

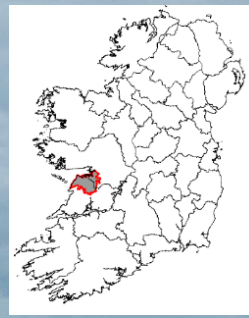
# Stakeholder engagement and collaborative management in the Burren

*Brendan Dunford*



# The Burren - a 'High Nature Value' (**HNV**) farmed landscape...

*72,000ha in size, c.30,000ha SAC, managed by 450-500 farm families.*



...with a deeply interwoven cultural heritage: *'One vast memorial to bygone cultures'*  
*'densely settled and intensively farmed' some 4,500 years ago (Jones, 1997).*



In recent decades, the rate and scale of change in farming has outstripped the Burren's ability to adjust, resulting in a growing imbalance between farming and nature.

*When **under**-farmed or **over**-farmed, the Burren's heritage becomes eroded.*



Farming intensity



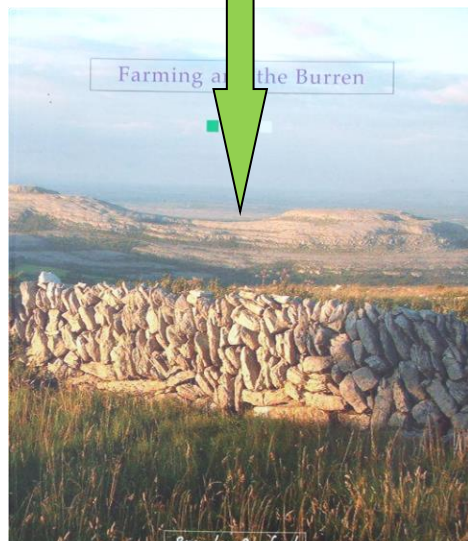
**Our focus – restoring the balance between farming and the Burren**

# 1. Reframing the Narrative – community as a (sustainable) conservation resource



The Impact of Agricultural Practices on the  
Natural Heritage of the Burren  
Uplands, Co. Clare

James Brendan Dunford



*Recognising farmers as part of  
the Burren, not apart from it.*

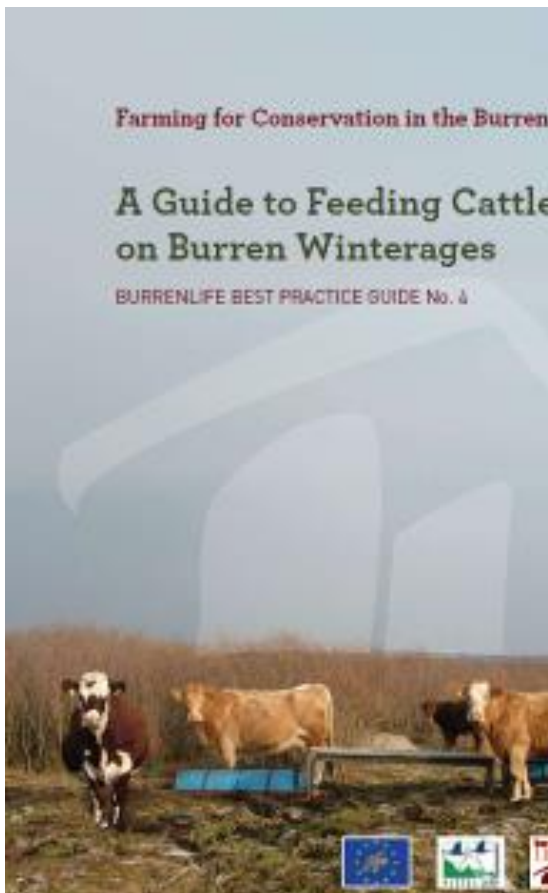


'... the majority of local people have not taken ownership of their own heritage, both cultural and natural... is once more imposed 'from above' and 'from outside' (O'Rourke, 2001).

## 2. Co-creating Solutions and earning trust



*Scientists and farmers co-creating solutions to deal with specific local issues: e.g. supplementary feed*



Joint Winner 'Best Ever' LIFE Nature Project in Europe

### 3. Rewarding positive management (paying for ecosystem services)

The Burren Programme pays farmers for Ecosystem Services on a **‘results-basis’** and also provides funding for **actions** to help address underlying environmental problems

Annual performance payment

+ fund to address the environmental problems on farm

“RBAPS: ‘Result Based’ Agri Environment Payment Schemes”

9/10 = €135/ha



0/10 = €0/ha



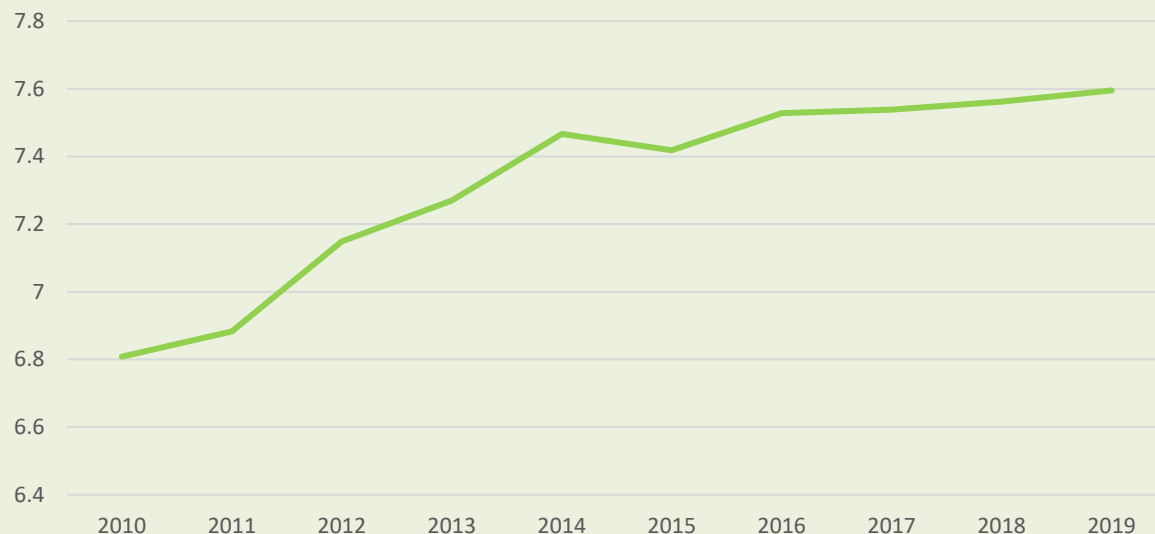
*RBAPS approach helps to improve farmer engagement, value for money and environmental impact.*

#### 4. Providing training and support at a local level



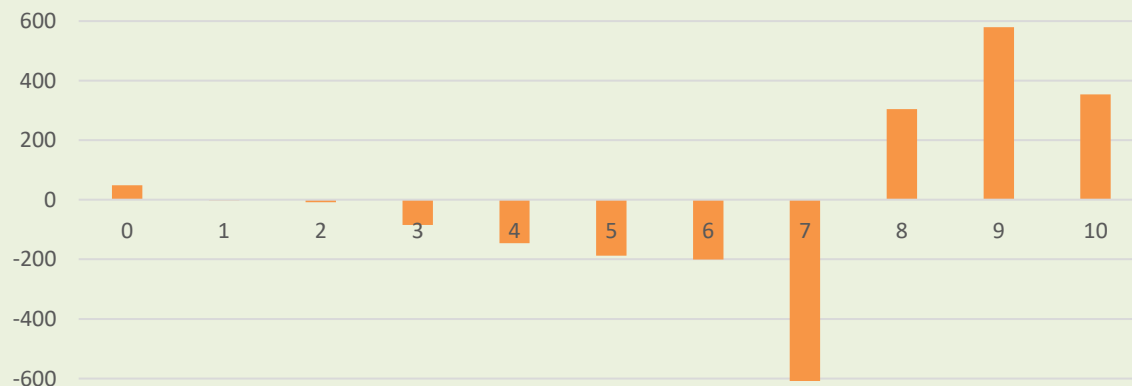
# IMPACT: Environmental (extracts from BP 2020 report)

Average I-1 (M1) Score(2010-19)



## Substantial improvement in high-scoring farmland

Difference in area (ha) per score, Y10(2019) vs Y1(2010)



## Conservation infrastructure completed since 2010

Encroaching Scrub removed	320ha (1.4% of BP area)
Scrub pathways	205.5km
Stone wall repair	127.5km
Wire fencing	50km
Gate installation	844
Water Troughs	530
Feed Troughs	221
New Access Tracks	28.7km
Upgrade Access Tracks	37.4km
Habitat Restoration Jobs	161

*All work co-funded by farmers.*

*Must apply to get funding (currently 60% of farmers have undertaken work)*

An **additional**, not an alternative, product, the price of which is guaranteed for 5 years.



# Improvements in farming infrastructure (and cultural heritage)



## 5. Reconnecting people with their place and their role in caring for it



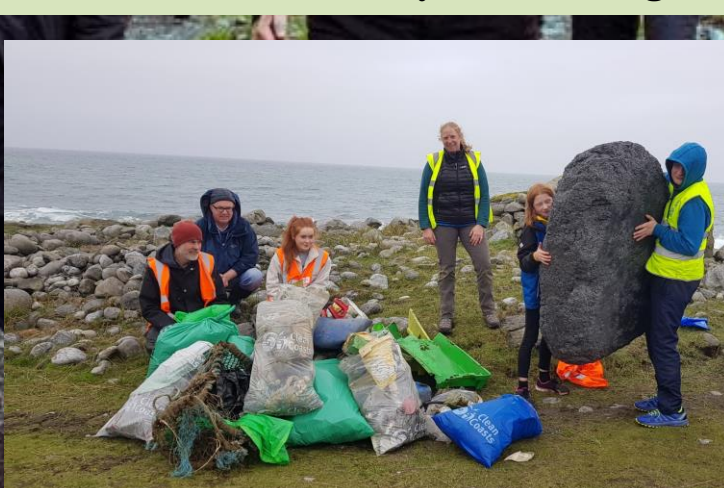
# Community wellbeing initiatives

**burren**beo**trust**  
connecting people and place



## Community Engagement:

- Better understanding between farmers and public
- Stronger, more connected communities
- New business opportunities – e.g. farm tours
- Better outcomes for biodiversity and heritage

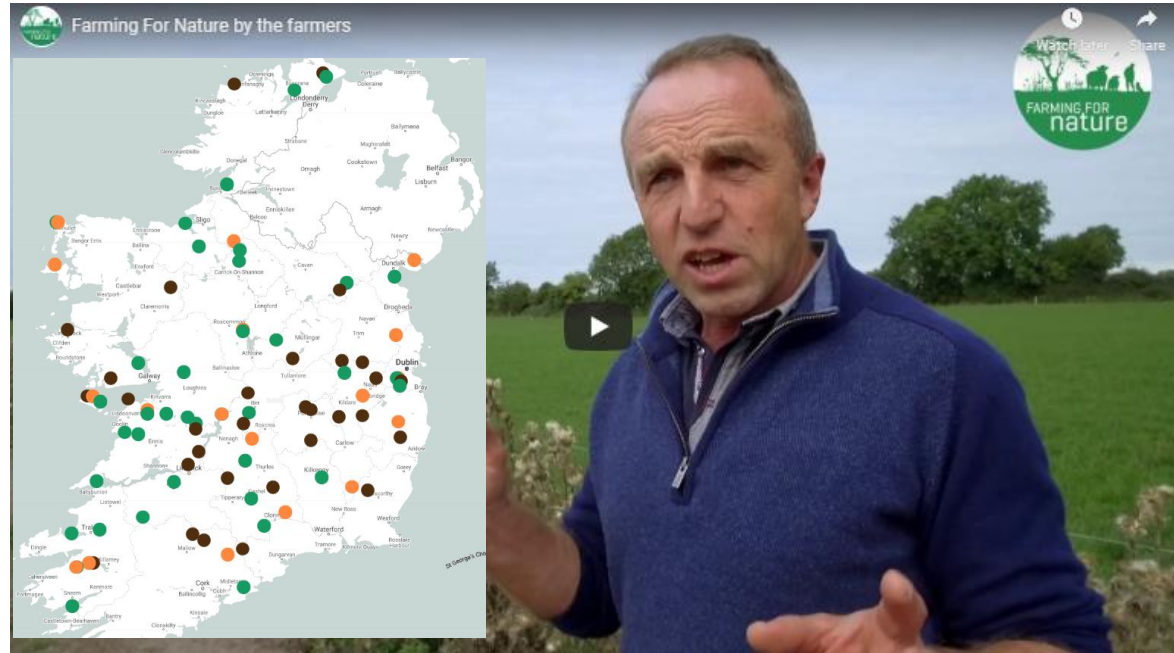


# The need for a new, more **inclusive**, positive narrative...and for peer learning

*'To change the world, let's start by changing the way we talk about it, and let's highlight those initiatives that are having a positive impact on people & the planet, to renew our confidence and spur us into action' (Sparknews)*



**Bord Bia**  
Irish Food Board



## FARMING FOR NATURE FARM WALKS

A series of walks for the Farming For Nature farmers to showcase their contribution to nature and good farming practices on their land

WALKS ARE €5 TO ATTEND & YOU HAVE TO REGISTER IN ADVANCE AS SPACES ARE LIMITED.

SAT 7 MARCH 2PM Tommy Earley, Co. Roscommon  
SAT 28 MARCH 11AM Oilly Nolan, Co. Dublin  
SAT 25 APRIL 2PM Ailbhe Gerrard, Co. Tipperary  
SAT 9 MAY 2PM Donna Mullen, Co. Meath  
SAT 16 MAY 2PM Boyd Bryce, Co. Donegal  
SAT 30 MAY 2PM Michael Hickey, Co. Tipperary  
SAT 6 JUNE 2PM Gerard Walshe, Co. Galway  
SAT 20 JUNE 2PM Feargal Ó Cuinneagáin, Co. Mayo  
SAT 27 JUNE 2PM Mervyn Auchmuty, Co. Roscommon  
SAT 18 JULY 2PM Suzanna Crampton, Co. Kilkenny  
SAT 25 JULY 2PM Michael Hickey, Co. Tipperary  
SAT 1 AUGUST 2PM Thomas O'Connor, Co. Kerry  
SAT 8 AUGUST 2PM Mark Hurst, Co. Kildare  
SAT 15 AUGUST 2PM Moyhill Community Farm, Co. Clare  
SAT 22 AUGUST 2PM Ailbhe Gerrard, Co. Tipperary  
SAT 5 SEPTEMBER 2PM Kate Egan, Co. Westmeath  
SAT 19 SEPTEMBER 11AM Clive Bright, Co. Sligo  
SAT 10 October 2pm Edmund Joyce, Co. Carlow

Registration and more information at  
[buytickets.at/farmingfornature](http://buytickets.at/farmingfornature)  
[www.farmingfornature.ie](http://www.farmingfornature.ie)



These events have been jointly supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Community as a resource – management, knowledge, education...



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



# Recognition of this resource: Burren Winterage included in register of Intangible Cultural Heritage



**burren**beo**trust**  
connecting people and place



**Challenges:** mass tourism, limited infrastructure, resources, plans, enforcement ...



## 2019

[illegible]

Job Type	Job	Job ID	On or within 30m of an RMP?	SMRS No.	RMP Code	Is it Low to No Impact?	Covered by blanket notification Date?	Covered by individual notification Date?	Farm on site
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SA2	No						
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SB1	No						
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SB2	No						
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SB3	No						
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SB4	No						
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SA3	No						
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SB5	No						
		0	0	0	0				
		0	0	0	0				
Scrub Control	Area or Band	SA1	No						
Scrub Control	Path	SP1	No						
		0	0	0	No				
Stone Wall Repa	Internal	Wall 1	No						

Task		Task	
You/No/ info	Comment	You/No/ info	Comment
No		No	



**An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta**  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht



## Working with farmers - some lessons I have learned

The value of deep listening – to build trust, understanding and knowledge – and a mistrust of external ‘experts’

The importance of understanding why people do things, rather than blaming them for doing them.

The central, and potentially positive role of farming in sustaining heritage, and our collective failure to harness it.

The depth and strength of the connection between farmers and their land, their livestock, their community, their ‘place’.

The importance of money in influencing decision-making, but the realisation that it’s not the only motivation.

The importance of a strong evidence base in making change.

The power of partnership and the disaster of division.

All farms and farmers are different, this complexity is challenging but it’s what makes our countryside special.



# Summary

Farm families (and the broader community) are a conservation 'resource'. To use this resource we need to influence the farmer's *pocket, head and heart*:

- Clearly explain what it is we want farmers to deliver on their land and why.
- Reward and acknowledge farmers who deliver what we want to do so.
- Provide farmers with practical, relevant (local?) technical support.
- Do better at making farmers feel part of the solution - not the problem

