km of Hedgerow created or improved by the end of the project	End of project review measured by reviewing biodiversity map of host farms participating
KPI3	Project actions	40 Bird and Bat boxes supplied to host farms	As above
KPI4	Project actions	40 Solitary bee habitats created on host farms	As above
KPI5	Project actions	5 acres managed for wildflowers	Same as above
KPI6	Training	25 farmers to have attended a minimum of two training session relating to specific project actions or habitat awareness 25 KSF participants to have attended trainings for same	To be reported in midterm report and additional trainings offered thereafter if required.
KPI7	Communications	Direct engagement with non-participating community members through events x200 Indirect engagement with project through social media and other outlets x 5000 Articles printed x 3 Mentions on local radio x 3	Direct engagement to be measured by attendance at community talks, school workshops and farm walks. Indirect engagement to be measure using online engagement metrics via social media channels and distribution of any printed materials.



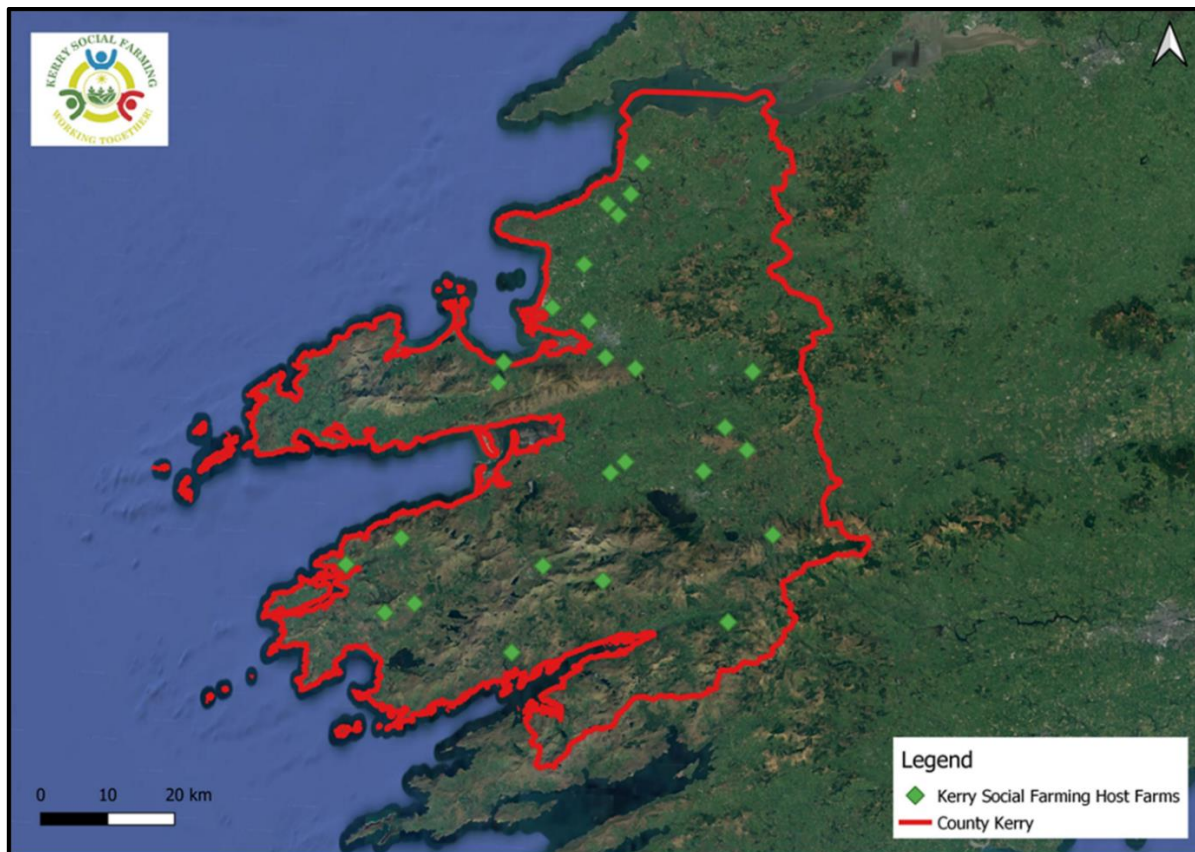
Figure 11: An Ashy Mining Bee found during the first bioblitz on the Lynch farm

Fact box...#3

The Ashy Mining Bee (*Andrena cineraria*) is one of our 77 species of solitary bee in Ireland. These lovely little grey bees use their very strong legs to dig into exposed areas of soil, in order to lay their eggs. The solitary mining bee loves a wide mix of habitats from woodland to heath, so it's important to make sure that each farm has a mix of different types of land. One of the main aims of the development of solitary bee habitat within KESF EIP was specifically to target bees, just like the Ashy Mining Bee!

Geographical location

The location of host farms who participated within the EIP is widespread across the county from Sneem to Ballybunion, with the most northerly farm being over 75km from the most southernly and the most easterly being 60km from the most westerly farm, as the crow flies.



Map 1: Distribution of participating host farms across the county of Kerry

Baseline data

Desktop assessments of all participating host farms were completed in Spring 2022. The assessment of background information associated with the farm, its surrounding areas and the species and habitats which potentially reside there, is a valuable step in determining the actions required, in order that they will adequately benefit local habitats and native species populations. These desktop assessments were conducted using data sets from a number of independent, semi-state and state funded bodies, schemes and projects, including; the National Biodiversity Data Centre, Teagasc, Birdwatch Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Corine 2000, and Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Field assessments took place on host farms across Spring 2022. These assessments were informed by the desktop assessment completed for each farm. Additional features, such as invasive species present, annex I habitats, semi-natural habitats, presence within an SPA, SAC, p/NHA and the presence of any species noted within annex I of the Habitats Directive, were recorded during this visit.

Permission was sought from the **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)** for the completion of actions, events and other activities within or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites.

Operational Group

Given the unique nature of the project, in tackling issues of social inclusion and accessibility, alongside actions for biodiversity, the operational group chosen was based on a requirement not only for understanding of implementing biodiversity actions on farms, but also for experience in education, training and accessibility to ensure the success of the project. The table below details the members of the Operational Group and their representative organisations/ groups.

Table 2: Operational Group

Project partner/ organisation	Nominated person
South Kerry Development Partnership	Noel Spillane (NS)
North and East Kerry Development Partnership	Dave Fitzgibbon (DF)
Kerry Social Farming Working Group Representative	Tom Sears (TS)
Biosphere Officer – Kerry Biosphere Reserve	Eleanor Turner (ET)/ Brendan Kirwan (BK)
Transition Kerry	Ian McGregor (IMG)
Host farm representative	Seamus Howard (SH)
Host farm representative	Irene Brune (IB)
Teagasc	Kevin O Sullivan (KOS)
NPWS	Danny O’Keeffe (DOK)
Munster Technological University	Dr. Therese Higgins (TH)
Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP	Luke Myers (LM)

In total, eleven operational group meetings for KESF EIP were completed across 2022 and 2023. These meetings are noted in table 3 below.

Table 3: Operational Group Meetings throughout 2022 & 2023

Meeting No.	Date	Those in attendance
1	28/02/2022	TS, LM, IB, SH, DF, ET, KOS, TH, DOK, NS & IMG
2	11/04/2022	TS, LM, IB, SH, DF, ET, KOS, TH, NS & IMG
3	26/05/2022	SH, TS, LM, IB, ET, NS, TH, DOK & DF
4	29/06/2022	SH, TS, LM, IB, NS, TH, KOS
5	16/08/2022	SH, LM, NS, TH, KOS
6	04/10/2022	IMG, LM, TS, TH, IB, DF, KOS & NS
7	07/10/2022	IB, KOS, LM, TS, TH, BF, NS & SH
8	25/01/2023	IB, IMG, TS, KOS, BK, NS, LM, SH & TH
9	01/03/2023	IB, KOS, LM, TS, TH, BK, DF
10	27/03/2023	NS, IB, TS, KOS, LM
11	24/05/2023	NS, LM, TH, TS, IB

The main role of the Operational Group was to oversee the day-to-day running of the project and provide advice to the Project Biodiversity Officer in relation to payments, agriculture, actions, sustainability, planning and other topics. Throughout 2022 & 2023, the Operational Group greatly assisted in the running of the project, assisting with account development, document review and determination and deciding on particular aspects of the project layout.

An Operational Group agreement was drawn up in order to make clear the roles and responsibilities of all partners of Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity Project Operational Group. This was signed by all members of the Group. This agreement stated the main position of the operational group and allowed for members to identify any potential conflicts of interest which may have arisen as a result of being members of the operational group.

Meetings of the operational group were held online via Zoom, accommodating potentially busy schedules of those involved. The meetings were pre-arranged with an appropriate agenda forwarded to all members well in advance. The minutes and supporting documentation associated with each meeting were then circulated after each meeting. This allowed time for members of the group to review these documents.

The first operational group meeting, which took place on the 28th of February 2022, composed of a detailed overview of the entire EIP project, with a brief background on the history of EIPs and the learnings associated. The KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) were presented to the Operational Group, along with an explanation of their own role as per the agreed operational group agreement. This ensured that all operational group members were clear as to the aims and objectives of the project and the input involved by each.

Typical agenda items covered during the operational group meetings include; attendance & apologies, minutes & matters arising, updates from the project officer in terms of work/actions completed since the previous meeting and work/actions planned, financial update vis a vis the approved budget, budget changes, rates of payments for actions, requests for assistance by the Project Biodiversity Officer for specific expertise associated with a project task, etc, planning for significant events , i.e. project launch & closure event, details of upcoming/planned events, review of final report.



Figure 12: Drawing by Host Farmer Lisa Fingleton of the Action Management training course

Project Launch

On the 23rd of May 2022, the Kerry Eco-Social Farming European Innovation Partnership Project was officially launched. The launch event took place on the Manna Organic Farm in Camp, Co. Kerry, and was well attended with more than 60 people including Minister Pippa Hackett, host farmers, social farming participants, press, other EIPs, DAFM and members of the public.



Figure 13: Attendees at the launch of the KESF project at Mana Organic Farm in Camp Co. Kerry on 23rd May 2022

The event commenced with addresses from Kevin O’Sullivan of Teagasc and Chairperson of the Kerry Eco-Social Farming Operational Group, discussing the background the project and EIPs in general. This was followed by speakers including Joseph McCrohan, from SKDP/Kerry Social Farming - discussing the background to the unique voluntary model of social farming along with the Irish landscape, Minister Hackett, who discussed the need more EIPs which revolve around inclusion, and Luke Myers, Project Biodiversity Officer of KESF EIP – who informed farmers what to expect from the Project.

The attendees of the event were then treated to a farm walk by Thomas O’Connor of Manna Organic Farm. During the talk, Thomas discussed the use of fungi on his farm in order to provide additional nutrients and opportunities for his crops. The attendees also looked at the various methods of ‘air pruning’, a technique which Thomas uses in order to take rooted cuttings from plants for propagation. Everyone was very impressed by Thomas and Claire’s willow hen enclosures, which compose of live willow stakes growing in a dome shape allowing the hens and fowl to have shelter.



Figure 14: Pippa Hackett T.D. Minister of State for Agriculture with responsibility for land use and biodiversity addresses the attendees at the launch of the KESF project at Manna Organic Farm in Camp Co. Kerry on 23rd May 2022

The event and project in general were well reported in a number of publications and media outlets including;

- The Independent - <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/kerryman/news/kerry-social-farming-partnership-to-benefit-both-the-host-farmers-and-participants-41714522.html>
 - Agriland - <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/minister-launches-eco-social-farming-eip-in-kerry/>
 - Radio Kerry - <https://www.radiokerry.ie/news/innovative-social-eco-farming-project-launched-in-kerry-282829>
 - The Avondhu - <https://avondhupress.ie/heading-up-kerry-eco-social-farming-biodiversity-project/>
- And many more...

Training

Training courses were delivered to host farmers, social farming participants and interested members of the public, who expressed an interest in joining Kerry Eco-Social Farming. This allowed the project to expand its awareness across the county. Training courses ranged in topic from the invasive species assessment and management to bird box building. Information associated to specific training events is present within Appendix I of this report, along with more photos and drawings associated.



Figure 15: Host farmers and social farming participants at Meitheal no. 2



Figure 16: Host farmers and members of the public at the pond development course

Table 4: Training courses and prescribed events throughout 2022 and 2023

Number	Training Courses/ Prescribed Events	Location	Date
1	Habitat Awareness (South Kerry)	Sneem	22nd April 2022
2	Habitat Awareness (North Kerry)	Ballybunion	28th April 2022
3	Invasive Species case study - Rhododendron with Trisha Dean of the McGillicuddy Reeks EIP	Lisbawn, Cahersiveen	6th May 2022
4	Bioblitz 1 (Monitoring nature) - Lynch Farm	Kilcummin	14th May 2022
5	Bioblitz 2 (Monitoring nature) - Kelly Farm	Ballymallis	21st May 2022
6	Knapsack & Herbicide – with the McGillicuddy Reeks EIP	Killarney	7th and 8th July 2022
7	Bioblitz 3 (Monitoring nature) - Sears Farm	Tralee	9th July 2022
8	Farmland pond development -Gortbrack Organic Farm	Ballyseedy	20th July 2022
9	Meithael 1 (Himalayan Balsam treatment) - Brosnan Farm	Cordal	21st July 2022
10	Meithael 2 (Himalayan Balsam treatment) - Fleming Farm	Kilcummin	9th August 2022
11	Heritage Week (with Live Eco-museum) - Shea Farm	Canuig	15th August 2022
12	Meithael 3 (Bird box development and drystone wall demonstration) - Curran Farm	Kilmackerri n West	13th September 2022
13	Meitheal 4 (Rhododendron management) - McDonnell	Lisbawn, Cahersiveen	25th October 2022
14	Meitheal 5 (Bracken management) - Teterroo	Glenflesk	10th November 2022
15	At home training with Kellihers	Knockagow na	23rd September 2022
16	Action Management	Ballyseedy	6 th March 2023
17	Meitheal 6 (American Skunk Cabbage Removal) - Kelly	Ballymallis	13 th March 2023



Figure 17: Hard work being completed during an invasive species management meitheal



Figure 18: Attendees searching for different pond insects during the action management event



Figure 19: Cathal Moriarty, Christy McDonnell & Mike O'Shea working on their cutting technique in advance of Rhododendron treatment

Monitoring

In order to allow the observation, monitoring and recording of nature into the future, all participating host farms were given an action **monitoring pack** filled with books, posters, magnifying sheets, insect observation containers, identification keys, and swatches. This equipment will allow future monitoring of host farm actions, involving the social farming family and participants through the process of enhancing host farms for nature. Through the addition of these resources, the social farming experience is enhanced with new areas of learning, observation, and interaction in order to occupy the social farming day.



Figure 20: Posters and keys delivered to host farms within the monitoring pack



Figure 21: Swatches delivered to host farms in the monitoring pack

In addition to the monitoring packs, a **trail camera loan scheme** has been set up between all twenty-six host farms within the project. Through this scheme, host farmers can have a loan of a trail camera for a period of time. This will allow the host farm to take note of the wildlife on the farm and document it. Again, this action enhances the social farming experience for the participants and also integrates new technologies into their lives. See figure 23, below for the Kerry Social Farming Trail camera loan scheme poster.



Figure 22: Lisa, Bronagh and John reviewing trail camera footage

The recording, via photograph or video, and submitting of observations of all species of wildlife to the **National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)** is very important in the dissemination of data gathered by the project. Records submitted to the NBDC are assessed by a team of ecologists and the resulting data is freely available for anyone to access. This data is particularly useful during large scale developments, where impacts to natural habitats and species populations may be an issue. During all three of the farm bioblitzs, which were undertaken across host farms in 2022, species observations and sightings were recorded and submitted to the NBDC. In total, over 220 individual species of plant, animal, insect, moss and fungi were identified across these farms and these records were submitted.



Figure 23: Trail camera loan scheme poster

Host farms were also given posters and nature swatches for both the host farmer and social farming participant in order to document nature using the '5 min nature walk' method , for both the host farmer and social farming participant in order to document nature using the '**5 min nature walk**' method. Host farmers and participants are asked to take five minutes out their social farming day to walk around the farm and record any observations of nature which they find. This could be seeing a worm, robin, a flowering plant in the field, some frog spawn or prints in the mud.

During 2022, KESF worked with Kerry County Council in order to provide information relating to the expansion of nature-based identification books in libraries across the county. This resulted in a large number of identification keys and swatches being purchased and dispersed throughout the participating host farms, assisting with the learnings and monitoring ability of the entire county. Along with this, the Project Biodiversity Officer also gave a talk on the tools available to the public for identifying and recording nature observations.



Figure 24: Display in Cahersveen Library where the nature observation event took place

The National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) were consulted with in relation to the obtaining of specific permissions relating to the photographing (using trail cameras) of protected species and their homes.



Figure 25: Trail camera footage of a hedgehog on the Brosnan host farm

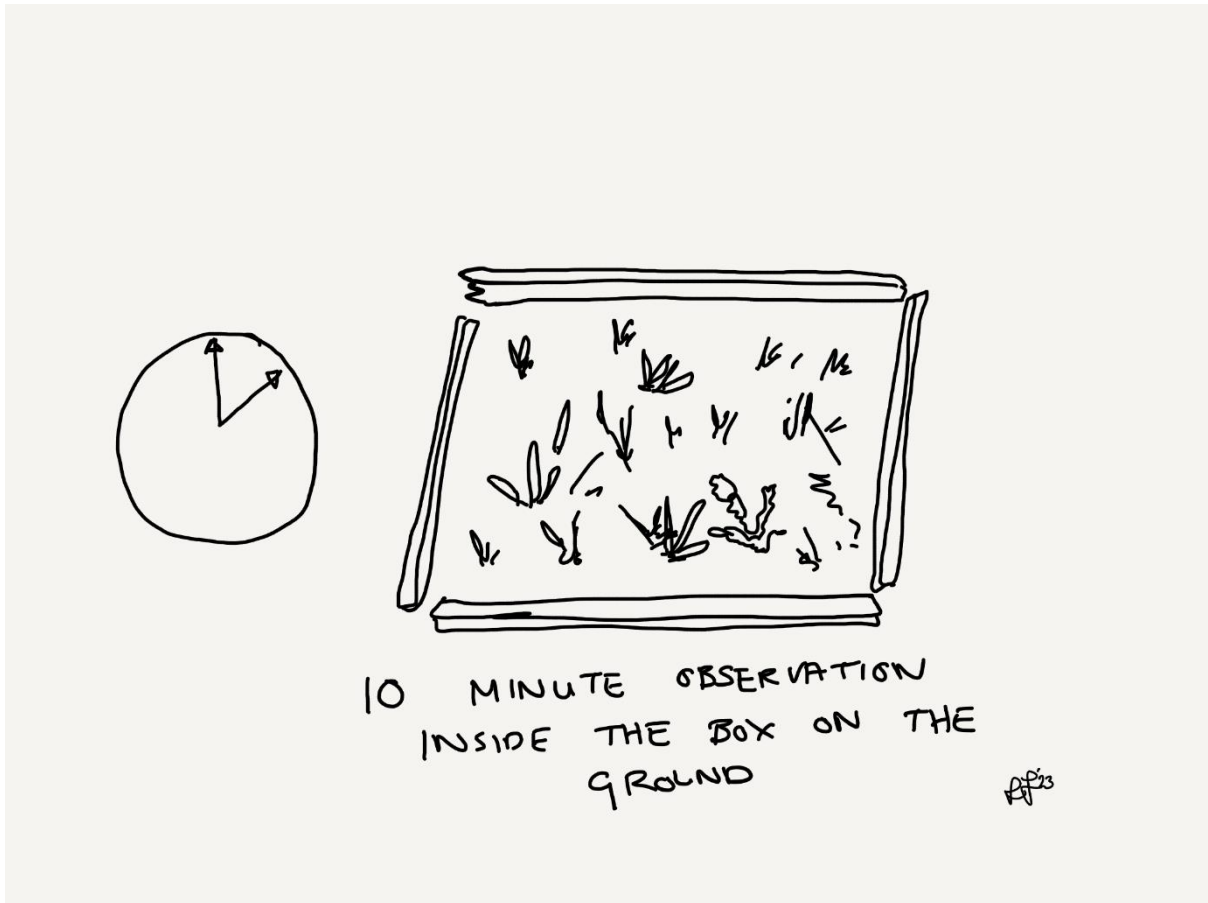


Figure 26: Drawing by Host Farmer Lisa Fingleton about the FIT Count monitoring method

Along with trail cameras, the KESF EIP also engaged host farmers to complete Flower-Insect Timed Counts (Fit Count) on their farms, during the appropriate weather conditions. More information can be found about this method of monitoring at <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>

Events & Collaboration

Over thirteen separate local events were attended by KESF across 2022 & 2023, of these the Project Biodiversity Officer, Luke, was asked to speak at all of them about nature, inclusion and EIPs. KESF EIP collaborated with a number of organisations during this project, the events and collaborations undertaken as part of the KESF EIP include;

- Ballinskelligs Environmental Action Group,
 - Green Day 2022 – where the Project Biodiversity Officer, Luke Myers, gave a talk about KESF EIP.
 - Green Day 2023 – where Luke collaborated with LIVE Eco-museum’s Fiach Byrne in order to deliver a joint nature walk.
- Transition Kerry – event in Currow where Luke gave his opinion to members of the community and helped out with actions in order to enhance the local area for wildlife,
- Killarney Men’s Shed – collaborative event with the men’s shed where Luke gave a talk on birds and bird boxes to members of the public,
- National Parks and Wildlife Service – Local rangers and members of parks staff attended multiple events and joined Luke on site visits across 2022 in order to give their expert opinion,
- LIVE Eco-museum,
 - Iveragh Chough survey in Caherciveen where Luke surveyed Beentee Mountain for evidence of the species.
 - Caherciveen Library nature evening, where Luke teamed up with Fiach Byrne in order to discuss nature with members of the public in Caherciveen.
- Heritage Week 2022 – Luke again teamed up with Fiach Byrne in order to discuss nature and local heritage with members of the public in Dromid,
- Kerry Social Farming,
 - KSF Annual Meeting 2022 – Where Luke talked about KESF EIP.
 - KSF Annual Meeting 2023 – Where Luke talked about KESF EIP.
- Iveragh Learning Landscapes 2022 – Luke joined in on an evening panel discussion about nature,
- Killorglin Community College – Luke attended with KSF farm facilitators in order to spread the word about the EIP,
- UCC – in 2023 Luke was asked to discuss the EIP with 2nd year students on the Diploma of Environment, Sustainability and Climate course in University College Cork,
- And Kerry Biosphere Reserve
 - Calendar Launch, where Luke discussed the significance of the EIP project particularly in relation to its presence within the Kerry Biosphere Reserve.
 - Bioblitz 1 & 2, where Creative Ireland funding, secured by the Kerry Biosphere Reserve, was used to complete two bioblitz events with a host farmer present to produce paintings of the events.



Figure 27: Attendees at the closing event of KESF EIP

Use of skills

All 26 participating host farmers and 35 social farming participants were noted as holding specific expertise and skills in a wide variety of topics, from social media, permaculture, photography, drystone wall development, education, art, etc. These skills were utilised through the project in a number of ways.

Martin Murphy, a social farming participant who is gifted in illustration and design, was asked to design the EIP project logo, as seen below. The logo depicts Martin’s host farm and his host farmer Joan Brosnan. Martin’s artwork allowed for further enhancement and reach of the project, through the presence of a logo, the project was able to become recognisable within the public of Kerry. For this the project is very thankful to Martin.



Figure 28: Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP logo as designed by Martin Murphy

The skillsets of **nine** host farmers were used within this project in order to provide educational, artistic and action management expertise. These specific skillsets allowed the project to provide in-depth support to social farming participants during training courses, allowed for host farmers to deliver the pond training course and drystone wall demonstration, and facilitated to developed of art throughout the project, much of which is presented within this report.



Figure 29: Earl Leahy, Stephen Brosnan, & Patrick O'Sullivan making bird boxes

Irene Brune, a host farmer with previous experience in working with people with additional needs, assisted through her knowledge of learning and mentoring people with disabilities. During a number of training courses, Irene was paid in order to provide support to social farming participants with the educational outcomes of each training course.

Ian MacGregor, a host farmer with experiencing running a nature education centre (Gortbrack Organic Farm), assisted the project through the delivery of a number of training courses for the project. These courses included pond development and the management of specific nature-based actions.

Mike O'Shea, a host farmer with experience in drystone wall building, gave a demonstration on how a drystone wall can be developed in the upland landscape, noting the benefits of these walls to nature. Drystone wall building is a talent that has been handed down through generations of farmers and stone masons in the area.

A large proportion of hedgerow stock, including willow rods, bareroot plants and potted plants, were purchased from organic host farms within the project. The horticultural skillsets of the farmers and social farming participants of these farms was used to harvest and care for these plants until the new hedgerow development or improvement sites were ready. Farmers who assisted with this process included; **Thomas O'Connor** (of Manna Organic Farm), **Tom Sears** (of Scotia Farm), **Rena Blake** (of Barna Way) and **Ian McGregor** (of Gortbrack Organic Farm).

During collaboration with the Kerry Biosphere Reserve and the subsequent bioblitz and men’s shed events which were developed, the project hired a host farmer and artist, **Amanda Curran**, in order to record the events via their chosen medium. The artworks produced can be seen below. Along with this, the skillsets of artist and host farmer **Lisa Fingleton** were also used. Lisa attended a number of events throughout 2023 and used her illustrations in order to depict the scene during these days,



Figure 30: A depiction of the Bioblitz 2 event By Amanda Curran

Eamon Horgan, a host farmer and owner of Woodland Tree Services, was identified as having particular skills and expertise in tree surgery and management. Eamon’s skills were put to use on the Kelleher farm where he assisted the host farmers through the development of 10 tree veteranisation features. Accounts of this management can be found in Appendix IV.



Figure 31: Host Farmer Eamon Horgan veteranising trees on the Kelleher farm

Meitheals

Meitheal working group events were setup in early Summer 2022 in order to bring Kerry Eco-social farming participants and host farmers together to tackle particular issues on individual host farms. These meitheal working events centred around a number of topics associated with helping nature including; management of invasives, management of nuisance species, building bird and bat boxes, and re-visiting invasive species management sites for signs of regeneration.

KESF EIP’s Biosecurity Protocol was adhered to during these meitheals in order to avoid transition of these invasive species across other host farms.

Table 5: Meitheals completed throughout 2022

Meitheal No.	Date	Location	Works
1	21 st July 22	Cordal	Physical management of Himalayan balsam
2	9 th August 22	Kilcummin	Physical management of Himalayan balsam
3	13 th September 22	Kilmackerrin West	Bird box development
4	25 th October 22	Lisbawn	Rhododendron management techniques
5	10 th November 22	Glenflesk	Bracken management techniques
6	13 th March 23	Ballymallis	American Skunk Cabbage assessment and treatment

Table 6: Attendance count at meitheals

Meitheal	Date	Host farmers	Social farming participants	KSF staff/ Service provider staff	Members of the public
1	21 st July 22	4	1	1	0
2	9 th August 22	7	5	3	2
3	13 th September 22	15	20	10	5
4	25 th October 22	4	3	2	0
5	10 th November 22	8	7	4	0
6	13 th March 23	8	10	4	0



Figure 32: Meitheal no. 2 Host Farmers and Social Farming Participants helping remove Himalayan Balsam



Figure 33: Lisa Fingleton's drawing of Luke Myers and Daniel Casey at a meitheal using a scythe



Figure 34: John Fleming, Pat O'Connor and Luke Myers managing Himalayan Balsam on the Fleming host farm

Results

Key Performance Indicators

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), as noted in Table 1, are targets detailed within the tender document which indicate the success of the EIP project. These KPIs are discussed below in terms of their achievement.

Indicator aim: *KPI1 Minimum of 25 host farmers signed up to the project and 25 KSF participants identified to participate*

Achieved: 26 host farmers signed up and active within KESF, along with 33 social farming participants.

Notes: In total, 26 host farmers signed up to KESF. Of these, 4 do not hold an active herd number.



Figure 35: Host farmers and participants on a host farm looking at cattle

Indicator aim: *KPI2 2.5km of Hedgerow created or improved*

Achieved: In total 2km of hedgerows have been created or improved.

Notes: This KPI was not fully achieved due to a number of factors, including the short timeframe of the project, hedgerow development timings, and the purchase of adequate hedgerow stock. Only hedgerow stock of 1 year + in age was purchased within this project as to prevent the need for plastic weed barrier membranes. Also, a number of participating farms were upland farms which were not conducive to the planting of hedgerow.

Species of hedgerow stock such as Spindle/ Feoras (*Euonymus europaeus*), Alder/ Fearn (*Alnus glutinosa*), Grey willow, Oak/ Darach (*Quercus robur*), Rowan/ Caorthann (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Guelderrose/ Caor chon (*Viburnum opulus*), and Blackthorn/ Draighean (*Prunus spinosa*) were used to create and improve hedgerows across Kerry. Hawthorn (Whitethorn)/ Sceach gheal (*Crataegus monogyna*) was the most dominant species used. Non-native willow species were also used in hedgerows adjacent to farmyards and where the species occurs already on the farm. These species include; Crack willow (*Salix fragilis*).

Indicator aim: *KPI3 40 Bird and Bat boxes supplied to host farms*

Achieved: In total 50 bird nesting boxes were supplied to host farmers and installed on the host farms, as constructed by local men’s shed groups. These boxes ranged from pre-constructed and already constructed forms, allowing host farmers and social farming participants to spend time constructing and painting. These bird boxes ranged in size and form, as per suitability for a number of species including; Blue tit/ Meantán gorm (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Great tit/ Meantán mór (*Parus major*), Starling/ Druid (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Robin/ Spideog (*Erithacus rubecula*), and Barn owl/ Scréachóg reilige (*Tyto alba*).

In total 50 bat roosting boxes were supplied to host farmers and installed on the host farms, as constructed by local men’s shed groups. These boxes ranged from pre-constructed and already constructed forms, allowing host farmers and social farming participants to spend time constructing.

Notes: This accounts for a total of 100 bird and bat roosting and nesting boxes provided to participating farms and social farming participants and installed on the participating host farms.



Figure 36: A solitary bee scrape found with bees actively nesting

Indicator aim: *KPI4 40 Solitary bee habitats created on host farms*

Achieved: In total 85 solitary bee nesting boxes and habitats were developed across host farms.

Notes: This includes 20 solitary bee cavity nesting boxes and the development of 65 solitary mining bee habitats within southernly exposed dry soil ditches. During the bioblitz events throughout 2022, a number of solitary bee species were identified on host farms, including the Ashy Mining Bee (*Andrena cineraria*).

Indicator aim: *KPI5 5 acres managed for wildflowers*

Achieved: In total 3.4 acres have been managed for wildflowers during 2022 & 2023.

Notes: This KPI was not fully achieved due to participating host farmers not having enough areas which they wished to be used for wildflower meadow management.

The main aspects of management of areas of ground for the benefit of wildflowers include a single annual cutting of the area and subsequent removing the clippings from the site. This will allow the nutrient content of the soil to be reduced, native wildflower seed to grow with reduced competition from grasses. This wildflower seed was not sown into the area, but allowed to grow naturally from the seedbank, already present within the soil.



Figure 37: Trail camera footage of Red Foxes with prey within an area of woodland full of wildflowers

Indicator aim: *KPI6 25 farmers to have attended a minimum of two training session relating to specific project actions or habitat awareness 25 KSF participants to have attended trainings for same*

Achieved: In total, 15 training sessions were delivered across 2022 & 2023 with 185 training days delivered across the 15 months of the project to host farmers and social farming participants. Host farmers attending 4.4 training events on average each. Social farming participants attended 2.18 training sessions on average each.

Notes: This KPI was achieved with over 925 training hours delivered across 2022 & 2023.

Indicator aim: *KPI7 Direct engagement with non-participating community members through events x200, Indirect engagement with project through social media and other outlets x5000, Articles printed x3, and mentions on local radio x3.*

Achieved: Yes, see below for details.

Notes: In total, 300+ non-participating community members were engaged through their attendance at the 27 events, training courses, meitheals and bioblitzes. KESF EIP utilised the KSF Facebook page to spread awareness about the EIP. This page has 1,181 likes and a reach of 15,703 accounts across whom were actively engaged with posts throughout the lifetime of the project. KESF EIP set up an Instagram page in early 2022 and currently has 232 followers with 621 likes and 10 comments. Across 2022 & 2023, KESF EIP posted actively on KSFs Twitter page, which has 800 followers. KESF also had a section on the KSF website <http://www.kerrysocialfarming.ie/eco>.

12+ online and print news articles were developed, discussing the EIP in 2022 & 2023, including The Avondu Newspaper (print) 36,000 weekly readers, Independent.ie (online) with print reaching over 500,000 readers per day and Agriland (online) 60,000 daily readers. On 4 occasions the project was discussed and audio from the project played on the local radio station (Kerry Radio), with a weekly listenership of 90,000.



Figure 38: Shane Savage, Mike Shea & Anthony O'Connor at the KESF EIP project launch as publicised in The Kerryman

Open actions

In order to assist host farmers and participant abilities, additional actions were recommended per farm. This was also based on specific aspects which the host farmer wished to undertake as part of the project. Aspects of the 'Open Action' included; the management of invasive species, small mammal habitat development, river buffer zone development, etc.

Open actions were additional actions over and above those noted within the project's KPIs and tender documents. These sub-actions reflect in effect additional project KPIs delivered that were not envisaged in the original tender proposal to DAFM.

As a result of this action type, the below sub-actions were completed;

- 28.3 acres of invasive species managed (year 1 management),
- 10 tree veteranisation features developed,
- 8 small mammal wood piles & areas developed and managed,
- 4 wildlife ponds developed,
- 2 viviparous lizard refuges installed,
- 1 cutover bog drain blocked,
- 1 section of drystone wall improved, and
- 1 section of sand martin habitat protected.

In relation to the management of invasive plant species across the project;

- The treatment (1st year summer treatment) of 12 acres Annex-I wet woodland for American Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*),
- The treatment (1st year summer treatment) of two farms infected by Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), equating to an area of 10 acres and 0.3 acres managed in total,
- The treatment of a Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) across three farms, equating to an area of 5, 0.9 and 0.1 acres in total.



Figure 39: Micheal O'Connor, Brendan O'Sullivan and Stephen Brosnan removing American Skunk Cabbage by hand

Action Inspection

The inspection of actions completed on host farms was undertaken across the lifetime of the project, with a particular emphasis placed on the assessment of actions during February, March and April 2023. In total, 24 of the overall 26 farms within the project were inspected. This accounts for an inspection rate of just over 92%.

Ecological data collected

Species records were noted and documented throughout the project. These records continue to be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre for assessment and approval into their national dataset, allowing for the legacy of KESF EIP to live on benefiting nature and research within the county.



Figure 40: Lisa Fingleton's drawing of Participant Breeda O'Sullivan scything

Financial Report

The total project budget as approved by DAFM was €128,550. This budget covered a number of cost elements of the project. **Administration costs** comprised the salary costs of the project officer, his travel costs and related office & administration costs. The total for administration costs within the project was €50,000. The remaining budget of €78,550 covered **the farm action costs & PR & Communication costs**. The farm action costs covered the on-farm biodiversity actions, the farm labour costs and plant hire costs for carrying out these actions, training costs for the host farmers & participants, costs for monitoring the project – wildlife cameras. The PR & Communication costs covered the costs of updating the project website.

The KESF project budget was closely monitored by the project operational group. A number of budget changes were discussed and agreed at the operational group meeting number 3 in May 2022. These proposed changes were detailed and forwarded to DAFM for their approval.

The project achieved a 100% spend of its project budget. Set out below in table 7 is the project revised budget versus actual expenditure report. Administration costs came in slightly under budget at 97%. Savings on office & admin costs were largely accounted for by additional costs for travel & subsistence. These additional costs arose because the participating host farms were dispersed right across the county, which involved significant travel by the project officer when visiting these farms.

Despite budget variances within a number of the budget categories within the Farm Actions budget sub-category, overall, the farm actions budget came in on target at 100%. Underspends on farm labour & plant hire costs were offset by additional costs for farming & participant training and bird & bat boxes. Additional costs were incurred for the farmer training because a lot more training events were held due to greater demand than what was envisaged in the tender submitted to DAFM. Also, it was envisaged in the tender that 25 KSF participants would participate in the KESF project – however 35 participated and took part in project activities. A training payment of €100 to each of the participants was envisaged per the tender. The operational group agreed to increase this payment to €150 per participant to fully recognise their efforts and contributions to the project. As some of the participants did not have a bank account, sanction was received from DAFM to present each of these participants with a gift card to the value of €150. All other participants were paid by cheque. In total 35 payments to social farming participants were distributed, equating to a value of €5,250.

Table 7: KESF Budget V Actual Expenditure

Budget Category	Budget	Actual Expenditure	% Expenditure
Administration			
Salaries	€42,600	€41,876	98%
Office & Admin Costs	€5,000	€3,979	78%
Travel Expenses	€5,400	€6,937	101%
Sub-Total	€53,000	€52,792	97%
Farm Action Costs			
Hedge Planting	€10,500	€11,134	106%
Bat & Bird Boxes	€1,300	€4,056	312%
Plant Hire	€7,000	€3,463	49%
Open Action	€3,000	€2,324	76%
Farm Labour	€32,800	€19,819	77%

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Farm & Project Materials	€1,300	€2,403	184%
Training Costs – Host Farmers	€14,500	€25,028	172%
Participant Training Costs	€2,500	€5,250	210%
Wildlife Cameras	€1,400	€1,542	110%
Monitoring Cameras	€750	€0	0%
Sub-Total	€75,050	€75,021	100%
PR & Communications			
Updating Website	€500	€738	148%
Overall Total	€128,550	€128,550	100%

All financial records pertaining to the project are retained at the SKDP head office at West Main Street Cahersiveen and will be retained by SKDP for a period of 6 years and will be available should DAFM or its agents wish to conduct an audit of the project expenditure.

SKDP underwent an audit/administration check of the project by DAFM on Wednesday 22nd February 2023 at the SKDP head office in Cahersiveen. The Department are required to visit each project during their lifetime to verify that the project has been implemented in accordance with the approved project plan. The audit/inspection focused on the procedures and processes for the oversight of the administration and management of the project. The following documentation was made available by SKDP to facilitate the audit/inspection

- Contracts of Employment
- Governance Procedures E.g.: GDPR & Risk Management & T&C's
- Leases or Hire Purchase Agreements
- Rental Agreements
- List of Assets with a residual value of €1k or more at the time the project ends.
- Invoices
- Payroll
- Bank Statements

The outcome of the audit/inspection was positive. The lack of a second bank account was the only finding. DAFM regard that it is preferable that EIPs hold one account for farmer payments and one account for admin implementation. SKDP has noted this recommendation going forward for any future EIPs it may deliver.

SKDP requested a three-month project extension from DAFM to extend the project end date from December 31st 2022 to March 31st 2023. This was to ensure that all actions could be completed by the host farmers. The project three-month extension was approved by DAFM on 24th October 2022.

Lessons Learned

Utilisation of skillsets

Utilising pre-existing skillsets within the group of host farmers and participants was particularly beneficial for the project. Particularly when working with people with additional needs, a familiar face giving a demonstration is much more valuable than a stranger unknown to everyone. We found that, through utilising the skillsets of host farmers and participants, we were able to further enhance the learnings and experiences, along with retaining project funds between the group. The use of skills within the project has been noted above. We envisage that the current skill base of host farmers and participants could be further used for specific nature-based activities such as: tree coppicing, hedgerow laying, drystone wall development, seed collection and propagation, cutting propagation, seed collection, art and design, photography, social media, scything, transportation of conservation grazing livestock, husbandry of conservation grazing livestock and so on.

Team support

Support from the Kerry Social Farming project administrator, Julie Brosnan, was highly valuable during this entire project. In future projects, there should be a greater emphasis within budgets for administrative support, in order to free-up time for the project officers to work on the ground.

Inclusion within nature and science projects

Involving wider cohorts of the community to nature and science projects, including people with additional needs, acquired brain injuries, people suffering from addiction, the elderly, early school leavers and other groups ‘at risk’ of community exclusion is a vital aspect of this project and should be replicated. The inclusion of all peoples within farming, science and community projects appears to be lacking, particularly in EIPs. More person-centred nature-projects, like KESF EIP, are needed in rural Ireland in order to make nature observation, recording and management more inclusive for everyone.

Funding for Social Farming

Host farmers and social farming participants responded well to this EIP, noting that in particular the training courses and meitheals on other host farms allowed them to interact with more host farms and see how their own farming and social farming practices could be developed. This was particularly the case during the Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP Project Launch Event, where Minister of State for Agriculture with responsibility for land use and biodiversity, Pippa Hackett T.D., enquired to the host farmer of Manna Organic Farm, Thomas O’Connor about the specific pruning techniques used on the farm. In order to continue to provide such interaction, as seen during the KESF EIP in 2022 and 2023, more funding for Kerry Social Farming and other projects like it is required.

Fact box...#4

Tree veteranisation is a technique used in mainland Europe in order open up new micro-habitats and nesting opportunities within woodlands and treelines. It is largely composed of the purposefully damaging young (not old or veteran trees) in specific ways so as to mimic the damage and wounds which would naturally over many years on old trees. This damage can cause rot within the tree, forming cavities or areas of deadwood, suitable for different insects, birds, plants and fungi. This technique should only be completed with prior consultation with an ecologist and should not be completed within a protected area.

Actions to Carry Forward

Kerry Social Farming continue to function as one of the only two social farming projects in Ireland which functions via the voluntary model. Resulting in a robust project delivering maximum impact to local people with additional needs, acquired brain injuries, the elderly, early school leavers and those utilising mental health services. KESF has allowed Kerry Social Farming to become more integrated into nature-based activities, broadening the scope of activities and farming practices which host farmers and social farming participants can complete together. This development of Kerry Social Farming will lead to advanced learnings and passions within the project, assisting with further innovation.

The trail camera loan scheme, nature pack provision and action monitoring and maintenance will allow host farmers and social farming participants to continue to learn and grow within the farm. Through the provision of these unique educational tools, a further understanding of the uses and needs of nature within the farm can be realised. A WhatsApp group of participating host farmers, interested in nature, has been formed. This group will allow passionate farmers the opportunity to update Kerry Social Farming about their actions and discuss their passions for nature and the environment along with how managing nature can assist with the productivity of the farm, through ecosystem services.

This EIP has opened up more community-based opportunities for Kerry Social Farming. A number of nature activity meitheals took place across 2022, allowing host farmers, social farming participants and members of the public to attend other participating host farms in order to assist with actions. These meitheals proved to be highly beneficial for project moral and allowed for advanced learnings in the way of invasive and nuisance native species management, bird box making, and species recording.

This project has shown that the utilisation of the wealth of varied skillsets and talents held by both host farmers and social farming participants can be used in order to both benefit the social farming experience, but also the associated project. The payment of host farmers and social farming participants for bio diversity actions provided is important and should be retained within any future EIP projects.

Additional focus will be made in order to continue such EIPs into the future, with a focus not only nature conservation but also social isolation, inclusion, and ecosystem services. Such a focus would allow for greater results across the county, a county which desperately requires the inclusion of 'at

risk' and disadvantaged peoples into society, along with the management of high nature-value farmland.

Dissemination of Project Findings

A number of steps will be taken in order to disseminate the findings of this project, including;

- The publication of the end of year report to the wider social farming community across the country,
- The publication of case studies associated with specific aspects of KESF such as the unique approach to meitheal working groups and invasive species management (these case studies can be found in appendix IV of this report),
- The broadcast of the project and findings on Kerry Social Farming's, SKDP's and NEWKD's social media platforms, and
- The circulation of project documentation to the wider social farming family, including the service providers and support staff involved.

Closing Evaluation

In total, five of the seven Key Performance Indicators were achieved and two were partially achieved. 2 km of hedgerow was developed or improved in comparison to the 2.5 km target and 3.4 acres were managed for wildflowers in comparison to the 5-acre target. The addition of 'Open Actions' brought additional, unplanned ecological benefits to the project farms, these actions include; invasive species management, trees veteranised, mammal wood piles & areas developed and managed, wildlife ponds developed, viviparous lizard refuges installed, cutover bog drains blocked, drystone walls improved, and sand martin habitat protected.

Testimonials

Testimonials relating to the project were taken along with the overall project evaluation and learnings. These have been reviewed and notes made in order to inform any future projects associated with social farming.

"I enjoyed the training courses and meitheals, getting to interact with other host farmers was the main benefit of the project." – **Host Farmer 10**

"I liked looking at nature" – **Social Farming Participant 10**

"I enjoyed meeting other farmers across Kerry" – **Host Farmer 1**

"I like looking for nature on the farm" – **Social Farming Participant 6**



Figure 41: Lisa Fingleton's drawing of Dr. Therese Higgins during her talk at the closing event



Figure 42: Drawing of Host Farmer Eamon Horgan and comments he made during the closing event



Figure 43: Drawing of Therese Higgins during her talk about biodiversity

Thank you!

We'd like to say thank you to everyone involved in the KESF EIP project, especially the volunteer host farmers and social farming participants. Without you, none of this could have happened. We'd like to thank Kerry Social Farming, North, East, West Kerry Development and South Kerry Development Partnership for all their help. We'd also like to thank DAFM for funding such an inclusive and innovative project and hope that more EIPs revolved around people accessing additional services and those with additional needs are prioritised into the future.



Figure 44: Drawing of attendees at a training course



Figure 45: A drawing by Daniel Casey



Figure 46: Drawing depicting an attendee searching in the wildlife pond



Figure 47: During the Action Management training event at the wildlife pond

Project Close – ‘A celebration of Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP’

On the 29th of March 2023 friends and family of Kerry Eco-Social Farming were invited to Sandy Feet farm, Camp for an event celebrating the works which have come out of the Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP. The event was well attended with almost 50 people in attendance. The event started with tea and refreshments, along with a short farm walk by owner and host farmer of Sandy Feet Farm Eleanor Wall. During this short farm walk the attendees looked at some of the farm’s smaller animals such as mice, rabbits, hedgehogs, hens, pigs and miniature donkeys. All of the attendees, from host farmers, social farming participants, support staff, service providers, members of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Kerry Biosphere and many more, very much enjoyed this aspect of the event as it allowed them to see the variety of different farming enterprises which exist within Kerry Social Farming.



Figure 48: Kevin O’Sullivan, Chairperson of the KESF Operational Group addresses the attendees at the KESF celebration event

The event continued within the farm classroom where a slideshow of all the photos taken throughout the project was running. Kevin O’Sullivan, Chairperson of Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP, gave the group a brief outline of Kerry Social Farming and how it evolved into developing the Kerry Eco-Social Farming project. Kevin was followed by Host Farmer Irene Brune and her Social Farming Participant Daniel Casey, who discussed their average social farming day and how social farming makes them feel. Luke Myers, Biodiversity Officer, then discussed the Key Performance Indicators of the project, along with the learnings and additional actions completed across host farms. Luke went on to discuss the various

supports put in place by the project, such as the 5-minute nature walk method and the trail camera loan scheme.

Noel Spillane, CEO of South Kerry Development Partnership, along with Kevin O’Sullivan, of Teagasc and Chairperson of KESF Operational Group, and Eamon Horgan, Host Farmer and Chairperson of the KSF Working Group, then presented the attending social farming participants with their certificates of completion for their hard work throughout 2022 and 2023 within the KESF EIP project. Thomas O’Connor, Host Farmer, then spoke about his experiences within the project. This was followed by an ‘Open mic’ session where anyone was allowed to speak and discuss how they felt about the project. During this, we heard comments from Noel Spillane, CEO of South Kerry Development Partnership, Eamon Horgan, Host Farmer and Chairperson of the KSF Working Group, and many more.



Figure 49: Dr. Therese Higgins of MTU and a member of the KESF Operational Group addresses the attendees at the KESF celebration event

We then welcomed our guest speaker Dr. Therese Higgins of Munster Technological University who described her amazement at the project and was particularly happy to see that host farmers had taken on the actions so readily, accepting nature actively onto their farms. The event was closed by Chairperson of KESF Operational Group, Kevin O’Sullivan



Figure 50: KESF Participant Aoife Murphy with her certificate presented to her at the KESF celebration event. She is pictured with host farmer Bernie Curran and Luke Myers (KSEF)

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- Soil Type – Teagasc (<http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php>)
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- Corrine 2000 (land use) within 500m – (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>)
- Bedrock Type – (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>)
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- NHA/pNHA – EPA (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>) & within GIS shapefiles on KSF drive
- Suspected invasive species – Observations of colour changes on roadways, hedgerows and riparian corridors within site (<https://www.google.com/maps>)
- Semi-Natural Habitats – Observations of colour changes at woodlands, heaths, bogs, wetlands, grasslands and hedgerows (<https://www.google.com/maps>)
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Appendices

Appendix I - Training sessions & Events attendance

Table 8: Training session attendance

Number	Training/ Prescribed Events	Location	Date	Host farmers	Social Farming participants	Members of the public
1	Habitat Awareness (South)	Sneem	22rd April 2022	9	3	0
2	Habitat Awareness (North)	Ballybunion	28th April 2022	12	6	4
3	Invasive Species - Rhododendron	Lisbawn	6th May 2022	5	3	2
4	Bioblitz 1 - Lynch Farm	Kilcummin	14th May 2022	4	0	4
5	Bioblitz 2 - Kelly Farm	Ballymallis	21st May 2022	1	0	15
6	Knapsack & Herbicide - Reeks EIP	Killarney	7th and 8th July 2022	4	0	3
7	Bioblitz 3 - Sears Farm	Tralee	9th July 2022	10	4	4
8	Ponds - Gortbrack Farm	Ballyseedy	20th July 2022	9	1	2
9	Meithael 1 - Brosnan Farm	Cordal	21st July 2022	4	1	0
10	Meithael 2 - Fleming Farm	Kilcummin	9th August 2022	6	6	0
11	Heritage Week - Canuig Shea Farm	Canuig	15th August 2022	3	0	7
12	Meithael 3 - Curran Farm	Kilmackerrin West	13th September 2022	14	23	12
13	Meitheal 4 - McDonnell	Lisbawn, Cahersiveen	25th October 2022	3	3	0
14	Meitheal 5 - Teterroo	Glenflesk	10th November 2022	10	6	0
15	At home training with Kelliher's	Knockagowna	23rd September 2022	1	0	0
16	Tree veteranisation	Knockagowna	28 th February 2023	2	1	1
17	American Skunk Cabbage	Ballymallis	13 th March 2023	5	10	1

Kerry Eco–Social Farming EIP (LLOC5032)

Table 9: Event attendance

Number	Event	Location	Date	Host farmers	Social Farming participants	Members of the public
1	Ballinskelligs Environmental Action Group 2022	Ballinskelligs	27th March 2022	0	0	10
2	Kerry Social Farming Annual Meeting 2022	Killarney	22nd March 2022	30	30	2
3	Moya Festival 2022	Ballybunion	1st May 2022	1	0	10
4	Killarney Men's Shed	Killarney	26th May 2022	1	0	30
5	EIP Launch	Camp	23rd May 2022	15	0	15
6	Kerry Biosphere Reserve - Calendar launch	Mealis	21st June 2022	0	0	25
7	Kerry Parents and Friends Association training (2x)	Killarney & Ballybunion	3rd May 2022	0	25	4
8	Stories of Change 2022	Waterville	7th October 2022	2	0	30
9	Nature in Cahersiveen	Cahersiveen	1st December 2022	0	0	10
10	Ballinskelligs Environmental Action Group 2023	Ballinskelligs	26th March 2023	1	0	75
11	Kerry Social Farming Annual Meeting 2023	Tralee	27th January 2023	30	30	2
12	EIP Close	Camp	29th March 2023	15	20	10

Appendix II – Action documentation produced

A number of documents were produced in order to enhance the social farming experience and assist with action, species, habitat and management identification. These documents include:

1. Hedgerow development and improvement
2. Wildflower areas
3. Nesting habitats for solitary bees
4. Bird and bat boxes
5. Farm almanac
6. 5-minute nature walk



Hedgerow development and improvement

Hedgerows are modern day wildlife sanctuaries. Estimated to cover approximately 1.5% of the Irish landscape they cover more ground than our native woodlands (1%). Traditionally they were used as boundaries between lands and mainly as enclosures for livestock and as such they needed to be stockproof. With the modern advent of electric fencing, the traditional need for thorny shrubs is gone. This provides opportunities to plant hedgerows with a more diverse mix of native plant species. The hedgerows can then act as mini linear woodlands providing new habitats for insects, birds, bats and all wildlife in general. This new approach to hedgerows will increase the overall biodiversity and aesthetic value wherever they are planted.

Important dates to remember

Bird nesting season: 1st March to 31st August

Hedgerow development: Between October and March (or after first frost)



How to plant a hedgerow.

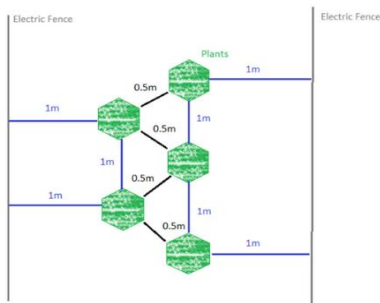
Consult the project biodiversity officer before completing works.

Ideally new hedgerows should be planted along a farm passageway or to replace a boundary that is being created by an electric fence. When planting along a farm passageway make sure to leave enough clearance (2m) for livestock, machinery and electric fencing. On existing passageways plant on either side of a north-south running passageway and the north side of east-west running passageways.

The ground should be bare and competing vegetation removed back to where the new electric fence will be (1m).

Plants should be placed three per meter in a staggered fashion as per the diagram below. Trees can be planted every 50 m to provide more unique habitat and stability. Overplanting trees will cause too much shade. Only plants with a strong root stock and adequate height should be planted to avoid the need for overprotection from competitor plants such as grasses and brambles.

Hedgerows that link to other hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats are advised as they will provide safe transport corridors for animals.



When and how do I carry out hedgerow cutting?

- Less is more with hedgerow cutting, overmanaged tightly cut hedges will provide less flowers, berries and fruit, reducing the available habitat, food sources and nesting sites.
- Hedgerow should ideally be cut in sections on a 3-5 year rotation, so at all times there remains a viable food source and habitat. As late as possible in the year.
- Well established hedgerows only need side pruning, the canopy should be allowed to reach its full potential, every 50 m or so trees should be allowed to reach full height.
- If hedgerow is to be kept low it should be cut in an A shape, leaving a wide dense base.
- A rich verge should be allowed to establish itself, providing more habitat and food sources.
- Do not use fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides or slurry near the hedgerow.





A disused area in the corner of a field can be great for wildflowers!



WILDFLOWER Areas

Bees and pollinators need:



Food

&



Shelter

Safety



Why do we need them?

Areas with wildflowers are amazing for wildlife. In recent years there have been massive declines in pollinating insect populations. By managing areas in a certain way, we'll be able to help the bees, as well as birds and many other creatures!

How it's done?

Wildflowers need nutrient poor soils in order to compete with grasses. This is achieved with annual cuts and removal of the clippings. If you aren't prepared to have just one annual cut, grass can be cut every 6-8 weeks to allow some flowers to bloom to act as a food source for insects



Allowing an area of wildflowers to grow can be a lengthy process. The main thing to be managed is human expectations! Helping bees can take years of management of your meadow.



This area behind a shed, when managed appropriately, can help supply food for bees.

You can choose to:

Make a short flowering area

- Cut the wildflower every 6 - 8 weeks from 15th of April
- This simply involves a change in your mowing schedule
- Leave grass to grow for 6-8 weeks then cut. Remove clippings immediately
- This will help make the area look 'pretty' whilst also helping nature

Make a long flowering wildflower meadow/ area

- Remove any large noxious weeds (although good for nature and bad for livestock)
- Allow the area to grow
- A cut of the area can be completed July or Autumn.
- The clippings should be removed

By having an area of wildflowers which is not sprayed or fertilised, you'll be able to provide food, shelter and safety for the bees in your local area!



NESTING HABITAT FOR SOLITARY BEES



What Are Solitary Bees?

When people think of bees they usually think of honey bees and bumble bees, but there is more to the story, much more. Of the 98 species of wild bees in Ireland 77 of these are solitary bees. Meaning almost 80% of our bee species do not live in large hives, but live alone. They come in all shapes and sizes and unlike honey bees and bumble bees, solitary bees don't moisten the pollen they collect, meaning much more of it falls off as they move from flower to flower. This makes them excellent pollinators worthy of our attention.

Back to some of the older ways of farming

Traditional farming was very friendly to bees because it helped wildflowers to prosper within our farms. Areas and practices like hay meadows, small areas of crops, more hedgerows and drystone walls, and less spraying all helped the bees. Today, bees pollinate our crops, a practice that would take millions of euro and moths if we had to do it ourselves!

How Can We Help?

We can help solitary bees by providing them with three very important things:

Food, Shelter & Safety

Food - By making sure that there are native pollinator friendly wildflowers in bloom on the farm from Spring to Autumn. These can include areas of dandelion, hawthorn hedgers, ivy growing on trees and brambles growing behind sheds.

Shelter - By following the below instructions and making areas of nesting habitat

Safety - Stop spraying hedgerows and ditches with herbicide and fertiliser



Solitary Bee Scrapes and Nesting Boxes

Solitary bees come in all shapes and sizes. Some prefer to nest in cavities (cavity nesting bees) in old logs and trees and others prefer to nest in areas of exposed earth (mining bees). You'll be able to spot these nests if you lookout for very small holes in the side of a dry hedgerow bank. There are 62 different species of mining bee in Ireland and 15 different species of cavity nesting bee!



A solitary bee found on one of our host farms in May



A solitary bee nesting area, they lay their eggs in the small holes which they dig

More than half of Ireland's bee species have undergone substantial declines in their numbers since 1980. The distribution of 42 species has declined by more than 50%.



Solitary Bee Nesting Boxes

Solitary bee boxes are bits of wood which holes have been drilled into in order to mimic an old tree or dead hollow vegetation. A number of different species of solitary bee use these areas to lay eggs.



The holes of these boxes are drilled into the end using a sharp bit. The holes can be drilled using bits from 4 to 10mm in size only and it is important that the depth of the drills is 10cm, but does not go out the back of the box.

Where to put a solitary bee box

These solitary bee nesting boxes can be installed:

- At least 1 metre above ground
- Facing the sun, so East, South or West facing
- Putting a sloping roof on top of your bee box to keep it dry
- Do not hang your bee hotel near bird feeders



A solitary box with nesting taking place

Solitary Bee Scrapes

Solitary bee scrapes made when a come in all shapes and sizes. Some prefer to nest in cavities in old logs and trees and others prefer to nest in areas of exposed earth. You'll be able to spot these nests if you lookout for very small holes in the side of a dry hedgerow. These can be developed using a digger or shovels.

Where to develop a solitary bee scrape

Solitary bee scrapes needs:

- To be in an area where there is a reliable food source (wildflowers and hedgerows) within 200m
- To be on a south facing dry earth bank
- Scrapes can also be constructed on flat or slightly sloping ground
- Avoid areas where there are lots of people, often nests will be constructed in large aggregates and whilst they are friendly they don't need the unwanted attention

Management of a solitary bee scrape

Management of solitary bee scrapes are easy! Just keep an eye on the area and make sure to hand remove any excess vegetation from the expose earth during the winter!



A solitary bee scrape on the edge of a farm road



Bird and Bat Boxes



Great tit



Blue tit

Why we need to help birds and bats?

Providing nesting and roosting opportunities for birds and bats is very important in helping local populations and giving them safe areas to raise their young. The aim of these boxes is to replicate the conditions of old barns, tree crevices, abandoned buildings and hedgerows, which are becoming less and less common throughout Ireland. Birds and bats are important predators on the farm and help by managing pests, such as rates, and disease spreading organisms, such as midge and mosquitoes.



Natural holes and crevices in mature trees in old buildings and caves would have traditionally been used as roosting areas for bats. In modern Ireland however, there is reduced number of these natural structures for them. Bat boxes are therefore used to replicate these conditions, by providing a dry roosting area for bats in the right conditions. The development of buildings and structures, and alterations in land use activities in the last 50 years have led to less moths and other insects upon which bats feed. Because of this, Ireland's nine bat species need our assistance so as they do not decline in numbers. ***Bats and their roosting areas are protected under Irish law***

Bat boxes

Bat boxes are flat rectangular boxes with an elongated bottom, designed so that bats can fly onto, and climb into the chamber within. They are used to mimic tree and cave crevices and no matter how small, can house a small colony of bats. Bats are very small mammals, a common phrase is often passed around; 'If you can get your thumb in a tree crevice, you can get a pipistrelle in it' (a pipistrelle is a type of bat very common in Ireland).

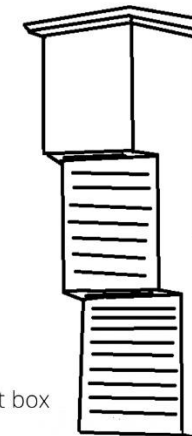
Where to install a bat box

Bat boxes can be installed:

- Along linear features (such as hedgerows, treelines and on the edge of woods)
- At least 4m above the ground
- South-East or South-West facing – to avoid bad weather conditions
- Away from artificial light sources

Management

Bat boxes don't require cleaning as they are vertical in placement, allowing droppings to fall out the entrance.



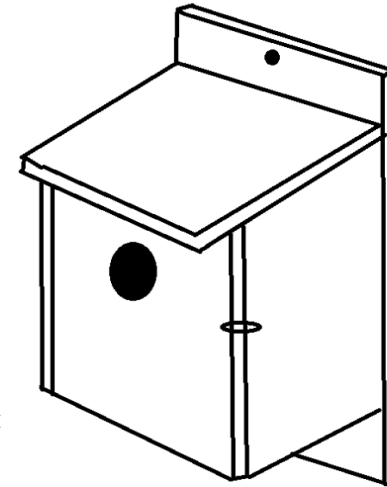
A bat box

Bird box dimensions and style

Bird boxes are species specific with different bird species requiring different proportions of access hole and different styles and shapes of box. All of the species noted below require somewhat of the same nesting box type, with the exception of the access hole diameter. Starlings in general require a larger nesting box and access hole diameter.

Where to install a bird nesting box

- Don't put nest boxes too close together, this will lead to competition!
- Keep bird boxes away from bird feeding areas
- Make sure the box is between 3 – 5 metres high
- Face the nest boxes between north and east on structures can help protect the birds from bad weather
- Starlings and sparrows like to nest in farm buildings, houses and abandoned areas.
- Tits and wren love to nest in broadleaved wooded areas
- Make sure that the entrance hole is not concealed by vegetation and can be generally well viewed by flying birds
- Use galvanised or stainless-steel screws to position your nest box onto the tree or building



Management of bird boxes

Small bird nesting boxes require cleaning out in winter in order to prepare the box for next spring. Bat boxes do not need c



Emptying bird boxes can be completed safely during winter when the birds aren't using the nests. They require cleaning every year. It is important to do this safely, during a dry morning when conditions are appropriate underfoot. Do not empty bird boxes if conditions are not appropriate to do so, they can be left till next winter. Old bird nests may be dusty. It is important to wear a dust mask when cleaning out the boxes.



Farm Nature Almanac

What you can see on the farm at different times of the year...



Kerry Eco-Social Farming Project
Tel: (087) 3683109
Email: kmeyers@SKDP.net
Web: www.kerrysocialfarming.ie

Good time to see:



Not so good time:



	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Habitats and plants	Red	Red	Red	Green	Plants in leaf & flower allowing for identification			Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Wintering birds	Whooper Swans seen now			Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green
Breeding birds	Red	Red	Green	Birds nesting, breeding and active			Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Bat activity	Red	Red	Red	Red	Bats most active during this time			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Amphibians	Red	Green	Frog and Smooth Newts lifecycle observed			Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Common Lizard	Red	Red	Red	Green	Look out for lizards during hot days			Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Marsh Fritillary	Red	Red	Red	Red	Adults emerge in May, caterpillars webs visible in spring and autumn			Green	Green	Red	Red	Red
Kerry Slug	Green	Green	Found throughout the year in damp areas on rocky outcrops and are mainly active at night and during damp periods			Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Hen Harrier	Red	Red	Red	Green	Sky-dancing by pair seen prior to and during the breeding season			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Barn Owl	Red	Red	Green	Birds commonly seen at the nest at this time			Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red

If you see any signs of nature in your farm, home or workplace please take pictures and contact your Farm Facilitator or the Biodiversity Officer!





Kerry Eco-Social Farming Project
Tel: (087) 3683109
Email: kmeyers@SKDP.net
Web: www.kerrysocialfarming.ie

Farm Nature Almanac

What you can see on the farm at different times of the year...



Whooper swans from Iceland overwintering in floodplain fields



Bat roosting



Marsh Fritillary & their Caterpillars



Smooth newt

If you see any signs of nature in your farm, home or workplace please take pictures and contact your Farm Facilitator or the Biodiversity Officer!



Common Lizard



Barn owl



Male Hen harrier & Female Hen harrier

Farms are havens for our native plant and animal species, birds and bats can be found roosting and nesting in barns, lizards, frogs, hen harrier, and Marsh Fritillary Butterfly can be found in the bogs and whoopers swans can be seen in winter, having travelled all the way from Iceland, on our river-side fields.



Devil's-Bit Scabious

Help nature today by logging records of anything you see in the Biodiversity Data Centre App.



Common frog



Nature Walk sheet



Help your host farmer by recording all the different plants, animals and insects that you've seen on the farm during your social farming day...



Your Name:.....

Your Farmers name:.....

Todays Date:.....



What's the weather like today?



Cloudy & Rainy



Windy & Stormy



Bright & Sunny



Cold

You'll see different flowers, plants, wild animals, birds and insects out during different times of the day and when the weather is different.

Did you see any flowers, wild animals, birds or insects today?



What did you see?.....

.....

Tell us more about what you saw and what you did to help nature, or draw a picture!



5 MIN NATURE WALK

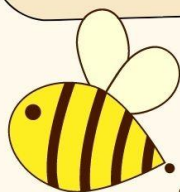
Help your host farm look for nature every week!
All you need to do is...

Put some comfortable shoes or boots on.



Dress up for the weather

Go for a short 5 minute walk around the farm



Look for any birds, bees, flowers or wild animals!

Fill in your nature walk sheet!



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



Appendix III – Project Terminology & Definitions

‘Department’ shall mean the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and its successors.

‘Farmer/ Host Farmer/ Social Farmer’ shall mean any farmer associated/ participating with the project, who opens their farm on a regular basis to participants of Kerry Social Farming.

‘Participant/ Social Farming Participant’ shall mean people within the local community, matched with a host farmer by the Kerry Social Farming Team, in order to allow for social farming to take place on the farm. Many of these people are associated with care service providers within the local Kerry area.

‘Service Provider’ shall mean the service organisation that social farming and non-social farming participants are attending on a regular basis. Such services may include day centres, residential, places of employment, schools, universities, etc.

‘Social Farming’, also known as ‘green care’, is the practice by which farms are made accessible and allowed to ‘farm socially’ within the community. Often including members of the community who are not typically associated with modern farming practices.

‘Kerry Social Farming’ shall mean the project funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) which links farmers to local people within the community, allowing them to farm socially together.

‘Project Biodiversity Officer’ shall mean the project manager, Luke Myers, who is responsible for providing scientific and technical support in all areas of the project. The main role of the Project Biodiversity Officer is to develop the project, design the project structure, recommend project actions, assess habitats within the vicinity of the project actions, lease with the farmer and farm advisor, provide events for members of the public, provide training for host farmers and participants, and monitor farm actions for payments.

‘Work Record Form’ shall mean the payment form which host farmers fill out once an action, training course, etc. are completed. Payments for actions, training courses, hosting events, will be payable during two periods of 2022 and 2023.

‘At risk’ shall mean anyone, of who there is a risk of becoming isolated from the community, also described as being ‘at risk’ of social isolation.

‘Desktop Assessment’ shall mean the assessment report completed by the Project Biodiversity Officer, looking at different online data sets to gather more information about the farm and the local area.

‘Biodiversity Management Plan’ shall mean the document containing notes on actions and monitoring agreed with by the farmer and farm advisor to come into effect on the host farm during 2022 and 2023. The Appendix I of these plans notes the potential compensation and value of actions to be received by host farmers if the actions are appropriately completed.

‘Site’ shall mean the farm area in general.

‘Farming’ shall mean any type of agricultural, silvicultural, horticultural, etc., practice completed by host farmers.

‘Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity EIP-AGRI’ shall mean the project funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) through the European Innovation Partnership initiative (EIP) under. Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity EIP-AGRI’ is administered under SKDP (South Kerry Development Partnership CLG), by the project team.

‘Project Team’ shall mean employees of South Kerry Development Partnership CLG & North East and West Kerry Development engaged in the administration of the Project, consisting of a full-time project biodiversity officer and support staff.

‘The Operational Group’ shall mean the group who oversees the project and comprises of Teagasc (Chair), South Kerry Development Partnership (lead partner), North East and West Kerry Development, KSF host farmer representatives, KSF Working Group representative, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Munster Technological University, Transition Kerry, and Kerry Biosphere Reserve.

‘Hedgerow’ shall mean a linear feature of trees dividing two distinct areas of land. KESF aims to have native tree species, at adequate diversities of species within the hedgerows developed under this project.

‘Tree veteranisation’ is the practice by which young trees are purposefully cut and altered in order to provide a mixture of arboreal habitats, typically seen in old-age veteran trees.

‘Semi-natural habitat’ is a distinct area with most of its natural processes and character still intact. Such habitats, as a result of human activity, are stronger and/ or more abundant, in comparison to their natural counterparts, as a result.

‘Natura 2000’ shall mean land designated under the Directive 79/409/EEC and Directive 92/43/ECC (Birds and Habitat Directives).

‘Demonstration Farm’ shall mean host farms participating in KESF, but do not have an active herd number or in receipt of basic payments (BPS).

‘Third Schedule Invasive Species’ shall mean the list of invasive plant, animal and fungal species noted within the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 [S.I.477/2011], whom are deemed to be of particular impact to human health, native ecosystems and/ or the economy.

‘Annex I’ shall mean the semi-natural habitats which are maintained and/ or restored by the relevant member state as they are considered threatened in the EU territory, as per the EU Directive on the Conservation of Habitats, Flora and Fauna (92/43/EEC), AKA Habitats Directive.

‘Action’ shall mean work/s carried out by individual host farmers and social farming participants, as agreed in their biodiversity management plan.



Figure 51: Lana O'Connor and her newly constructed wildlife pond on Leagh Farm.

Appendix IV – Case studies

A number of case studies were produced in order promote the findings of the project and spread the word about the successes of Kerry Eco-Social Farming EIP. These case studies include:

1. Invasive Species Meitheals
2. Inclusive Action
3. Tree Veteranisation



Kerry Eco-Social Farming – an EIP integrated within a Voluntary Model of Social Farming, addressing biodiversity, inclusion and accessibility on farms in Kerry.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Author: Luke Myers

Inclusive, community-based meitheals for invasive species

Overview – The Kerry Eco-Social Farming European Innovation Partnership Project (KESF EIP) is a nature-based project which was funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine through the European Innovation Partnership fund. The project was integrated into a voluntary model of social farming, Kerry Social Farming, a community-based project which links up people with additional needs, acquired brain injuries and people utilising specific mental health services, with local volunteer farmers across the county in order to provide inclusion and accessibility on farms. The KESF EIP was a single year Call-5 EIP which focused on enhancing the social farming experience for host

farmers and participants through the provision of funding, training and guidance on biodiversity and nature-based action.



Background – It was noted that a large proportion of the twenty-six farms associated with the EIP held populations of High Invasive Impact Third Schedule Invasive Species (as per S.I.477/2011). Such species included; Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica/ Fallopia japonica*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), and American Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*). As a result of this,

meitheal working groups were developed, composing of host farmers and social farming participants, and funding provided in order to facilitate the safe removal of these species, where methods and locations were deemed appropriate.

Across 2022, six different meitheal events were undertaken by the EIP with a particular emphasis on invasive species management and methods. The above figure shows the attendance at a Himalayan Balsam treatment meitheal, where host farmers, social farming participants and members of the public attended in order to remove flowing plants from the farmyard, thus reducing the seedbank of the species within the surrounding soils in the subsequent years.

Goals – The aim of KESF EIP was to encourage host farmers and social farming participants to increase the area managed for nature on their farms, through habitat creation, management and improvement. The expansion of the overall project into the individual host farm issues, termed ‘the open action’, allowed invasive species identification, training and management to be included.



Approach – Through the scheduling of specific meitheal events and the payment of attendees, both host farmers and social farming participants, provision of equipment, lunches, tea, etc., invasive species management was achieved. The development of KESF EIP within a pre-existing project, Kerry Social Farming, allowed for health and safety aspects such as first aid kits, training courses and manual handling courses to have already been completed on host farms. The community-based nature of KESF EIP allowed for

collaboration with multiple organisations and groups, particularly the McGillycuddy Reeks EIP and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). During this process, the McGillycuddy Reeks EIP provided guidance and invasive species training opportunities to host farmers and social farming participants and the NPWS provided information relating to their own farm plan scheme, along with methods relating to invasive species management within specific Annex I habitats.

Results – Two meitheals were undertaken in relation to the management of Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), one meitheal and two training courses were completed around the safe handling of herbicide and identification and management of Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and one working group meitheal was undertaken in order to manage American Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*). Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was managed via hand pulling of plants, early in the flowering season, before seeding occurred. These meitheals required the purchase of gloves and biosecurity boot and PPE washing kits for each of the working days. Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) was managed via direct stump treatment with herbicide, over the meitheal which took places for the management of Rhododendron, young and flowering plants were targeted within an upland farm demonstrating the management techniques to other such host farmers.

American Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*) was identified within a 12-acre wet woodland farm habitat, within the Castlemaine Harbour SAC (Site Code: 000343). This wet woodland is noted within the site’s conservation objectives map as being a qualifying interest, namely; 91E0 *Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*. The woodland was noted as being of ‘high’ quality by local NPWS ranger, this is thought to be as a result of the low but persistent grazing which is completed on the site, reducing scrub density and allowing for ground floral indicator species. Year-round livestock units within the habitat are at an average of 2 LU across the entire site, consisting a pony, donkey and three goats. Guidance from the NPWS was sought in relation to the management of this habitat for the removal of American Skunk Cabbage, it was noted that;

- The site lies within SAC 000343. This site does not yet have a statutory instrument in place, as such, works which require consent from the Minister are those listed as ‘Notifiable Actions’ for the specific QI habitats in which works are to be carried out. The National Parks and Wildlife Service were consulted heavily in relation to this and permission was



granted in order to complete these actions within the SAC, (mechanical removal of invasive species) as it specifically did not feature within the site’s Notifiable Actions. The method proposed for the removal of American Skunk Cabbage from the site was mechanical removal using handheld tools and machinery.

- It was also noted that the removal of the invasive plant would be ‘necessary to the management of the site’ and as such, an Appropriate Assessment was not required. Nonetheless, every precaution was taken during the action that no inadvertent negative impacts to the site or its wildlife were allowed.

NPWS was notified of the removal of American Skunk Cabbage from the site and biosecurity measures were put in place in order to prevent the further spread of this invasive plant species. During 2022 a total of 62 mature American Skunk Cabbage plants were removed from the site, infected soil and plant material (especially flowers and seed heads) was re-located to the farm yard for further treatment and assessment. This treatment method was completed as per the guidance from the NPWS in relation to crushing and herbicide licking emerging plants. The mechanical removal (using hand tools and machinery) of these plants was completed by the host farmer, social farming participants and support staff. During the early spring meitheal in 2023, a further 6 American Skunk Cabbage plants were removed manually from the site.

Learnings – In total, 15-acres were managed for six invasive species across the meitheals and the entire project works, along with the educational benefits of hands-on learning and skills which came from physical management of these species.

Resources –

Higgins, G.T. (2008) *Rhododendron ponticum*: A guide to management on nature conservation sites. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 33. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.

ISI, (2008) Best Practice Management Guidelines: Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Invasive Species Ireland. Dublin, Ireland.

KBR, (2022) *Rhododendron Ponticum*: Management for Farmers, Private landowners and Gardeners. Kerry Biosphere Reserve. Kerry, Ireland.

RAPID, (2018) Good Practice Management: American Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*). Reducing and Preventing Invasive Alien Species Dispersal.

This project was funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the European Innovation Partnership Fund.





Kerry Eco-Social Farming – an EIP integrated within a Voluntary Model of Social Farming, addressing biodiversity, inclusion and accessibility on farms in Kerry.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
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Department of Agriculture,
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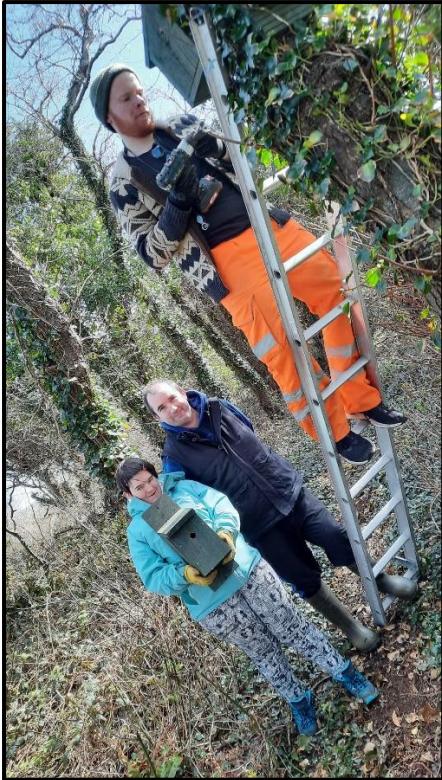
Author(s): Luke Myers

Inclusive management of nature in the Irish farming landscape

Overview – The Kerry Eco-Social Farming European Innovation Partnership (KESF EIP) was a nature-based project, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine through the European Innovation Partnership fund. The project was integrated into a voluntary model of social farming, Kerry Social Farming, a community-based project which links up ‘at risk’ groups to local farmers. The project caters to people with additional needs, acquired brain injuries, utilising specific mental health services to link up with local volunteer farmers across the county in order to provide inclusion and accessibility on farms. The KESF EIP was a single year Call5 EIP which focused on enhancing the social farming experience for host farmers and participants through the provision of funding, training and guidance on biodiversity and nature-based action.



Background – KESF EIP is built on inclusivity, integration and accessibility, with the project’s main finding being that more science and nature-based schemes must be developed for disadvantaged and ‘at risk’ groups across the country, particularly in rural areas. During this project, a number of actions



were undertaken by host farmers and social farming participants across twenty-six farms over the length and breadth of Kerry. The actions prescribed to host farms were relatively simplistic in nature, along with having a positive impact on local biodiversity, for tangible scope in terms of public relations and also to adequately engage and ‘marry-into’ the weekly social farming activities. The action types which we’ll be discussing in this case study include; bird box development, cleaning and installation, solitary bee nesting habitat development and wildflower area development.

KSF, the parent project of KESF EIP, is managed by South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) and North East West Kerry Development (NEWKD) are partners in the project. As a result of this, KESF has been able to access community groups, organisations and events associated with each of these, assisting with project development, community benefit and engagement. KESF EIP acquired the skillsets of both Tralee and Killarney Men’s Shed groups, and engaged them to develop bird nesting, bat roosting and solitary bee cavity boxes for the

project. Along with this, an event, centred around bird box development, was delivered in co-ordination with the Kerry Biosphere Reserve.

The development of solitary bee nesting habitats, as noted within the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, was identified as a potential action which could be completed by host farmers and asocial farming participants together. The simple task of using a shovel or bucket to expose vertical edges of south facing dry slope, followed by weeding as management, was noted as being achievable. This action was further propelled into popularity amongst farmers and participants when a number of interesting solitary bee species were identified during one of the bioblitz events.

The management of areas of disused ground for wildflowers also proved popular. With the simple steps of a single cut per year alone and not re-seeding or digging, host farmers and social farming participants will be able to enjoy naturally created wildflower areas on their farms for years to come. This method was also adopted from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and utilises the seedbank, which is abundant in all soils in order to develop naturally occurring native and local providence wildflowers suitable for local pollinating insects.

Goals – The aim of KESF EIP was to encourage host farmers and participants to increase the area managed for nature on their farms, through habitat creation, management and improvement. The project’s key performance indicators (KPIs) were specifically designed to maximise the benefits to nature, along with having the abilities of host farmers and participants in mind.

Approach – A multitude of meitheal working groups, training courses and practical engagement sessions on farms allowed for the identification and demonstration of action management to those involved. It was noted that, host farmers and social farming participants engaged more when actions were targeted more to a specific species which they already knew. As a result, different styles of bird

box were developed, as per Bird Watch Ireland guidelines. Bird boxes associated with; Blue tit/ Meantán gorm (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Great tit/ Meantán mór (*Parus major*), Starling/ Druid (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Robin/ Spideog (*Erithacus rubecula*), and Barn owl/ Scréachóg reilige (*Tyto alba*) were distributed. Along with this, bird box developments ‘kits’ were also formed by the men’s shed groups in order to provide host farmers and social farming participants with the wood, hardware and opportunity to develop their very own bird and bat boxes. As a result of this, actions including the development of wildflower areas and management of solitary bee nesting habitats proved to be less popular – potentially due to the awareness and commonality of birds as opposed to solitary bees.

Results – In total across all 26 participating host farms; 95 bird & bat boxes were supplied, 100 solitary bee nesting habitats developed, 3.4 areas were managed for wildflowers, 15 acres of invasive species managed (year 1 management), 4 wildlife ponds developed, 2 km of hedgerow either developed or improved, 8 small mammal wood piles & areas developed/ managed, 1 cutover bog drain blocked, 10 tree veteranisation features developed, 2 viviparous lizard refuges installed, 1 section of drystone wall improved, 1 section of sand martin habitat protected and 1 section of 1m river buffer zone developed.

“I enjoyed the training courses and meitheals, getting to interact with other host farmers was the main benefit of the project.” – **Host Farmer 10**

“I liked looking at nature” – **Social Farming Participant 10**

“I enjoyed meeting other farmers across Kerry” – **Host Farmer 1**

“I like looking for nature on the farm” – **Social Farming Participant 6**

Learnings –

The involvement of all peoples within a project is key. The scope of all steps within a project can be altered in order to facilitate everyone. Just like the actions within KESF EIP were specifically designed with the social farming participants in mind, accommodations can be made across society to allow for more inclusion and a greater sense of community.

Resources –

Whelan, R. (2021). Build a Nest Box for Birds and Biodiversity in Your Garden This Spring. [online] BirdWatch Ireland. Available at: <https://birdwatchireland.ie/build-nest-boxes-for-birds-in-your-garden-this-spring/> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2023].

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. (2017). All-Ireland Pollinator Plan» All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. [online] Available at: <https://pollinators.ie/> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2023].





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Kerry Eco-Social Farming – an EIP integrated within a Voluntary Model of Social Farming, addressing biodiversity, inclusion and accessibility on farms in Kerry.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
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Food and the Marine

Author(s): Luke Myers

Tree veteranisation within linear features of farming enterprises

Overview – The Kerry Eco-Social Farming European Innovation Partnership (KESF EIP) was a nature-based project, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine through the European Innovation Partnership fund. The project was integrated into a voluntary model of social farming, Kerry Social Farming, a community-based project which links up ‘at risk’ groups to local farmers. The project caters to people with additional needs, acquired brain injuries, utilising specific mental health services, the elderly and early school leavers and links up with local volunteer farmers across the county in order to provide inclusion and accessibility on farms. The KESF EIP was a single year Call 5 EIP which focused on enhancing the social farming experience for host farmers and participants through the provision of funding, training and guidance on biodiversity and nature-based action.

Background – KESF EIP is built on inclusivity, integration and accessibility, with the project’s main finding being that more science and nature-based schemes must be developed for disadvantaged and ‘at risk’ groups across the country, particularly in rural areas. During this project, a number of actions were undertaken by host farmers and social farming participants across twenty-six farms over the length and breadth of Kerry. The actions prescribed to host farms were relatively simplistic in nature, along with having a positive impact on local biodiversity, for tangible scope in terms of public relations and also to adequately engage and ‘marry-into’ the weekly social farming activities. On one host farm, tree veteranisation was used in order to provide micro-habitats for fungi and beetles, along with roosting areas for bats within a linear treeline dividing grazing fields.

Tree veteranisation is the process by which, through specific techniques, trees are ‘veteranised’ in order to exhibit the features of older trees. Older, veteran, trees hold features as a result of their age, storms, lightning strikes, animal and insect damage and death of limbs. Features of veteran trees include; trunk cracks, dead standing wood, hollowed trunk cavities, fallen deadwood, herbivore bark browsing and bird damage, etc. By exhibiting these features on younger, non-veteran trees, the potential for more roosting, nesting, feeding and living areas for wildlife can be increased on the farm.



Goals – The aim of KESF EIP was to encourage host farmers and social farming participants to increase the area managed for nature on their farms, through habitat creation, management and improvement. The project’s key performance indicators (KPIs) were specifically developed to maximise the benefits to nature, along with having the abilities of the host farmers and participants in mind. The goal of this aspect of the project was to trial the techniques of tree veteranisation within linear treelines across a host farm. Typically tree veteranisation only occurs in woodland areas, where their aim is to provide a diversity of structure across the entire habitat. Due to the lack of old-age and veteran native trees with suitable features on Irish farms, most farms do not hold enough suitable features for roosting bats and fungi. Bats and fungi are two main contributors to farm productivity, bats predate disease causing insects and fungi contribute to surrounding soil health, therefore they must be retained and enhanced.



Approach – Four techniques of tree veteranisation were trailed on a host farm in Mid-Kerry in Spring 2023. These techniques were completed by another host farmer, from a different farm, with the help of social farming participants. Bat slots are vertical incisions into the tree using a chainsaw in order to provide a nice thick cavity for bats to roost. Fungi scrapes mimic herbivore browsing and include the scraping and damaging of a specific face of a tree trunk in order to enhance the growth of fungi in the area. Standing deadwood involves the ring barking of tree branches in order to kill the branch and allow for an area of standing dead wood within the tree, suitable for insects. Wood piles are often seen at the base of old veteran trees, they can be made by piling wood at the base of a tree and allowing it to rot down over a number of years.

All host farmers associated with Kerry Social Farming have specific funding allocated to them in order to provide farm upgrades and health and safety equipment, such as first aid kits, in order to allow the farm to become a safe place for social farming participants to get involved. In addition to this, participating social farming participants and support staff wore high visibility jackets and appropriate foot ware when observing and completing the methods discussed. During chainsaw work, all participants and support staff stayed the field’s width or length (whatever was greater) away from the works being completed. These works were then inspected by the group once the area was deemed safe.

Results –

See the table below for the features developed on the veteranisation trial host farm in February 2023.

Tree No.	Species	Age	Features developed
1	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	30	Ring bark of upper branches
2	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	35	Bat roost incision
3	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	40	Small bird box incision

4	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	70	Fungi herbivore scrape
5	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	60	Fungi herbivore scrape
6	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	45	Fungi herbivore scrape
7	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	50	Fungi herbivore scrape
8	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	40	Fungi herbivore scrape
9	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	30	Fungi herbivore scrape
10	Ash/ Fuinseog (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	55	Fungi herbivore scrape

Learnings – ‘At risk’ groups can assist with aspects of many, if not all, nature-based actions on Irish farms. Actions need to be properly managed and assessed to identify these openings where everyone can have the chance to become involved and assist.

Resources –

Beck, R. (2014). ‘Wood Wise – Woodland Conservation News Spring 2014’. Woodland Trust. Accessed online Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1798/wood-wise-ancient-trees.pdf>. Date Accessed: 20th February 2023.



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Department of Agriculture,
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Appendix V – Project Documentation

Documentation associated with the EIP are available for DAFM upon request. These documents include;

- Host Farmer Terms & Conditions
- Host Farmer Agreement
- Informed Image & Media Consent for Host Farmers and Social Farming Participants
- Work Record Form