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Managing High Conservation Value Areas in Coillte

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Why restore priority woodlands?

- ➔ EU Habitats Directive defines Special Areas of Conservation across the EU (Natura 2000 network)
 - Priority habitats are those “*most at risk of disappearing*”
 - “*Critically rare*” habitat in Ireland & the EU
- ➔ Ireland has national obligation to conserve these habitats
 - “*Member States must take all necessary measures to guarantee the conservation of habitats in special areas of conservation, and to avoid their deterioration*”
- ➔ Cross sectoral obligation
 - Every sector must address its own contribution



Irish Forest History

- 8,000 years ago Ireland almost totally under forest cover
- Since then almost total loss of native woodland resource
- Trees cut for
 - Agricultural clearance
 - Timber
 - Fuel / shelter
- By 1900 ~ 1% forest cover
 - Even less native woodlands
 - Even less priority woods
- Today 10% forest cover
- Importance of priority woods today





Priority Woodlands in Ireland

- **Alluvial woodland** ~ *"under increasing threat today"*
 - Durrow fen peat woodland enriched by spring water
 - Camcor gorge spring fed woodland with Tufa springs
 - Hazelwood, lake and river fed
- **Yew woodland** ~ *"extremely restricted in distribution"*
 - Nationally 75ha only, this project will create 46ha
 - Clonbur, Attyslany, Castletaylor, Cahir Park, Currahchase
- **Woodland on limestone pavement** ~ *"rare today"*
 - Reclamation of fertile land for agriculture
 - Mosaic of habitats, woodland, grassland, open pavement
 - Clonbur, Attyslany, Castletaylor
- **Bog Woodland** ~ *rarest woodland type?*
 - Acid wet woodland, Aghnaguig



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**Alluvial woodland
Camcor**



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Yew woodland



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**Limestone pavement
woodland, Clonbur**



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**Sphagnum moss at
Aghnaguig**



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Coillte & Nature Conservation

- Coillte's role in conservation has been augmented by FSC certification
- Since 2000 Coillte has commissioned ecological surveys
 - Identified 20% of the estate to be managed with nature conservation as the primary objective
 - Drawn up management plans for these areas
 - Unearthed significant new sites nationally
 - Alluvial woodlands
 - Yew woodlands
- Increasing conservation status
- Increasing Ireland's total resource



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Burnet rose
Clonbur



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Coillte & LIFE Nature

- These ecological surveys have identified the real conservation “jewels” on the Coillte estate
- Actively sought credible partners for habitat restoration works
- Three LIFE Nature projects awarded
 - The “Oscars” of nature conservation
- Blanket bog restoration (approx 2,000 ha)
 - www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie
- Raised bog restoration (571 ha)
 - www.raisedbogrestoration.ie
- Priority woodland restoration (550 ha)
 - www.woodlandrestoration.ie



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Ballykine Castle
Clonbur



Coillte and LIFE Nature
Raised bog restoration project
14 project sites
571 hectares restored
www.raisedbogrestoration.ie

Coillte and LIFE Nature
Blanket bog restoration project
17 project sites
1,988 hectares restored
www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie



A photograph of a forest floor, likely in a woodland restoration project. The image shows a mossy tree trunk with two large, shelf-like fungi growing from it. The fungi have a reddish-brown, slightly irregular shape. The background is a blurred forest scene with green moss and brown tree trunks.

**Coillte and LIFE Nature
Woodland restoration project
9 project sites
550 hectares restored
www.woodlandrestoration.ie**

Fungi at Aghnaguig

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What about the other 80%?

- ➔ Across its entire Coillte:
 - Identifies, records and protects features of biodiversity wherever they occur
 - e.g. badger setts, wetter areas
 - Establishes buffer zones of native trees along all riparian zones at replanting stage
 - Creating habitat & corridors for wildlife
 - Protecting soils and waters
 - Applies special management to old woodland sites
 - Sites with continuous forest cover since 1830
 - Protects features of social and cultural interest
 - Consults widely with local stakeholders



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Riparian Zone
Camcor



Woodland restoration ~ AfterLIFE

- 4 year project
 - short interval in the lifetime of a woodland
- Major ecological processes occurring
- Range of data collected during project
 - Fixed point photography
 - Quadrat data
 - Vegetation data
- Monitoring opportunities?
 - Interest from third level, other groups?
 - Undergraduate theses?
 - Access, Data availability, Maps





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Future of restorations?

- Coillte has genuine contribution to make
 - Truly diverse estate with range of habitats & species
 - Coillte's strengths:
 - Designing projects
 - Managing projects
 - Delivering results on the ground
 - Clear proven record of success
 - But costs must be addressed



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Scrub woodland
Attyslany



Need to get
our green
thinking
caps on!



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Thank you!



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