

REPORT OF THE CROSS-VISIT TO IRELAND

This is a report of a visit to The Burren, the Irish Learning Area (LA) by a group from the Dalsland LA (Sweden) which took place between 24th to 28th October 2018. The visit was prompted by a number of innovations identified within the Burren LA and described in the Burren Innovations Report (<http://www.hnmlink.eu/download/IRBurrenINNOVATIONREPORT.pdf>). Our group was on a mission trying to find innovations in the Burren which could help us fill our gap in order to reach our HNV vision in Dalsland. We had targeted the successful social and institutional innovations as well as the regulation and policy innovations in the Burren as main focus for our visit. We thought the Burren winterage weekend would be a nice time of the year to visit the Burren since this would be a good opportunity to meet as many stakeholders with regards to HNV-farming as possible.

The participants:



- Katrin McCann – Environmental planner, Environmental & Energy office of Dalsland (DMEK)
- Magnus Ljung – Researcher, Swedish University of Agriculture
- Åsa Marberg – Controller, Administrative board of Västra Götaland (LST VG)
- Lars Johansson – Farm advisor, (LST VG)
- Jeanette Lindh-Svanqvist – Business developer, Community of Bengtsfors
- Miriam Sannum – Ecologist, adult educator, Studieförbundet vuxenskolan
- Börje Pettersson – Farmer (beef), mediating cattle between farms
- Christer Jansson – Business developer, Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF)
- Johan Larsson – Farmer (beef), diversification and direct sales
- Lars Ottosson – Politician community of Åmål, trustee LRF
- Sophia Olander – Head of advisor group (LST VG)
- Jenny Christensen – Energy and climate strategist (DMEK)

The group consisted of members of Dalsland catalysing group – a network of stakeholders that can all have a positive impact on sustainable land management in Dalsland. To finance our travel costs for



this quite large group, we applied for funding for this innovation trip to the Burren through our local LAG group – (Leader, Framtidsbygder Dalsland, Årjäng, Munkedal).

Starting off with energy!

Before heading off to Ireland we contacted Gloria Callinan at the local LAG group in co. Clare to see if we could share some ideas with regards to energy issues between the two LAs. On our arrival Jenny and Katrin met up with Gloria and Pat Stephens, manager at Limerick Clare Energy Agency to discuss innovation with regards to energy solutions.



Pat and Gloria were very generous to share their experience on working with energy issues through LAG and the Energy Agency. Some reflections from this meeting:

This was an interesting meeting where the different countries work on energy and climate issues and targets on local, regional and national scale were discussed. A sharing of experience which captured the challenges the two countries are facing. It seems Ireland is behind Sweden in terms of implementing the climate measures the EU-members have agreed on in the 2030-target.

However, in the area in and around the Burren several fossil free alternatives to energy supply have been tested and there is a keen interest to do more! e. g. hydro-, wave-, and wind powered as well as some examples of woodchipburners installed in some community localities. The LAG group has been working with energy efficiency measures such as funding for insulation of private homes. The impressive innovation mind set of the area when it comes to trying new methods could, together with experience sharing across borders, be very important for this area in terms of reaching the climate targets. There could be opportunities here for potential projects between our two LAs.

25th October: The National Agri-Environment Conference 2018, Gort

On our first day after arriving in The Burren we had the opportunity to attend to the National Agri-Environment Conference, this year taking place in Gort. That this conference was being held in the Burren is by no means a coincidence. It is one of many proofs of that our brilliant hosts Dr Brendan Dunford and Dr James Moran together with all the other ambassadors of the Burren know how to promote the Burren and which important stakeholders locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, to involve.

The hosts; the Irish team:



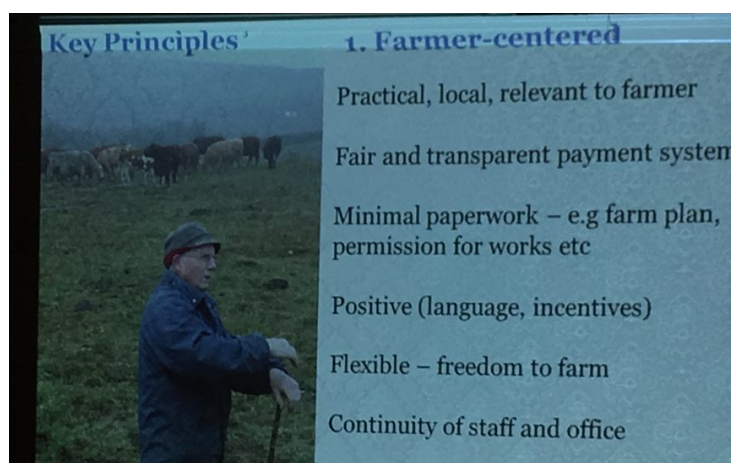
← Dr Brendan Dunford

Dr James Moran →



Another good reason for the Conference to be held on Burren land is that the area has proven successful with regards to operating EIP projects. The Department of Agriculture Forestry and the Marine are providing funding for more than 20 such projects in Ireland with the support of the EU Rural Development programme 2014-2020. Several of them are based in the area in or around the Burren and we had the pleasure to listen to experiences from those projects. Here are some reflections from our group:

Stakeholders have been working resolutely to create EIP projects used for gearing up in those cases where direct payments and/or the rural development programme are not sufficient. Both in order to create and retain biodiversity as well as increasing the water quality. One seemed to have avoided the risk of double financing, a concern that we have experienced to be an issue in Sweden. The EIP projects are all a bit different but what they seem to have in common is trying to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity for the sake of biodiversity itself as well as to increase economic viability within the farming community and adapting to consumer awareness. Advisors are employed by the projects and work closely together with the farmers. The advisors are locally based, well known and on site.



25th October, evening: HNV LINK – sharing European innovations

In the evening we had a short presentation from the different LAs in the HNV-Link project visiting the Burren for the winterage festival (see info: <https://www.burrenwinterage.com/>). The LAs except from Dalsland visiting were Causses et Cevennes in France and eastern hills of Cluj in Romania. Giving a brief presentation was also an area in Wales.

A reflection from our group: “Many threats to HNV-farming are similar to all HNV-areas, not depending on where you are based but on how the land must be managed to keep its’ values. Abandonment, intensification, awareness issues, et c. And most of those issues can to be handled with technical solutions. You have to reach deeper. Into our identities as food producers – once upon a time we were all food producers”



26th October, Farming for nature – field trips: The Burren programme & The Hen Harrier Project*The Burren Programme*

Mr Anthony Hynes, farmer

Dr Sharon Parr,
programme scientist

Dr Parr and Dr Moran explained the details of the scoring system of the results-based payment a farmer like Mr Hynes would get. Technical solutions were discussed as well as the history of the area. A famous quote from the Burren is that made by Edmund Ludlow (c. 1617–1692): "It is a country where there is not enough water to drown a man, wood enough to hang one, nor earth enough to bury him... and yet their cattle are very fat..." When the quote was made there were not many technical solutions in terms of fattening the cattle but, there was, which is lacking in both LAs today, a lot of people in the landscape, strategically moving cattle to efficiently grow on what the land was producing. A reflection from our group from this field visit:

The field visit showed the programme in practice and how the points-system works. The farmer decides himself how much effort he wants to put in – how much it is worth for getting the extra payment. The recompense is quite substantial which it should be considering the circumstances in the Burren – the high nature value and extra effort it would take to manage this land full of stone.



The Hen Harrier Project

Dr Carolina Sullivan, assistant manager took us to see Mr Paddy Joe Egan and his farm which takes part in the Hen Harrier project - Europe's largest species focused results-based farming innovation.



Dr Caroline Sullivan



Mr Paddy Joe Egan

Branch of Holly, protecting the cattle from ring worm!

The Hen Harrier project is focusing strictly on farming actions benefitting the Hen Harrier. The Hen Harrier would be an umbrella species and lots of other species would thrive where the Hen Harrier thrives. There is plenty of advisory service involved in raising the knowledge of the Hen Harrier within this project. The farmer would be recompensed for measures taken to favour the Hen Harrier. A couple of reflections of this visit from our group:

Having the one species as a target for increasing biodiversity in the landscape is an interesting pedagogical concept. Perhaps it simplifies a complex message and will lead to more direct actions. It is also interesting that the farmer is encouraged for the positive actions and not in any way "punished" for negative actions. This is leaving the decision completely up to the farmer and giving freedom to farm.

Does not the Hen Harrier feeding block, in the long run, disadvantage the Hen Harrier, as it is adding nutrients to the land. Our farmers would not be allowed to add nutrients to land with high nature values.



It is unfortunate to see that innovative projects benefitting biodiversity is running a race against plantation of spruce which superfast would decrease the habitat of the Hen Harrier. It was a while ago now the Swedish farmer was paid to plant "badlands" but that might be the view point again in the future. Perhaps there are cross border project possibilities here between our two LAs? Perhaps there is a possibility in not calling those areas Badlands but making them an important part of the landscape as a total and calculating their ability of carbon storage as permanent, semi-natural pastures in the system of sustainable food production?

27th October, Farming for nature – the broader context

On the Saturday morning we gathered to hear some very interesting talks on HNV-farming in a context of what is happening in the world around us:

Kevin Hanrahan (Teagasc) – Brexit: Potential Implications for High Nature Value farmers

John Sweeney (NUI Maynooth) – Winners and Losers in Agriculture as Climate Changes.

Liam McHale (Irish Farmers Association, Brussels Office): Global trade deals, evolving CAP discussions and the potential impact for HNV farmers

Some reflections from our group:

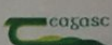
In cautious choice of words prof Sweeney explained how the clean, green image of the Irish food sector is not harmonising with the climate targets. He was also very clear that it is urgent to do something about this fact as soon as possible. Maybe we can learn from this when our regions and municipalities are creating new food strategies in Dalsland?

Brexit will mean a higher cost to bring Irish products into the UK market. Half of the food products of beef and milk consumed in the UK are from Ireland. Brexit will therefore have an enormous impact on the farming sector in Ireland and you can sense that people are worried about this.

One is also concerned about the next rural development programme. It seems one does not want more power moved from Brussels to Dublin with regards to those questions. Not sure this mindset is the same in Sweden.

Conclusions

- HNV farming outcomes the result of both market forces and policy incentives
 - Public good nature of HNV outcome means market underprovides HNV farming outcomes hence role for Government support of Burren Programme like HNV programmes
- Brexit will weaken real prices of agricultural output in Ireland
- Brexit will reduce farm incomes as compared to a world of No Brexit
 - Brexit will reduce market based provision of HNV farming outputs
 - Reduced CAP budgets may reduce resources available to support programmes such as Burren Programme
 - National prioritisation of HNV via National Strategic Plans under new CAP may offer way of insulating programmes such as the Burren Programme from Brexit policy impact



THE MYTH OF THE CLEAN, GREEN IMAGE

WATER	AIR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing decline in highest quality river waters. 21 locations are classified as the highest quality compared with 575 between 1987 and 1990. Samples of drinking water taken from Dublin, Cork and Offaly have been found to contain levels of microscopic plastic fibres 10 times higher than the global average. 30% of Irish private water wells have <i>e.coli</i> contamination Drinking water supply for 700,000 people identified as at risk of contamination. 163,000 people on a supply requiring treatment to prevent cryptosporidium contamination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EPA estimates that 1,600 premature deaths occur in Ireland each year as a result of air pollution EU Nitrogen oxides emission limits breached consistently since 2010 Particulate Matter (PM10, PM2.5) concentration levels above World Health Organisation guidelines Exceedance of EU limits for Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds by 84% in 2015 National Emission Ceiling values for ammonia exceeded from 2016 Exceedance of EU annual greenhouse gas emissions limit from 2016



In the afternoon we listened to:

Frank Vanclay (University of Groningen, The Netherlands) – Understanding farmers' views about things

Prof. Vanclay gave an interesting talk about a good few principles of exchange of experience and knowledge in the social context. Some of them are similar to principles we are using in advisory service in Dalsland but there were a few more that we definitely should think about if we could use.

Farming for Nature – Stories from the land – Five short films on farming for nature.

The films were short but beautiful. They visualised farming for nature in a very appealing manner and can help to get a good message through to the customer. We should think about doing something similar starting with Dalsland and perhaps under a common HNV-brand?

Networks for Nature

Fabrice Gouriveau (HNV LINK Project) – HNV-Link: Networking for High Nature Value farming innovation

Liam Lysaght (National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)) – How the work of the NBDC can support farming for nature.

Dr Gouriveau highlighted the importance of the EU and how projects like HNV-Link can be a bridge over borders for exchanging ideas on how to build a sustainable future. His talk was moving especially considering these times of Brexit and uncertainty.

Sweden has an enormous species data base dependant on voluntary reporting of observations by amateurs. Can we use this more in our work with restoration of pastures or the planning of green infrastructure?

27th October – evening: Dinner and Debriefing

Our hosts invited the vice-president of the European Parliament, Mrs Mairead McGuinness to join our debriefing during dinner. Every LA gave a short reflection of what they take with them from the Burren to their home LA. The vice-president spoke of the importance of HNV-farming in terms of meeting challenges regarding biodiversity, climate change and consumer demands. She also stressed the importance of projects like HNV-Link as a platform to unite over borders – particularly important when there are movements trying to break the EU apart. A reflection from our group:

Very impressive to see how close the Burren group is to their politicians and to the department of agriculture. You can tell that farming is a very important business in Ireland. Every day during our stay there has been at least one representative present from the department of agriculture. How can we reach our politicians? The vice-president McGuinness called upon us to involve our local commissioners. Do we even know who they are?





Vice President of the European Parliament – Mairead McGuinness

Bord Bia National Farming for Nature Award 2018 (www.farmingfornature.ie)



The Farming for nature award is a good way of celebrating sustainable farming as a resource of ecosystem services and cultural heritage – well done James and Brendan for taking this to a national level – we are truly impressed! Hopefully we can do something similar on a local or regional level.

Some reflections from the visit in the Burren:

Lars Ottosson, local politician

I noticed some differences between the Burren and Dalsland. Among other things the amount of forest, rock and engagement of both farmers and the local population as well as the dialogue between the farmer and the staff evaluating the measures in the Burren programme as open and based on solutions instead of passing of judgement. My gathered impression is therefore that the possibilities of creating a functioning system for HNV-farming are better in the Burren than in Dalsland.

Like in many other places one is facing large challenges with regards to the environment and especially climate issues. This was brought up by a number of speakers during the conference. Given the importance of the farming industry for the economy of Ireland through their large export numbers my belief is that authorities and the state/ politicians have a great interest in finding solutions for viability. Therefore I think it will be easier to be heard and introduce new systems which will lead to improvements without losing profitability. My notion was though that the farmers in the Burren are also struggling with profitability and are vulnerable to changes that will affect income.

