



PARTICIPANT

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Meath C15XD6H**

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED BY

[name]

[date]

This 'Plan for Nature' has been produced through The Hare's Corner initiative of Burrenbeo Trust. All recommendations are made with the intention of benefitting Ireland's biodiversity and the native, flora and fauna in your local area. For more information on The Hare's Corner, please visit www.theharescorner.ie.

Property with or close to: nature designations, recorded monuments or protected structures

No

Area of site 8
(hectares):

SUMMARY & KEY ACTIONS

I was really inspired by your place ! You are doing a fantastic job, and the level of community engagement is amazing.

Key actions

- (1) Add some additional areas for forest bathing , meditation or retreats, by planting birch circles, willow huts or semicircular Miyawaki forests.
- (2) Take in some homeless hedgehogs ! But first put in signage about it and see if everyone keeps their dogs on leads – it should work – everyone loves hedgehogs.
- (3) Try out a long fruiting hedge, with berries and trees along the back driveway.
- (4) Add a long grass trail, with paths cut through it. The long grass would also benefit hedgehogs.

And keep up all your wonderful work !

SITE MAP



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| 1. Fruiting hedge | 2. Barn Owl Boxes | 3. Making buildings more attractive for bats and birds |
| 4. Long grass trail | 5. Laurel | 6. Area for additional trees |
| 7. The river | 8. Grassland | 9. Hedgehogs |
| 10. Native hedgerow | 11. Willow, birch and forest meditation areas | 12. Walls |

YOUR PLAN FOR NATURE

1 Habitat: Area for fruiting hedgerow

Benefits : Provides pollen and nectar, food for birds and for people

Tips: You are welcome to take cuttings from our hedgerow in the wintertime. Blackcurrants, redcurrants, gooseberries, loganberries and blackberry hybrids are wonderful and require little maintenance. Some trees such as hazel and walnut, and bushes such as elder should be added to provide a range of heights. Your community might have some old family recipes to make signs from, to create an edible walking trail.

2 Habitat: Area for barn owl boxes

Benefits: An apex predator

Tips: Barn owls are doing particularly well in Meath at the moment. If you wish to try a barn owl box, the box should be fixed high up within your barn where it will be visible to a visiting owl. Also, barn owls like a second box nearby (so they can get a break from the chicks, but still keep watch!) Barn owls learn to tolerate some disturbance as long as they have somewhere to hide – like a box. There are a number of commercial websites selling indoor Barn owl boxes as well as individuals advertising on Done Deal. Plans for making your own can be found on the Barn Owl Trust website. Birdwatch Meath monitor barn owl boxes in the locality and you could log your box with them.

3 Habitat: Buildings

Benefits: These can be made more attractive for bats and birds.

Tips: Great to see the house martin nests. Additional nest boxes for house martins can be purchased from NHBS.com - <https://www.nhbs.com/search?q=housemartin+boxes>, or the provision of a pond nearby will allow them to get soft mud with which to build their own! Some very small gaps – 15- 18 mm should be put in the fascia, where it meets the wall, to allow bats to access the fascia. It is likely that you already have bats in your buildings. Make sure that all water tanks in your attics are covered. We were talking about replacing slates with bat access slates, whenever slates need to be replaced. You can get them from NHBS.com - <https://www.nhbs.com/search?q=bat%20access%20slates&hPP=60&idx=titles&p=0&fR%5Bdocs%5D%5B0%5D=false&fR%5Bhide%5D%5B0%5D=false&fR%5Blive%5D%5B0%5D=true>



Ideal areas for bat access holes, away from the nest. Do this work after the nesting season.

Bat boxes could also go on trees or buildings and could be made by the men's shed - See the guide from Bat Conservation Ireland - https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BCIrelandGuidelines_BatBoxes.pdf

It is also important to keep all the buildings as dark sky areas, to reduce light pollution, by using low level or sensor lighting.

4 Habitat: Long grass trail

Benefits: The long grass will attract a range of insects. Paths cut through the grass will make it interesting for children to run and play in. Long unmanaged grasses, and plants like nettles and docks are essential host plants for moth and butterfly caterpillars who feed on the plant before transforming into the moth/butterfly form. Many moths are important pollinators of wild plants, and it is critical to retain those plants which they require to complete their life cycle. Moth and butterfly caterpillars in turn represent a significant proportion of the diet of the chicks of many small birds like blue tits and great tits. In winter plants like docks, thistles and nettles provide nutritious seed for seed eating wild birds.

Tips: Cut it every autumn, and if possible, move the grass elsewhere to compost to reduce the soil fertility.

5 Habitat: Laurel

Benefits: None! Laurel is full of cyanide and is very invasive.

Tips: Try to remove it from your forest. It is a difficult job, and you might have to do this over a number of years.

6 Habitat: Area for additional trees- Pocket forests

Benefits:

Small parcels of trees create natural stepping stones for animals. Trees and shrubs benefit wildlife greatly by providing food sources (pollen, nectar, leaves, sap, berries/nuts/seeds), shelter and the individual trees are mini-habitats in their own right. They can improve drainage, capture carbon and influence the development of an improved soil biology. Native trees generally support more wildlife than non-natives.

Tips: Well done on all the woodlands you have already planted. Continue putting a few more trees in every year along the corners of fields.

Trees should be planted in wintertime and cardboard placed around the base to smother weeds. Free trees can be sourced from <https://freetrees.ie/>, who are based in Oldcastle, Co Meath.

A mix of small and large trees could be planted in a few pocket forests. If you plant a horseshoe space, and keep an area in which to sit, or pitch a tent, it is lovely! Allow the grass to grow tall under the trees. Because some will die, it is best to overplant by a third to allow for some natural death. It is also good to plant trees which are happy to be broken/coppiced, such as oak, or hazel.

You might want to watch a video on pocket forests here -

<https://www.greenfoundationireland.ie/what-is-a-pocket-forest-and-why-do-we-need-themsep-2023-video/>

7 Habitat: The river and your pond

Benefits: Provides water, areas for aquatic animals, and a commuting corridor for a number of species.

Tips: You could do some kick sampling to check on the long-term water quality. You are welcome to come to look at our citizen science water quality project (with DCU) and we will show you what we do. There is a guide here - <https://www.teagasc.ie/news--events/daily/environment/using-kick-sampling-to-determine-the-quality-of-water-in-a-river.php>

It would be worth keeping an eye on the water quality and letting Inland Fisheries Ireland know of any pollution incidents - [0818 34 74 24](tel:0818347424)

Expanding the hedgerow along the river, or adding some clumps of willow, would help filter the water from soil or excess nutrients which could be washed in.

A new small pond area could be added near your labyrinth .

8 Habitat: Improved Grassland

Benefits: Reducing the soil fertility will bring in a range of native species and flowering plants.

Tips: Having spoken to you about the practicalities of grass removal, it might be best if you introduce yellow rattle, which will naturally lower the soil fertility over several years. You are welcome to collect yellow rattle seeds from my farm in autumn. They can also be purchased online.

If you do manage to move off the grass cuttings, allow it to be stacked in corners like hayricks. These are great places for hedgehogs to hibernate in.

9 Habitat: Hedgehogs

Benefits: Fantastic small mammals. Eat slugs, snails and earthworms.

Tips: The hedgehog hospital in Rush is currently looking for sites to release (1) healthy hedgehogs and (2) disabled hedgehogs. Your area would be perfect, and if there was an enclosed area, you could also take the disabled hedgehogs.

However, first you would have to put up signage – Hedgehog Rescue Area – all dogs must be kept on a lead.

I think people would keep their dogs on leads with some pictures of happy hedgehogs on signs throughout your place. It would be worth doing this first, before you try introducing hedgehogs, to monitor the level of compliance.

You can contact Yvonne at Hedgehog Rescue Dublin – the hedgehog hospital in Rush at - <http://hedgehogrescuedublin.com/>

1 Habitat: Native hedgerow near the labyrinth

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Benefits: The hedgerow would provide shelter. Great for insects.

Tips: New native hedgerows with native trees could be planted Hedgerows should have varying heights and angles, to provide pockets of shelter for insects.

See the video 'How to plant a hedge' from the tree council -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lcB47ua54E>

- It is important to use native species. You are welcome to come to our farm and take cuttings over winter. Otherwise, you can buy native stock from the following sources – recommended by the Hedgelayers Association of Ireland.
- None So Hardy Nursery
- Wild Oaks Nursery
- Kearney's Nursery
- Celt
- Future Forests
- Cappagh Nurseries
- Fermoy Woodland Nursery

1 Habitat: Willow huts, Miyawaki forest, birch circles.

1

Benefits: Great for biodiversity, willow is a great early source of pollen and filters the soil. The forest involves planting lots of trees closely together, forcing them to grow high quickly, almost producing an instant forest/ outdoor classroom area. These areas throughout your centre would add places for people to sit, for retreats and meditation.

Tips: : I would suggest a Miyawaki forest in a half-moon shape, which would act as shelter to expand the retreat area. Tallaght school, and some schools along the Dodder in Dublin have successfully planted several of these – see - <https://tallaghtcns.ie/stepping-stone-forests/>
For the willow huts -

Take softwood cuttings of willow in early summer or hardwood cuttings in winter, and plant straight into the ground where you want them to grow. Take cuttings from a variety of willows growing naturally in hedgerows and roadsides rather than buying.

You are welcome to take some from our farm. Huts can be teepees, or you could try a dome.

To try to make a dome, see the video here -

<https://www.lakeshorewillows.com/site/blog/2020/11/30/building-living-willow-play-hut-tunnel>

Another outdoor project I saw, which was wonderful, was a circle of birch trees, which quickly grew to form a little shelter. The birch shed parts of its bark, almost like paper, which people then wrote on as part of forest bathing experience.

1 Habitat: Walls

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Benefits: Walls can contain crack and crevices for birds to nest and bats to roost in. They can also support ivy.

Tips: When repointing old stone walls, take care not to entomb any bats which may be hibernating. Check crevices first with a torch and stick.

In the area behind the barns, remove the old tyres and grow ivy or honeysuckle over the walls.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

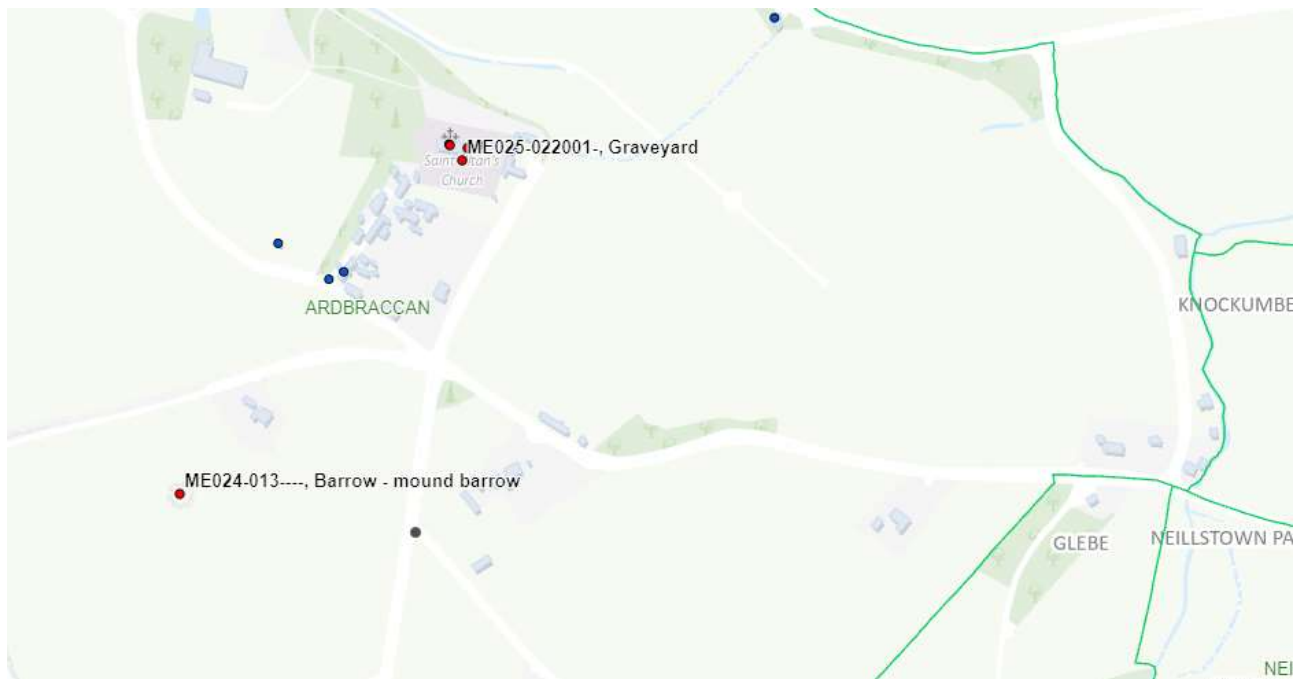
Some helpful resources relating to the Hare's Corner and Plans for Nature can be found at www.theharescorner.ie. These resources are in development and will be added to over time.

Don't forget to log everything you find! I would recommend logging anything you find on the Biodiversity Data Capture App which logs all information onto the National Biodiversity Data Centre. You can also buy swatches from them on bees, butterflies, dragonflies, etc, to help you identify the species - <https://shop.biodiversityireland.ie/collections/swatches>

Well done on an amazing place.

Nature designations, recorded archaeological monuments, protected structures.

Historic sites nearby



Nearby nature designations

