

ANNEX 1 – DOCUMENTS FOR THE ELABORATION OF THE CASE STUDY MATERIAL TO BE INCLUDED IN THE E-LEARNING COURSE (IO2).

1.A - Case-studies by country: Ireland

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Case-Studies on Innovative Development in Peripheral Rural Areas

INTRODUCTION TO PRA – BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Introduction to the *Burren, Ireland* Peripheral Rural Area

Content:

The Burren is located on the west coast of Ireland and is the most extensive glaciated karst landscape in Western Europe. The area comprises of two primary landscape units: the Burren uplands and the 'Gort lowlands'. The Burren uplands provide habitats for the celebrated Burren flora and supply rough winter grazing for livestock. The intervening valleys and a low-lying coastal strip of glacial drift; Burren lowlands, are more species poor and are often used for more intensive farming practices.

Water is typically unavailable in the summer months due to the free-draining characteristics of the limestone landscape. This has forced Burren farmers to adopt a unique farming practice of winter grazing, known locally as 'winterage'. This important agricultural practice has a significant impact on the biodiversity and cultural traditions within the Burren.

Innovations in the Burren are important for the community to continue important cultural practices, retain young people in the area through new business opportunities and agricultural support through locally-led agri-environment programmes.



Part 1 / *Burren* PORTRAIT

The Burren is located on Ireland's mid-western coast and encompasses sections of two Irish counties, Clare (North) and Galway (South). Most of the Burren is privately owned and farmed, though c.2000ha is publicly owned, forming a National Park and several Nature Reserves.

The Burren landscape is dominated by exposed limestone bedrock, with occasional shale and sandstone and a thin soil cover. The limestone bedrock is important for farming as it offers a 'dry lie' for overwintering cattle, similar to an underfloor heating system.

The unavailability of water in summertime in this free-draining landscape where most of the water flows underground, forced farmers to adopt a system of winter grazing. This shapes the biodiversity and cultural traditions of the Burren. The geological heritage of the Burren has been recognised by its award of UNESCO Geopark Status.

The Burren landscape is distinguished by two main landscape structures, the Burren uplands (2-300m above sea level) and the lowlands (<100m above sea level). Burren uplands are located in County Clare and feature hills of limestone pavements and deep depressions called grikes. The soils in the uplands can be very thin in places and the water drainage is subterranean. The uplands are attractive areas for farmers due to the light, fertile and free draining soils. This area also contains some of the best pasture meadow habitats, the conservation of which is a high priority. The upland habitats are important for providing important Burren flora and rough winter grazing for livestock.

Burren lowlands feature a wide range of wetland habitats that are interspersed with outcrops of rugged limestone. Typical wetland habitats include calcareous fens, oligotrophic lakes, petrifying



springs and seasonal lakes known as turloughs. The Burren lowlands also contains important grasslands and heaths. Grazing levels are lower in the Burren lowlands as there is more outcropping rock and less soil cover than the uplands. One of the main conservation priorities in the Burren lowlands is to prevent eutrophication of the wetland habitats.

The climate of the Burren is similar to the rest of Ireland, mild and wet throughout the year. The average daily temperatures are 14 degrees Celsius in Summer (July/August) and 5 degrees Celsius in Winter (January/February). The mild winters in the Burren facilitate the outwintering of cattle and the free-draining soils enable the rapid clearing of surface water. The high rainfall levels in the Burren flush nutrients from the thin rendzina soils, while summer droughts on can lead to desiccation of soils and vegetation. This creates a stressful growing environment for many plants, which offers a competitive advantage to more compact, stress tolerant plants such as the herbs – flora which the Burren is famous for.

The Burren is made up of several different habitats. None of these habitats are unique to the Burren, however the scale and quality of these habitats is unparalleled. These habitats include semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates, Alpine and Boreal heaths, *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands, Lowland hay meadows, Limestone pavement, Turloughs, Calcareous fens, Petrifying springs, Atlantic Hazel woodland.

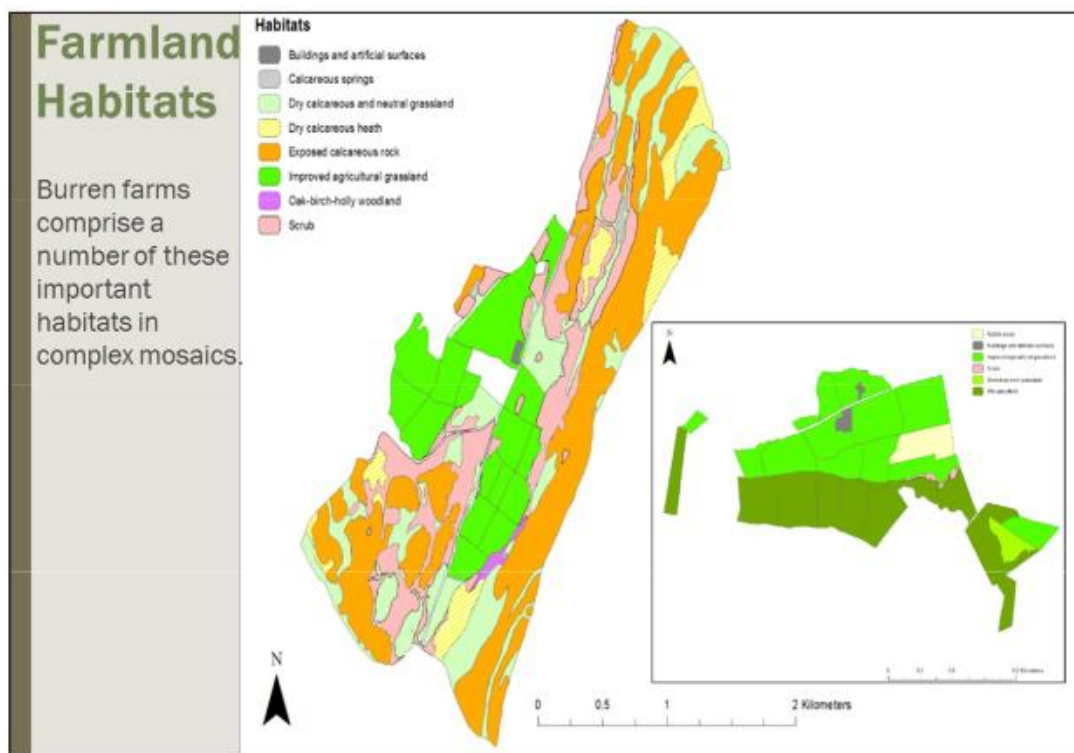


Figure 1: Map of Burren habitat types

Part 2 / The Burren FEATURES AND TRENDS

Agricultural values

Burren farming involves a unique practice called 'winterage'. This is when cattle are put up on the Burren uplands (rough grazing) in October and brought back down to more fertile/improved pastures in the lowlands in Spring. Winterage is an important agricultural practice to reduce scrub encroachment in the uplands. It also prevents plants such as blue moor-grass (*Sesleria caerulea*), purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and heather (*Erica* sp. and *Calluna* sp.) from out-competing smaller herb species, for which the Burren is famous. Grazing by livestock is the key to the conservation of the biodiversity and landscape of the Burren.

Limestone pavement habitats provides a dry, warm habitat for out wintering cattle, while turloughs and springs provide livestock with a calcium rich water supply. Cattle rely on the species rich grassland forage provided by the Burren's grasslands and heaths and hay from meadows providing supplementary feeding for stock in bad weather and for sick animals.



Environmental values

Over 30,000 ha of the Burren have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EEC) and almost 2,000 ha is designated as Special Protection Area. Over 70% of Ireland's 900 native plant species have been found in the Burren uplands. This area represents just 0.5% of the national land area.

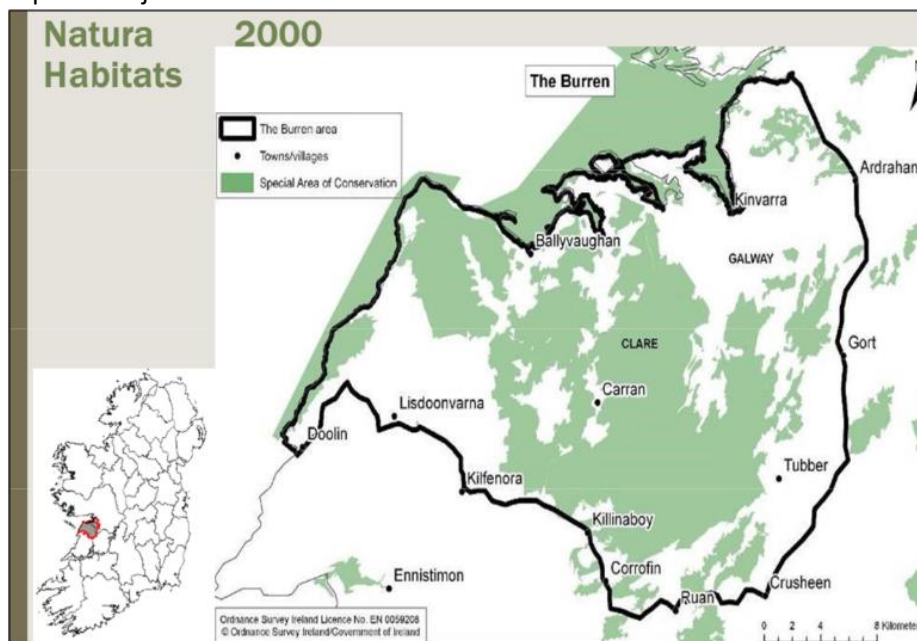


Figure 2: Map of Natura Habitats across the Burren

The diversity of habitats in Burren supports a variety of fauna. The Burren is recognised as one of the best surviving areas for bumblebees in Ireland (Santorum and Breen, 2005) and is home to at least half of the 570 macro-moths recorded in Ireland and 30 of Ireland's 34 butterfly species. Over 60 species of snail are found in the Burren, as are most of Ireland's native bat species.

Vertebrates found living in the Burren include large herds of wild goats, the common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and the only native frog to Ireland (*Rana temporaria*). The Burren supports 102 bird species, which represents 70% of Ireland's breeding birds.

Socio-economical values

In 2011, the population of the Burren was 15,389 people. Eleven small towns and several rural villages make up this number. Many Burren families have at least one member working off-farm. This off-farm work usually provides a reliable source of good income for a fixed workday. However, the associated farm business must be restructured to become more efficient to facilitate this off-farm job, which has a big impact on how the land is managed.

Traditionally the economy of the Burren, as with the rest of rural Ireland, has been dominated by agriculture. In the last few decades however, the market has changed substantially with the development of other industries such as tourism and technology.

The development of locally-led agri-environment programmes since 2005, have supported the unique farming practices in the Burren and consequently how the land is managed. This support for the area has helped support farm families to continue living and working in the Burren.

Part 3 / *The Burren* Weakness, Issues and Challenges

Agricultural

Every farm in the Burren is unique, which makes the management changes and challenges on each farm different. In general, the changes in agricultural practises and in the landscape have an increased focus on lowland grasslands (fertilisers, slurry, machinery, silage, cattle housing). This change may result in environmental damage such as reduced water quality and contribute to the under-grazing of species-rich uplands and the encroachment of scrub on these areas.

Scrub encroachment on upland areas is an ongoing agricultural and environmental challenge in the Burren. Continuing Burren farming traditions like 'Winterage' is extremely important to prevent scrub encroachment and create a suitable environment for smaller herb species, for which the Burren is known for.

There has been increasing popularity in farming continental cattle breeds, such as Charolais, Limousine and Simmental due to their marketability. These animals require higher nutritional and husbandry requirements than that of the native breeds. Therefore, there has been an increasing requirement for supplementary feedstuffs and housing, which increases farm labour.



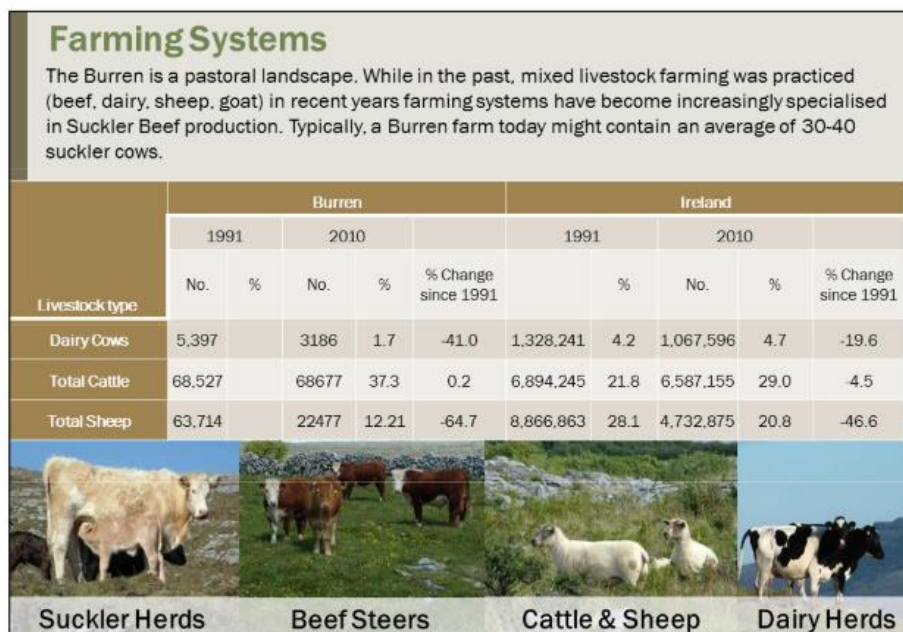


Figure 3: Changes to the farming systems in the Burren over 20 years

Environmental

Many important Burren habitats, such as limestone pavements and species-rich grasslands are not eligible for Basic Payment Scheme funding. This is an issue, as these marginal, extensively managed areas are among the most significant from a natural and cultural perspective.

Socio-economic

Farm labour availability can be low due to an increase in Burren farmers working part- or full-time off the farm. The age profile of Burren farmers is increasing, (see figure below), with a substantial loss of younger farmers (under 44) to the older cohorts and very low levels of young farmer recruitment. This echoes the National trend of an ageing farmer population in Ireland.

Farming population

1,561 people in the Burren identified themselves as farmers in 2010, a (surprisingly) small decrease from the 1991 figure.

Farmer age	Burren					Ireland				
	1991		2010		% Change since 1991	1991		2010		% Change since 1991
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%	
under 35	237	14.7	106	6.8	-55.3	21504	13.3	8658	6.2	-59.7
35 to 44	360	22.3	279	17.9	-22.5	32247	20.0	24480	17.6	-24.1
45 to 54	323	20.0	378	24.2	17.0	35312	21.8	34500	24.8	-2.3
55 to 64	333	20.7	410	26.3	23.1	36077	22.3	34946	25.1	-3.1
65 and over	359	22.3	388	24.9	8.1	36479	22.6	36510	26.2	0.1
Total no of farmers	1612		1561		-3.2	161619		139094		-13.9

Figure 4: Table comparing the age demographic of Burren farmers to farmers in the rest of Ireland.

Turnover of land is very low in the Burren. It is common for those inheriting land to retain the land while either farming it as a part-time occupation or renting it to other farmers. Inland Burren villages such as Fanore, Carron, Boston and Tubber, have seen a decline in population in recent years. This has resulted in a withdrawal of services such as post offices, shops and churches. This can have a big impact on the surrounding landscape and how the land is managed.

Part 4/ *The Burren* PRA Strengths and Opportunities

The unique management practices carried out in the Burren region contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the biodiversity and the sustainable development of the area. Conserving traditional Burren farming practices such as winterage, herding and physical features such as rainwater troughs and shelter walls, will help retain important landscape features and the unique Burren habitats and biodiversity. Recent public involvement and published research into the Burren landscape, agricultural practices and traditions has led to the development of locally-led agri-environment programmes, including the 'BurrenLIFE Project' (2005-2010), 'Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (2010-2016) and most recently the 'Burren Programme'.



Community partnerships have been set up to bring together the community within the Burren. The Burrenbeo Trust is a major national ENGO that was set up to focus on 'connecting people with their place and its care'. It aims to connect all members of the Burren community through education programmes and local events to generate a sense of pride in their heritage and natural landscape.

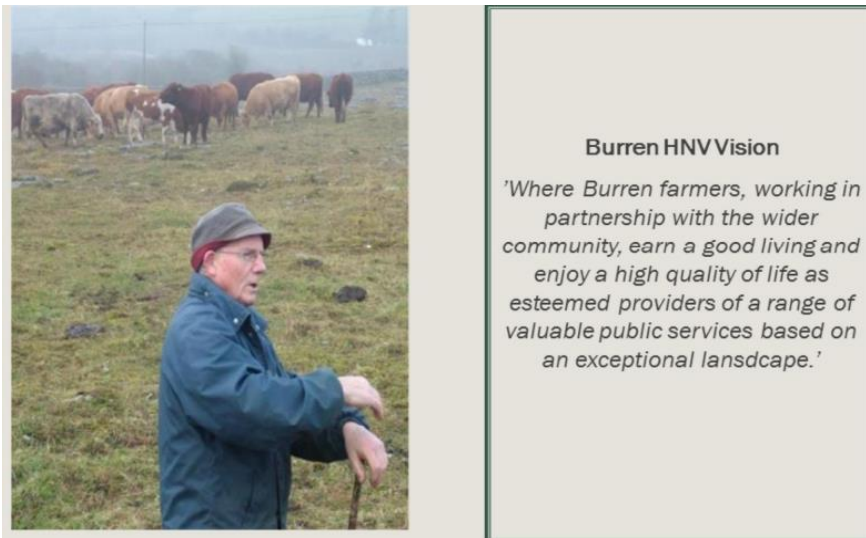
The Burren Programme is a hybrid agri-environment scheme (AES) that takes a farmer-centred approach to AES implementation. The programme is specific to the Burren and the traditional management practises. The Burren Programme aims to grow a sustainable farming population by addressing different challenges:



- **Social:** an ageing farming population with very few young farmers resulting in a loss of management knowledge and skill and insufficient labour to carry out required conservation actions.
- **Economic:** Farming remains an unviable occupation for most farmers, even with additional funding provided by the Burren Programme. Farmers currently gain very little from tourism or added value gained from livestock sales.
- **Environmental:** Notwithstanding the impact of the Burren programme, scrub continues to encroach onto the Burren's grasslands while on lowland areas there is continued, often damaging intensification (reclamation, nutrient input).

Part 5 / The Burren Current and Future challenges (Business as Usual vs sustainable PRA future)

The Burren HNV Vision:



Challenges to the current HNV vision:

- Not losing sight of a farmer's central identity, of producing an agricultural output!
- The Next Generation: confidence for young farmers in a 25-year road map with some certainty attached to it, not a 5-year agri-environmental commitment.
- HNV vision text ok, but no language in terms of the future (all worded in the present tense), therefore achieving the potential is assumed but not explicitly stated.
- Over-regulation or bureaucracy: too much paperwork, restrictions (e.g. planning).
- Access to land: includes inheritance/succession issues but also farmers attachment to land and their reluctance to rent or sell land.
- Poor social opportunities especially for young farmers: less people, more machinery, fewer social outlets.
- Poor infrastructure: broadband, roads, community facilities.
- Limited skills or confidence among (some farmers) to undertake alternative enterprises.
- Poor viability of current systems and their limited product range – mainly weanling beef.
- Poor overlap between two main industries – farming and tourism.
- Lack of off-farm employment opportunities close to the farm.
- Security and short term (5 years or less) nature of public funding.

All these barriers, altogether, call for innovative ways to overcome the difficulties. The Burren Programme has demonstrated different innovations in which to tackle these challenges.

Sources:

- Original Baseline Assessment Document: [BurrenBaselineAssessment.pdf \(hvnlink.eu\)](https://hvnlink.eu/BurrenBaselineAssessment.pdf)

Part 6/ Notes:

Burren Timeline

Timeline

The farming history of the Burren region


Prehistorical context: Neolithic – Late Iron Age

Historical context: Medieval times to mid 1800s

The Famine and land tenure: 1840s to late 1900s

Intensification and modernisation: 1973-2004

Advent of BurrenLIFE to present: 2004-present



Important Actors and Stakeholders

Some of the key Actors in realizing the HNV Vision

International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU UNESCO Council of Europe HNV LINK, EFNCP, Europarc and other EU Networks
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine National Parks and Wildlife Service National Monuments Service Teagasc (Farm Advisory Service)
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clare County Council Galway County Council Leader Companies (Clare and Galway) Collegess (Galway, Sligo and Limerick)
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burren Irish Farmers Association Burren Programme Burrenbeo Trust Burren Ecotourism Network



Case-Study on innovative development in Peripheral Rural Areas
Part B – BUILDING A COMMON VISION FOR THE PERIPHERAL RURAL AREA: THE
PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND
INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRA
corresponding to Module 3– e-learning course

Building a common vision for Burren, Ireland



Part 1 / Mapping the Participatory Process

The Burren Learning Area (LA) team was led by James Moran of the Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo) now GMIT, in the northwest of Ireland. The project draws on the long-standing collaboration that has been built with the key stakeholders in the area: Burrenbeo Trust (LA Lead Partner), The Burren Programme, and the Burren Irish Farmers Association. The participatory process was instigated by the [BurrenLIFE](#) project an award winning EU LIFE project.

The overall objective of LA is to catalyze the creation of a future network for sustainable development in HNV areas across Ireland with the Burren as a central innovation hub.

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



Starting from the project application stage, the HNV-Link team consulted with key stakeholders on the design of the HNV-Link project. During project development and initiation, the team also held discussions with a broad range of stakeholders including: Teagasc (national farm advisory service),

nature conservation authorities and local higher education institutions. The role of Burrenbeo Trust is particularly instrumental since it is a well-respected non-governmental organisation in the Burren dedicated to connecting people and place bringing together a wide range of stakeholders who care for the Burren.

The Burren Learning Area team also organised an innovation seminar in July 2017, to refine the vision of sustainable development for the high nature value region and to decide on the innovation priorities for the next phase of the project.



Figure 1: Key actors involved in realization of Burren LA HNV Vision'

The target groups needed to enable the completion of the Burren HNV Vision are outlined in Figure 1. Local level stakeholders have direct responsibility and are direct beneficiaries of this vision. Regional, national and international stakeholders have a key role in creating the enabling environment that can assist in realizing the vision, while also benefiting as visitors, consumers and users of the ecosystem services provided by this landscape.

At international level the Burren has received recognition including a [European Diploma for Protected Areas](#) from the Council of Europe, The [“Best of the Best” LIFE nature project](#) award; and the area is a [UNESCO Global Geopark](#) and part of the [EU Natura 2000 Network](#).

Part 2 / Implementation and Assessment of the participatory process

A key annual event in the Burren is the [Burren Winterage weekend](#), which incorporates the Burren Winterage School. The Winterage school acts as an annual learning and networking event for stakeholders in the Burren. It aims to facilitate the participation and engagement of local, regional and international stakeholders in a knowledge sharing, co-construction and engagement process. The event is organized by the Burrenbeo Trust. It was used by HNV-Link as an opportunity to enable wider engagement with stakeholders and host workshops focused on the range of HNV-Link activities.

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

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

The [HNV Link Burren Action](#) plan highlights that the partnership and participatory approach of BurrenLIFE and the follow-on Burren Programme laid the foundations for the sustainable development of this PRA. Organisations such as the Burrenbeo Trust together with a broad range of committed stakeholders, have led to the creation of a local and institutional environment which inspires creation of innovative solutions.

The engagement of stakeholders in a participatory process, identifying the problems and co-creating solutions is key to the development of this area. International recognition for the initiatives in the area keeps the issues in the policy spotlight with continued need to communicate and highlight the challenges and opportunities in the area.

At a series of Burren Farmer Training Sessions in October 2016, 200 Burren farmers were asked to describe farming in the Burren today and their vision for farming in 20 years' time in five keywords. The responses were aggregated into a word cloud (Figure 2) by the HNV-Link learning area team.



Figure 1 : Word clouds displaying farmers impression of farming in the Burren (2016) and their vision for the future of farming (2036) (Source: HNV-Link).

Part 3 /Identification of HNV Innovation Needs

a/ Knowledge of strengths and weaknesses

The Burren PRA main strengths are achieved through the partnership and participatory approach of the BurrenLIFE projects and its successor the Burren Programme, supported by the ongoing work the BurrenBeo Trust. The main strengths and weaknesses have been highlighted in the [Burren HNV-Link Innovation Assessment report](#):

Strengths

- Strong partnership and positive working relationship across a range of key stakeholders.
- Support and trust of farming community.
- Ongoing public funding for delivery of public goods through payment for results/payments for ecosystem services approach.
- Individual businesses availing of opportunities to develop new products (e.g. Burren gates), market food products and create on farm tourist experiences.
- Local “one stop shop” advisory services which minimises bureaucracy for farmer while providing guidance and support.
- Support of wider community enabled and captured through Burrenbeo Trust initiatives.
- Pride of farmers in producing biodiversity and landscape product.

Weaknesses

- Short term basis (5 years or less) and ongoing uncertainty of future availability of public funding. Farmers are delivering the biodiversity/HNV products and a market has been created but uncertainty over its continuation.
- Under current regulations and member state implementation rules, many HNV features are ineligible for farm payments creating a negative perception of value of these areas.
- Despite current initiatives, farming is still a relatively low-income occupation which is considered financially non-viable.
- Attractiveness of farming as occupation for next generation.
- Overly dependent on public funds and need to diversify funding sources.
- Limited number of farm business benefiting directly from tourism or selling products directly to consumer.

b / Knowledge of the challenges

The Burren faces several challenges related to ageing farming population, rural depopulation, rural infrastructure, viability of farming, land intensification and abandonment (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Challenges facing HNV farming in the Burren PRA (Source: HNV-Link Innovation report)

The Burren has made great progress on social and institutional innovations through community organisations such as the Burrenbeo Trust and working partnerships with stakeholders (Figure 4).

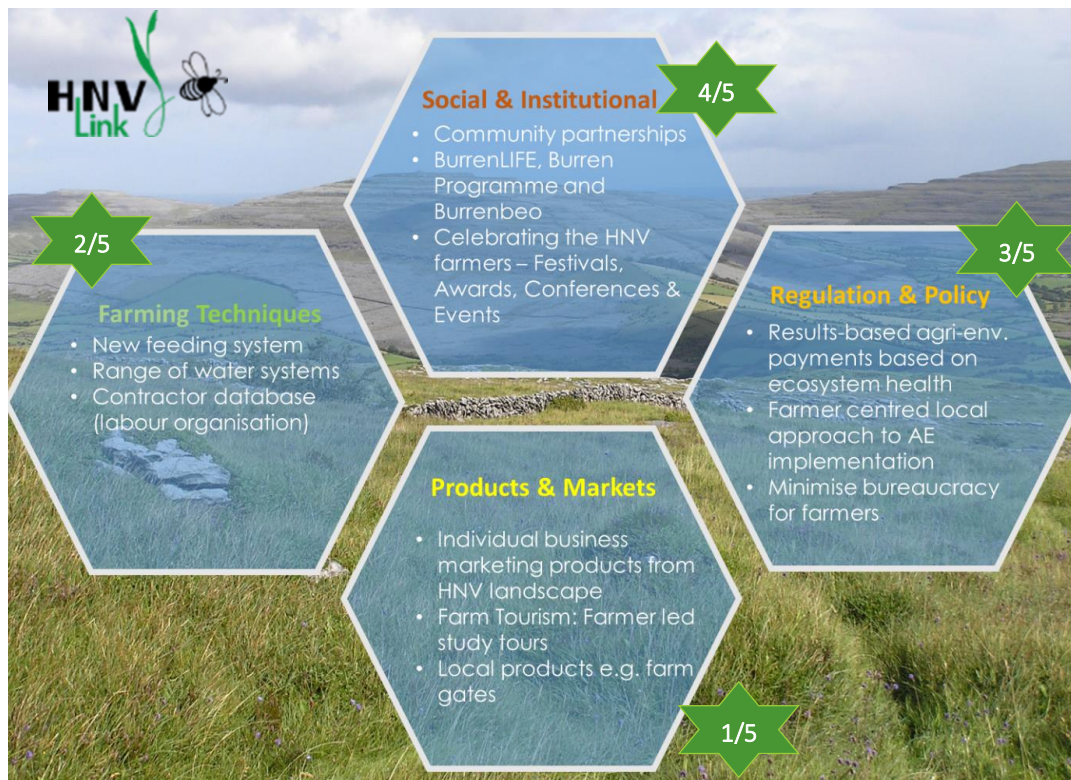


Figure 4: HNV-LINK assessment of innovation situation in the Burren PRA in 2018 with score out of 5 indicating where further innovation is required. 0 = insignificant, nothing is happening to address the needs of HNV under this theme; 1 = Few innovations and overall impact very small, many HNV issues not addressed at all; 2 = Several innovations, some with significant effects for HNV, but not at the necessary scale; many HNV issues not addressed effectively; 3 = Several significant innovations, with at least some of them addressing HNV issues at the necessary scale; but some important issues need to be addressed more effectively; 4 = Many significant innovations, the main HNV issues are addressed at the necessary scale; but there are still some smaller issues that need to be addressed more effectively; 5 = Innovation is addressing effectively all the main HNV issues under this theme, needs are being met right across the LA. There are no apparent gaps.

c / What needs to be done

Further work is required around the regulatory framework to enable and support local communities to create local solutions. Social infrastructure and community wellbeing initiatives are required to combat rural isolation and improve attractiveness of farming as a career choice for the next generation. Improved marketing, product development and diversification opportunities are needed to realise a vision of sustainable HNV farming in the Burren. Innovations are outlined in Figure 5 under the themes.

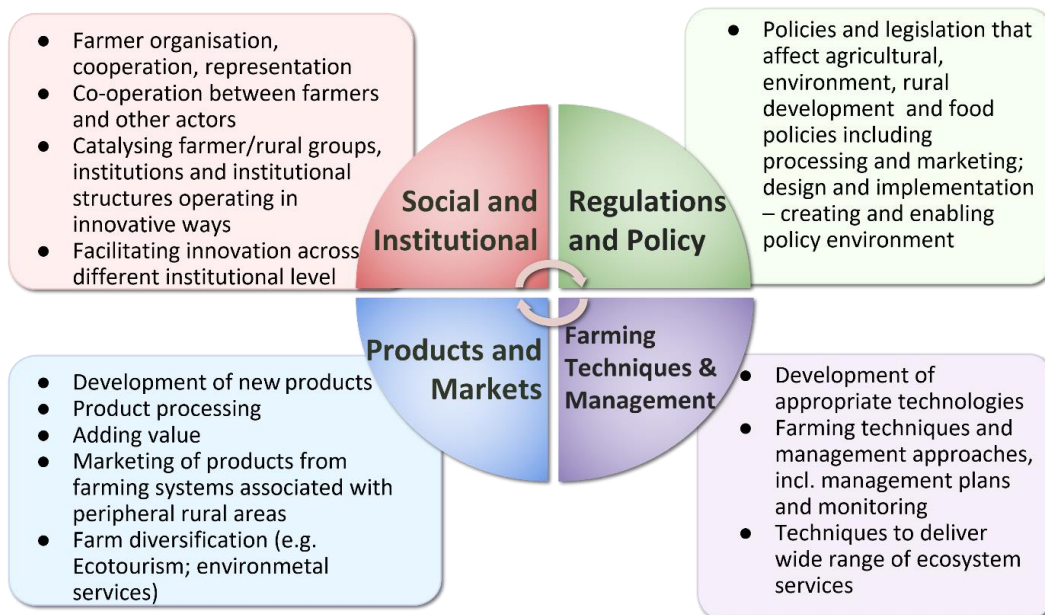


Figure 5: Improvements and solutions for the Burren classified across the four innovation themes; social and institutional, regulation and policy, products and markets, farming techniques/management

d/ The Vision

In the early stages of the participatory process, the team focused its efforts on the co-creation of a HNV Vision for the Burren. For this, the team engaged with stakeholders to gather existing baseline information and the development of a business-as-usual scenario. Combining this data with the HNV innovation assessment facilitated the identification of innovation gaps. It is crucial that innovation gaps are identified to develop solutions for the sustainable development of the Burren. This process needs to be anchored in an agreed HNV vision for the area.



Figure 6: The agreed HNV Vision by stakeholders as part of the HNV-Link project.

Sources from HNV-Link documents:

[The Burren Region - European Diploma areas \(coe.int\)](http://coe.int)

[Environment - LIFE : Best LIFE-Nature Projects 2010 \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)

[BURREN & CLIFFS OF MOHER UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK \(Ireland\)](#)

[Natura 2000 - EUROPARC Federation](#)

[Burren Winterage Weekend - County Clare - 21st to 25th October 2020](#)

[P09-IE-TheBURREN_LAACTIONPLAN_V4_20190301.pdf \(hvnlink.eu\)](#)

[IRBurrenINNOVATIONREPORT.pdf \(hvnlink.eu\)](#)



Case-studies on innovative sustainable development in Peripheral Rural Areas

Burren PRA Part D – INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION

corresponding to Module 5 – e-learning course

Part D: Innovation exchange, transfer and dissemination

Content:

After the reflection on the innovation needs and the vulnerabilities of the area, the PRA engages in an active process of moving forward with the sustainable development of the PRA, through the implementation of innovative solutions for preserving and enhancing the HNV farming system and the peripheral rural area's economies.

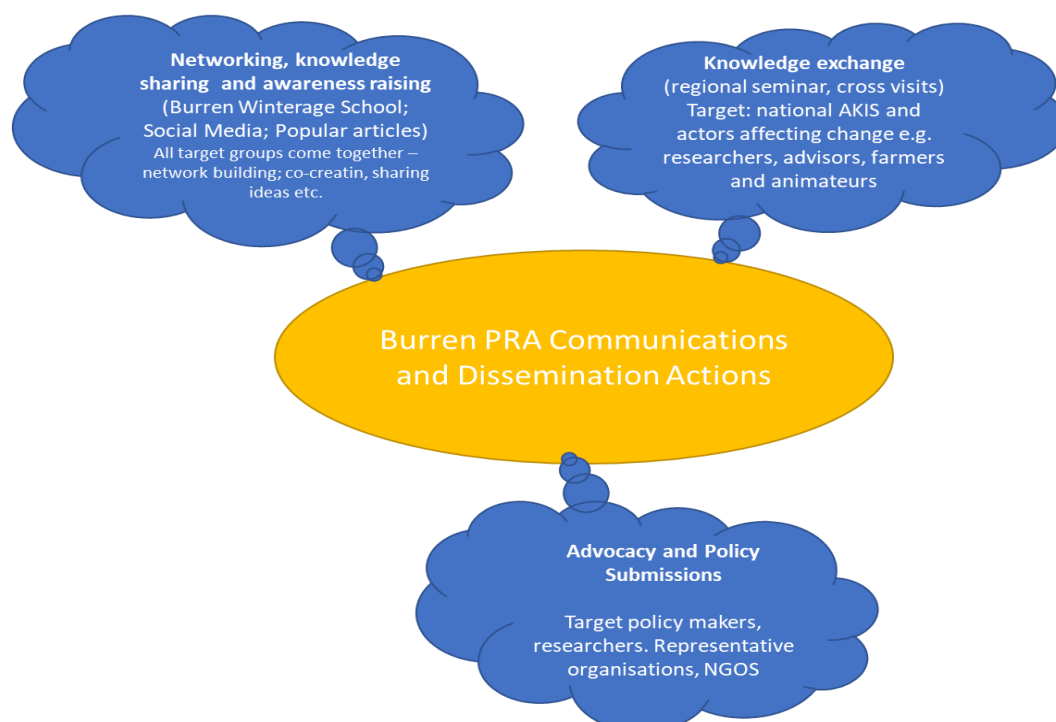
Part D provides students with information on communication and dissemination examples carried out during the HNV-link project, with an emphasis on the most efficient actions focused on specific end-users.

As part of the communication/dissemination/transfer activities, Part D also provides a focus on the Cross-Visits and peer-exchanges activities carried out during the HNV-Link project (short summary + links to C-V recorded material). Part D of the case study relates to the e-learning Module 5.

1 / Engaging Communication and Dissemination Actions for sustainable development of the PRA

Summary of the communication and dissemination activities carried out during HNV-Link

The overall objective of the communications and dissemination actions in the Burren PRA during HNV-Link were to catalyse the creation of a future network for sustainable development in HNV areas across Ireland with the Burren acting as a key innovation hub. Actions focused on increasing awareness of the HNV concept and value of HNV farmlands among diverse range of actors. This was accompanied by dissemination of a range of HNV innovations from across HNV Link EU learning areas to stimulate the development of local solutions.



There were also activities targeted at engaging policy makers and ensuring wider acknowledgement of the need for policy to provide an enabling environment for innovation and sustainable development of HNV areas. A wide range of activities were undertaken including an annual Burren Winterage School, regional meeting focused on the incorporation of needs of these areas into the national Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS), popular articles, social media and engagement with national public consultations on policy development.

Brief assessment/reflections on the overall Communication and Dissemination Process

The HNV LINK communications and dissemination activities were part of an ongoing communications, knowledge sharing and networking process in the Burren which aims to build towards a national farming for nature network. Long term commitment beyond the lifetime of individual projects is essential and the presence of an organization in the Burren (BurrenBeo Trust) enables this long-term engagement. The BurrenBeo Trust is dedicated to connecting people and place and highlighting the Burren as a learning landscape. It provides place-based learning opportunities across the community. Activities are focused on learning, events, active conservation, research and advocacy.



The annual Burren Winterage festival (incorporating the Winterage School) is a focal event of activities each year. Lack of a dependable, long term source of funding to sustain this range of activity is a risk and there is continued efforts required by dedicated volunteers to organize activities and secure funding. Ongoing support from the state and relevant authorities to mitigate this risk. Widening the network of volunteers and supporters is the best way to mitigate against this.



A national [farming for nature](#) initiative has been ongoing since 2018 and focuses on acknowledging and supporting farmers who farm, or wish to farm, in a way that will improve the natural health of our countryside. The initiative focuses on celebrating success, identifying ambassadors, peer learning, collation and dissemination of best practice. It uses a range of online and in person communication tools including dedicated website, farm walks, podcasts, videos, webinars, annual meetings and bimonthly newsletters.

Part 2 / Focus on Cross-Visits

The cross-visits of the regional teams are one of the key activities within the HNV-Link Network. The project learning area teams visited each other during 2018. The objective of the cross-visits was to support peer-learning about HNV farming innovations and how these could be implemented in learning areas. As HNV-Link has discovered so far, there is no shortage of innovative solutions to help solve challenges to the viability of HNV farming in HNV farmland regions. However, knowledge transfer and exchange of these solutions are not always successful. As a result, individual innovations may stall if the whole institutional, legislative and cultural context is not supportive of novel approaches.



A French delegation (representatives from Causses and Cévennes Learning Area) joined colleagues from Dalsland (Sweden) and Cluj (Romania) Learning Areas for a cross-visit to The Burren in October 2018. This visit was timed with The Burren's well-known Winterage School weekend event. These events gave participants the opportunity to network with approximately 260 advisors, researchers, farmers and government officials working on agri-environment (AE) programmes in Ireland. This event in particular highlighted how the 'Burren approach' can be adapted to work for other landscapes and farming systems. In addition to the Winterage Weekend events, the cross-visit allowed the various groups from Sweden, France, Romania and Wales to share their stories and discuss the challenges farmers are facing in their HNV landscapes.

Reasons of a visit to The Burren: The French delegation visiting the Burren aimed to deal with different questions, some of which included:

- How do the AE schemes work with a results-based payment approach?
- Is the administrative set-up of the AE measures simplified to favour the involvement of the breeders?
- Is the support of breeders with the AE measures planned on long time steps to maintain their membership?
- How is the CAP apprehended by breeders?
- Is the consideration of pastoral areas satisfactory?
- What is the value of livestock by-products (e.g. wool) and is there a structured economic sector for this?
- How to maintain dynamics of exchange on a European scale and what to do after HNV-Link project?

Lessons Learnt: Despite some differences with the Causses and Cévennes, great similarities in the problems experienced by these two different territories were found. The project HNV-link also aims to federate the various sites to defend and assert proposals for pastoralism to the European political authorities for the next CAP. For instance, during this trip, the French delegation, together with the Irish representatives of the Burren, the Swedish and Romanian delegations, were able to develop tracks for new project or partnership, and to speak on this topic with the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mairead McGuinness, present at one of the events of the Burren Festival.

Further information / Sources:

Short videos of the cross-visit to The Burren, implemented under HNV-Link project:

Video reviews of the cross-visit from the host team:

1. [James Moran sharing his ideas as a host at the cross-visit, HNV-Link - YouTube](#)
2. [Brendan Dunford sharing his ideas as a host at the cross-visit, HNV-Link - YouTube](#)

Video review of the cross-visit from the visiting teams:

1. [Mugur Jitea from Romania on his cross-visit to Ireland - YouTube](#)

