OBJECTIVES OF THIS PROJECT

- To remove plantation forests from Irish raised bogs of conservation value.
- To contribute towards the restoration of wetland, peat-forming conditions on those bogs.
- To build on experience gained in a previous project ("Restoring Raised Bog in Ireland" LIFE04 NAT/IE/000121 – www.raisedbogrestoration.ie LIFE04) and to employ best practice techniques in restoration of afforested bogs.
- To contribute to the development of best practice in the restoration of afforested raised bogs, both nationally and across the EU.
- To increase public awareness of the value and beauty of raised bog habitats.

PROJECT ACTIONS

- To fell and remove non-native tree species.
- To block drains using peat or plastic dams.
- To remove regenerating non-native tree and shrub species.
- To create and maintain firebreaks.
- To fence project sites where necessary.
- To monitor vegetation change and water levels.
- To produce promotional material informing people about the project.

THE PROJECT SITES

- There are 636 ha in 17 project sites, in 7 counties.
- All project sites are owned and managed by Coillte.
- The sites were identified in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service as having the best ecological value and potential for restoration of wetland conditions.
- Five of the project sites are designated as Special Areas of Conservation and 12 as Natural Heritage Areas.
- Two of the sites have been selected as LIFE Project Demonstration Sites, and will have a special focus on public awareness.

EXPECTED RESULTS

During the lifetime of the project, a significant improvement in the quality of raised bog habitat is expected.

The aim is to create the conditions which will allow raised bog habitat regeneration in future years.
**WET RAISED BOG**

Wet bog has a soft, spongy (sometimes even quaking) surface, with pools of open water and flat lawns of coloured bog mosses. The wettest areas are usually found in the central part of the high bog, where you often find hummocks, pools, Sphagnum lawns, flushes and soaks. Sometimes, wet bog can develop in the cutover areas, wherever drainage is poor.

*EU Priority Annex I habitat – Active Raised Bog*

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**EXPLANATION OF TECHNICAL TERMS**

**Raised Bogs** are domed masses of peat that build up slowly, over thousands of years, in former lake basins or shallow depressions. They are nutrient-poor, ombrotrophic wetland ecosystems – i.e. they are fed by rainwater only, with no groundwater input. The best raised bog habitat is actively peat-forming, i.e. very wet, with lots of surface water and a high cover of bog mosses (i.e. different species of Sphagnum moss). This kind of habitat builds up the bog through the accumulation of bog moss layers over time. Typically, a raised bog will consist of high bog, i.e. an uncut bog dome, surrounded by cutover bog, where peat-cutting has taken place. At some sites, forestry plantations were established on the cutover bog, but at others, the plantations extended onto adjacent high bog.

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**DRY RAISED BOG**

The surface of dry raised bog tends to be firm underfoot, with little surface water to be seen. Heathers and bog cotton species are plentiful, also lichens and the beautiful yellow bog asphodel. The bog mosses are scarce here, and these areas are no longer actively peat-forming. This habitat forms when wet raised bog has been affected by drainage. The aim of restoration is to re-wet dry areas and to create, wherever possible, the conditions for active peat formation in future.

**EU Annex I habitat – Degraded Raised Bog**

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**BIRCH WOODLANDS**

Naturally-growing native woodlands dominated by birch have always been a feature of Irish raised bogs. These woodlands often occur in the margins of raised bogs where the peat is shallow.

Typical species are birch, willow and Scots pine, with ferns and mosses.

On some areas of the project sites where water levels remain low, birch woodland will develop, providing an additional natural habitat for wildlife.

*** Wet birch woodland on permanently waterlogged peat soils corresponds to EU Priority Annex I habitat – Bog Woodland.***

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**DEMONSTRATION SITES**

Two of the project sites have been selected as demonstration sites as they display a range of project actions and are located close to population centres. At each of these sites, visitor information panels describe the overall LIFE project and features particular to that site.

**Girley Bog (Site No. 12)** is located 7kms south-west of Kells, Co. Meath. This site contains a significant area of high bog which includes typical bog vegetation and topography, including hummock/hollow systems and pools.

**Scohaboy Bog (Site No. 15)** is located 4 kms south-east of Borrisokane in Co. Tipperary. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including extensive hummock/hollow complexes. This raised bog is one of the more southerly raised bogs in the country, adding significantly to its ecological value.