

The Bog Standard

FarmPEAT Newsletter

Issue 2 | July 2022



The FarmPEAT (Farm Payments for Ecological and Agricultural Transitions) Project is developing a locally-led, innovative, results-based farm scheme for farmers who manage lands that surround some of Ireland's finest remaining raised bogs.

Farming with nature in the midland raised bog landscape.

'Love Your Wellies' Art's Competition

The FarmPEAT's 'Love Your Wellies' art's competition is finished and we have this year's winners to celebrate! After over a thousand entries, we got to our 10 finalists for public vote with the help of our very special panel of judges. During the competition, FarmPEAT engaged with over 576,000 people, which ended with this year's winners being selected. It was an inspiring competition that went beyond the arts and achieved results the team at FarmPEAT couldn't even dream. This national event lent itself to an incredible amount of people learning more about the importance of the peat landscape and students gaining new appreciation for where they call home. Please turn to page 4 for the competition winners and full breakdown.



Behind the Hedge Project Update

Farmer Payments

A total of €75,948 in results-based farm payments for 2021 have been paid to our 36 pilot farmers, with an average farm payment of €2,110. We hope these payments go some way to rewarding our farmers for ecosystem services provided by their farms such as carbon sequestration, water retention and filtration, biodiversity, pollination and much more!



Greenhouse Gas Study

Did you know that every hectare of intensively managed grassland on peat soils emits somewhere in the region of 20 tonnes of greenhouse gases every year?

The FarmPEAT farm scoring system is designed to give higher scores to plots where peat soils are either not drained or drained ineffectively and, where the water level in the drains is high (within 30cm of the ground surface). Additionally, a high cover of wetland plants (think rushes, meadowsweet, mint etc.) will increase the score. Do these factors, which contribute to high scores, capture how environmentally friendly the plot is in terms of greenhouse gas emissions?



That is what Environmental Scientist, Mark O'Connor, is helping us to unravel. Mark is working with FarmPEAT installing equipment at nine study sites within five FarmPEAT participant farms. Mark visits these sites regularly to take various measurements of e.g. water-table depth, soil moisture, soil temperature and, critically, of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄), to see how much greenhouse gases are being emitted (or sequestered!) by a particular site. The idea is that we will be able to use this valuable data and relate it to our scoring system. We are exploring whether a high scoring peaty grassland is emitting low levels of CO₂ and CH₄, or, dare we hope, even sequestering these damaging gases! Time and dedication will tell as Mark will need to record regularly for at least 1 year before conclusions can be made. We will keep you updated on this exciting study!

Soil and Drain Survey

The FarmPEAT team and Wetland Surveys Ireland completed a soil and drain survey of all our 36 pilot farms. This gave us very useful information such as estimates of the depth of peat on peaty plots, the location of drains and their main characteristics. It also gave us an indication as to where inaccuracies lay with existing mapping of peat soils. Thank you to all our farmers for facilitating this study and hopefully the soil test results are of benefit to you.



Annual Works Plans

Our farmers have been busy engaging with the FarmPEAT team to work out planned actions on their farms for the coming year. Thank you for all the engagement so far and we look forward to seeing the fruits of your labour later in the year!

Another Scoring Season Begins!

The second scoring season for the FarmPEAT project and our participant farmers has begun. The team will be in touch over the summer months to score your farm for 2022 and don't forget you, or another farm team member, are more than welcome to come along with us for a chat or to learn a bit more about the scoring process.

FarmPEAT Expands

A big welcome to our 14 new participant farmers who have joined the FarmPEAT Project. We look forward to working with you over the coming year and getting to know you and your farm! This brings our total group of farmers to 50 and increases our number of participants across almost all our project sites.



Did you know?
with Farmer Pete

Whole milk has a higher % of solid material than an intact bog!



Love Your Wellies Art's Competition Winners

The true intention behind this art's competition was to encourage and inspire the youth of today across rural Ireland to gain a better understanding of their surroundings and become part of the conversation for change. This was done by students choosing a theme and a format under the competition guidelines and use them as a way to tell their story about the peat landscape through their eyes. An achievement you will agree they all reached.

Guest Presenter

Minister Pippa Hackett
Minister of State | DAFM
A huge supporter of FarmPEAT and a great appreciator of art, the minister was blown away by all the entries submitted.



1st Place

'The Boglands' by Mark Fox from Kiltreevan N.S, Kiltreevan, Co. Roscommon. This incredible artpiece is a 3D model of the history and ecosystem of the bog and includes a map of the Clonlarge bog walk, a place very special to Mark and his family. The use of natural material, depth of field and the merging of education with art meant this entry stood out to everyone. Well done Mark and congratulations.



2nd Place

'Bog Over Time' by Mia Guilfoyle, Eleanor McCormack, Angeline Leonardo, Sophie Hunt from St.Evins School, Monasterevin, Co.Kildare. This entry was a colourful glimpse through three lenses, the past, the present, and the future, shown in a comic book style poster and a 3D model.



3rd Place

'MediaTrap' by Amelia Kobzda, Alison Flood, Julia Kurpis, Dagmara Pasioka from Colaiste Chiarain, Athlone, Co. Roscommon. MediaTrap is a beautifully made dream catcher featuring a bee working in a honeycomb of social media brands. A narrative on the blend between our environment and modern society.



Class Bracket Winners



Entry. 7
Farmers Day

Junior Infants - 2nd Class

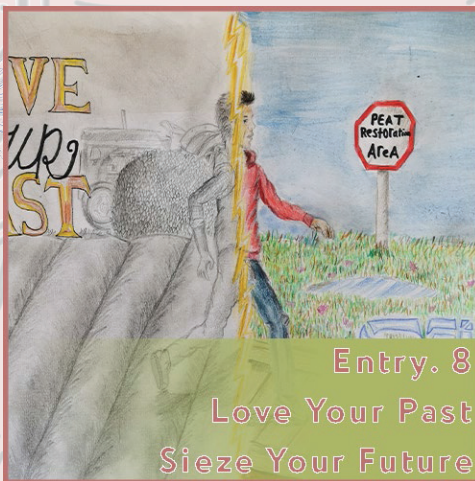
'Farmers Day', created by: Caoimhe Murphy, Sarah Heavy, Ben Dowling, Angelina/Anna Sasunts from Scoil Bhríde, Lackagh, Co. Kildare. This entry was based on a farmer's day, from the breakfast table to the farm work, and includes an energetic song and dance by all the farm animals.

3rd Class - 6th Class

'Bogopoly', Created by: Eimear Lovern, Antigoni Arvaniti, Ksenia Kieltyka, Isabelle Murphy from St. Evins School, Monasterevin, Co. Kildare. This entry was a Monopoly inspired boardgame designed by the group focused on education and interesting facts about the bog landscape.



Entry. 1
Bogopoly



Entry. 8
Love Your Past
Seize Your Future

1st Year - 3rd Year

'Love Your Past, Seize Your Future' by James Duffy, from Athlone Community College, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. This is a stunning piece of art in the form of a poster, with a lot more depth than first meets the eye! A judges favorite for its art style and messaging.

4th Year - 6th Year

'Buried In The Past' by Aisling O'Brien from Ballinamore C.S., Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim. This art leans heavily on the history of the peat landscape and the stories that lie beneath it. The striking tones used helped capture the imagination.



Entry. 10
Buried In The Past

The Judging Panel

Niamh Nolan -	Farmers4Safety	Anna Orman -	Clara Community & Heritage
Emma Byrne -	FarmPEAT	Aoife Kirk -	CCWP
Ray Stapleton -	Lullymore Heritage Centre	Liam Kildea -	Karst Farming
Pat Feehily -	Ballydangan Red Grouse Project	Eugene Dunbar -	ETHOS
Maria Pettit -	Irish Rural Link	Amanda Pedlow -	Offaly Co. Co. Heritage Officer
		Eddie Smyth -	Umeras Community Development

Farmer Interview

This month we were lucky enough to speak to one of our own participant farmers and hear why the bog is important to him. Michael Feehily has a great appreciation for the bog and this can be seen through his passion for sustainable farming on his own peat landscape.

How did you get into farming?

Well, I was born and bred into it as it is the home farm that I now run. I always had a love of tending to animals and making sustainable improvements on the land to maximise any potential that could be gained from it. I am also passionate about trying to produce a better quality animal which was more desirable to the market and which coincided with the holding and land type that I was farming. Mineral soils running into peat soils/ cut away bog land is the makeup of my parcel of land.

What type of Farming do I engage in?

I am a suckler farmer with 50 Limousin cross suckler cows and the offspring sold as weanlings. This is the only enterprise that is sustainable. Due to the protracted grazing season which is highly dependent on the weather both at turn out and end of the year, heavy wet soils not conducive to carrying livestock during continuous wet periods. To that end I run a batch dry hoggets' (sheep) to clear up the unwanted sward and which in turn tillers the grass and manures the pastures during the closed season when cattle are housed, causing little or no damage to the land.

Memories you have growing up near the bog.

I have lots of memories from growing up in the bog I would think, as when I was much younger, I have memories of going to the bog in early April to prepare a plot for the cutting of turf (the only source of heat for the farm house at that time). The Turf was cut by hand with slanes "a spade like tool with a wing on it" and then it was wheeled out across the turf bank on a wooden barrow to allow dry for a week or so and then the back breaking work of spreading and footing the turf followed. It was all hardship and we seemed to spend all summer long there in between saving hay and pulling weeds out of crops.

They were the more prominent ones but as we grew older we learned to appreciate the lovely freshness of the place, the beautiful sweet smells of the different array of heathers and wild plants and of the activities of the various insects like bees, dragonflies, daddy long-legs and those dreaded horseflies and midges who seemed to find the hinds of youth much more appetising. Birds like Grouse, pheasants, lapwings, snipe, cranes (Herons) and curlew were always about and you would hear them calling in the abundant heather and reed growths which spanned the entirety of the bog. The bog was in a sense a magical place to be explored by young fellas hoping to find pools full of frog spawn or find a well-hidden nest with a couple of eggs inside with the hope of seeing new life being hatched in the intervening period.

Do you value the bog today?

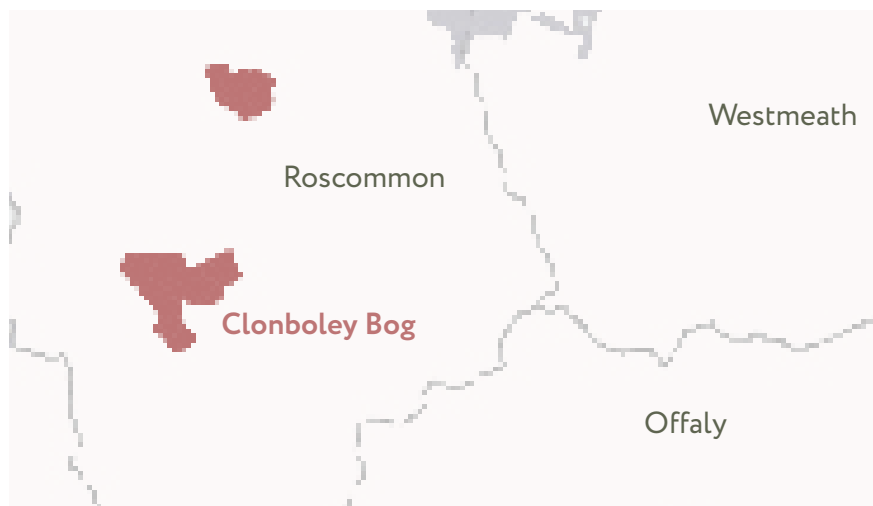
Yes, very much so. Of course, it is still the source of heat providing fuel but this resource can be managed effectively to allow the bog to rejuvenate. I have come to respect the bog and what it contributes to the enjoyment of life to a lot of people. From its beautiful landscapes and colour to its great openness and biodiversity that prevails there right in front of us, some of it which is very evident and that of which is rarely seen with whole worlds happening within the foliage in regards to plant and insect life. Those features have to be maintained and protected.

Do you think local communities benefit from the bogs?

I would indefinitely think that local communities benefit from the existence of the bogs in the area. From the sense of good fresh air and which are now becoming places to go for recreational walks, to explore the quietness, the smells and sounds that will not be experiences in other environments or hectic fast moving communities of cities and towns. There is now a great emphasis on bog walks and excursions to where people can go and experience nature happening where they would never have imagined.



Clonboley Bog Profile



Location: Roscommon

The Clonboley Bog site comprises a cluster of bogs located in Co. Roscommon approximately 7km north-east of Ballinasloe. This includes three distinct bog areas; Ballydangan Bog, Knock Bog and Cranberry Bog.

There are a variety of other habitats present within the site including; cutover bog, scrub, lake, flush, poor fen, rich fen, transition mire, conifer forestry, birch woodland, and humid grassland.

The surrounding area comprises agricultural land and other remnant raised bogs. The bogs within the site are largely owned by Bord na Móna and were industrially pre-drained in the past but were never harvested for peat, and the surface vegetation has therefore remained largely intact. Some sections remain un-drained. Restoration work involving the blocking of drains has been completed on the high bog in recent years by Bord na Móna and the vegetation is showing good signs of recovery. The bogs in the complex are mainly bounded by agricultural land, remnant bog areas, cutover and some conifer forestry areas. The Galway-Athlone railway line runs through the centre of the site, separating Ballydangan Bog to the south and Knock Bog to the north.

A local community group established the Ballydangan Bog Red Grouse Project and is very active on the bog undertaking appropriate management and monitoring for Red Grouse. As a result of the habitat restoration and management activities here, this local group saw the return of breeding Curlew to the site and now incorporate Curlew and other bird species of conservation concern, into their management plan for the bog.

Plant Profile

Mint (*Mentha* spp.)

Fun facts about mint:

This plant smells exactly how it sounds – minty!
Romans used it to make their baths smell minty fresh.
Mint tea is drunk and has a ‘calming’ effect.

How to identify mint:

The easiest way is to smell it.
When it blooms in July, it has lilac flowers.
The leaves are in an oval shape and are toothed along the edges. It usually has square stalks.



Bog cotton (*Eriophorum* spp.)

Fun facts about bog cotton:

The cotton mass is made up of seeds with hairs which help the seeds to be spread around by the wind.
Our ancestors used to bog cotton to stuff their pillows.
The Irish name for bog cotton is Ceannbhàn.

How to identify mint:

Its leaves have a reddish or brownish tint on them and they are long and needle-like.
When in fruit, they have an obvious white cotton mass.
They can grow to be 30-50cm high.



ScoreCard Workshop

This summer, the FarmPEAT project offered a workshop to any of the participating farmers that were interested in learning more about the results-based approach. The purpose of the workshop was to help farmers fully understand where the value lies on their peatland plots, and to show how the scorecards can reflect that value.



The outdoor workshop ran for a full day and covered four of the projects' scorecards. We focused on the dry grassland, wet grassland, peatland, and boundary scorecards. Each farmer was given a scorecard so everyone could take part in a scoring demonstration as a group. After the initial demonstration, everyone was then divided into smaller groups and carried out their own scoring. By the end of the session, everyone was familiar with most of our positive indicator species and the different drain conditions. Following the successful workshop, we hope to see more farmers engaging with the scoring process in our second year of the project.

A big thank you to the participating farmers that allowed us to run the workshop on their farms.

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FarmPEAT Wordsearch

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| Sphagnum | cuckooflower | violet |
| Moss | birdsfoottrefoil | yellowflagiris |
| Heather | spearwort | loveyourwellies |
| bogcotton | lousewort | esker |
| Peat | daisy | drumlin |
| peatlandscape | orchid | dragonfly |
| community | meadowsweet | redgrouse |
| farmers | meadowthistle | devilsmatchstick |
| agriculture | sedge | hare |
| heritage | sheepsorrel | fox |
| home | rushes | fern |
| mint | umbel | scent |
| knapweed | tormentil | sound |



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