



Stakeholder engagement in the context of results-based payment schemes – the experience of Ireland

LIFE IP LatViaNature International Conference

25th September 2025

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Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



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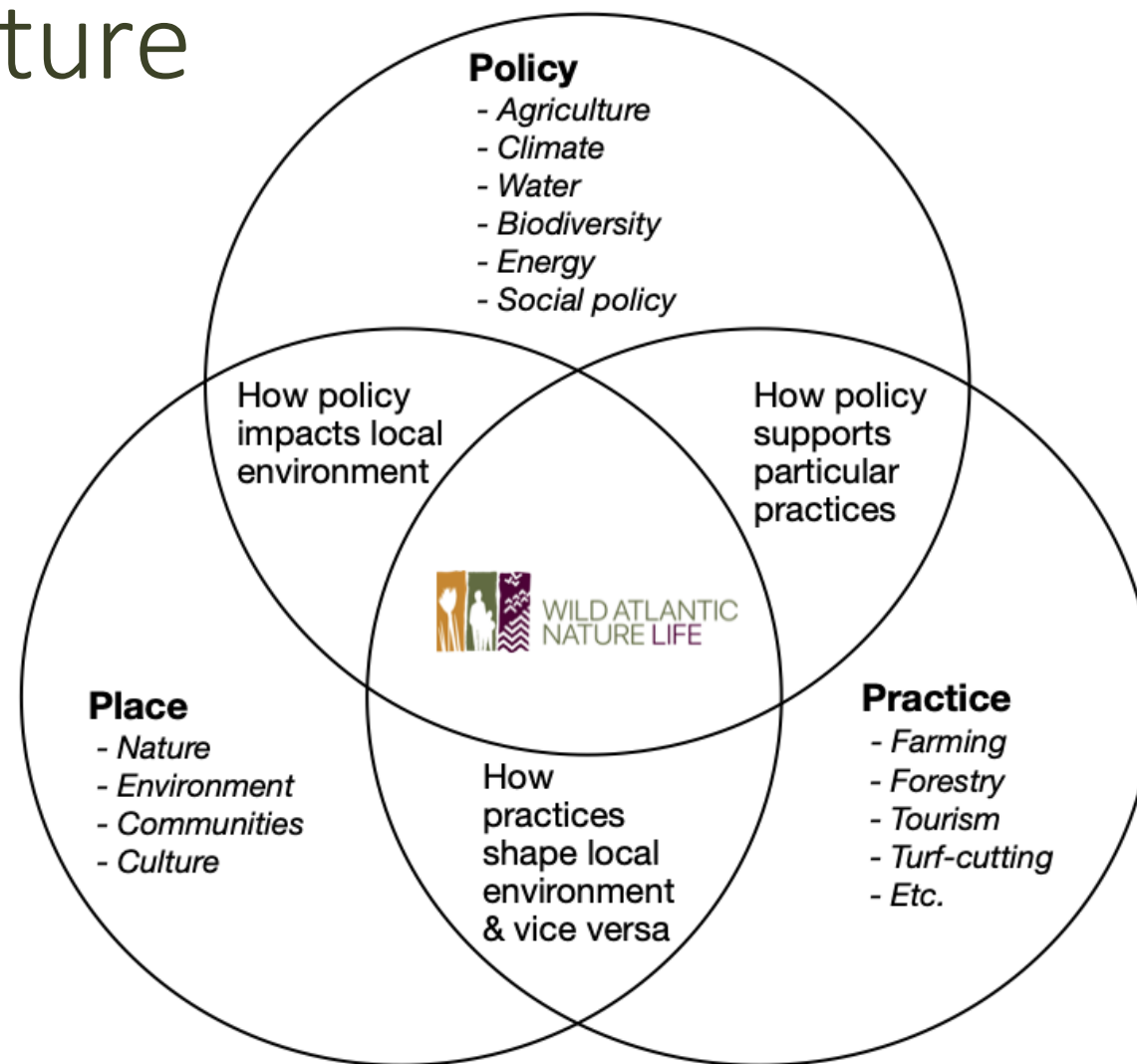
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LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature

- Key objective = high **quality** habitats, sensitive to local contexts that deliver for the environment, farmers and local communities



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What have we learned in the past 30 years?

Success factors	Description
Clearly defined objectives and indicators	Ensure common understanding related to objectives and how to achieve them
Appropriate supports for farmers	Appropriate advice, training, regulatory, financial, scientific, peer-to-peer and technical supports
Participatory processes	Engaging farmers' knowledge and experience and active involvement of farmers in decision-making
Autonomy and flexibility	Retain freedom to balance agriculture, restoration and conservation through adaptive management
Locally-adapted	Suitable for social and institutional context
Integration with policy	Compatibility with existing policy and opportunity to influence future policy



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(Hybrid) Results-based agri-environment programme (RBPS)



Peatland Habitat Score Card

Farmer ID: _____ Surveyor: _____
Plot number: _____ Survey date: _____

Total Score: **/100**
(A+B+C)

Which of the following best describes the plot (land parcel) (tick most appropriate):

Blanket bog ☐ Heath ☐ Mosaic of heath & bog ☐ Mosaic of heath with grassland ☐

A Ecological Integrity

Total score A
(sum of A1 to A5): **/55**

Positive indicators:
(tick those present)
Moss Layer:
☐ Branched Mosses
☐ Non-crustose (bushy) Lichens
☐ Sphagnum Mosses
Sedge / Herb Layer:
☐ Bog Asphodel
☐ Bog Bean
☐ Bog Cotton
☐ Deer Grass
☐ Lousewort
☐ Sundews
☐ White-beaked Sedge
Shrub Layer:
☐ Bell Heather
☐ Bilberry
☐ Bog Myrtle
☐ Cross-leaved Heather
☐ Ling Heather
☐ Western Gorse

Negative indicators:
(tick those present)
☐ Bramble
☐ Conifers (Sitka Spruce or Lodgepole Pine)
☐ European Gorse
☐ Nettle
☐ Rhododendron
☐ Other alien invasive

A1 How many positive indicators are present in the plot?
Count total number of positive indicators present:

No. of plants:	Score
Low: 0-4	0
Medium: 5-6	2
High: 7-8	5
Very high: 9+	10

Score A1: _____

A2 What is the combined cover of positive mosses & lichens (listed above) throughout the plot?

Cover:	Score
Rare: 0-5%	0
Frequent: 6-20%	10
Abundant: 21-30%	15
Dominant: >30%	20

Score A2: _____

A3 Presence of **non-native** species within the plot (rhododendron, self-sown conifers, other alien invasive)?

Score
Present: -10
Absent: 0

Score A3: _____

A4 What is the combined cover of all **negative** indicators/weeds (listed above) throughout the plot?

Cover:	Score
High: >25%	-15
Medium: 11-25%	-10
Med-low: 1-10%	-5
Absent/negligible	10

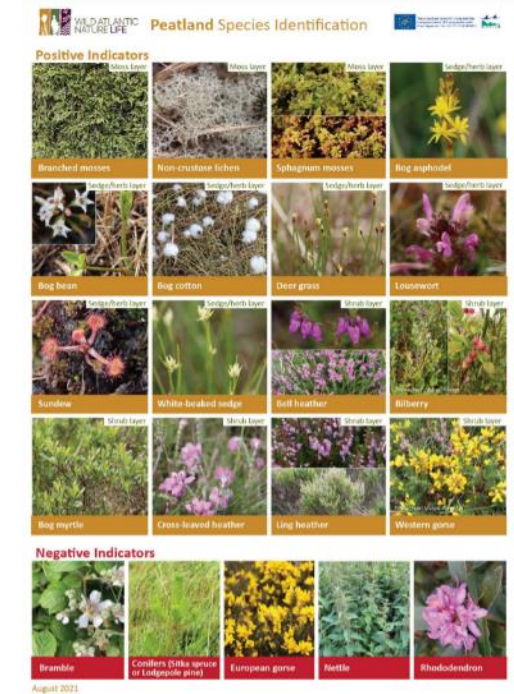
Score A4: _____

A5 Quality of vegetation structure?

Very Poor Vegetation height is uniformly low. Little or no heather present on wet heaths. Often lacking moss and shrub layer. Often resulting from over grazing or recent peat cutting. Score: -15	Poor Rank sward. Purple moor-grass/mat-grass and rank senescent heather dominating. Litter cover high, thatch forming in large continuous patches. Poorly developed ground layer. Often resulting from under grazing. Score: -10	Moderate (high grazed) Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have tight uniform vegetation although not throughout. Score: 0	Moderate (low grazed) Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have rank vegetation although not throughout. Score: 0	Good Sward in good condition, abundant grass and sedge-like vegetation on blanket bog with hummock, hollow, and pool complexes on bog. On heath, all stages of heather / shrub growth present, mostly >30cm. Mix of bog and / or heath vegetation at varying heights throughout. Well structured vegetation with all three layers (moss, sedge / herb, and shrub) well represented. Score: 15
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Score A5: _____

May 2021



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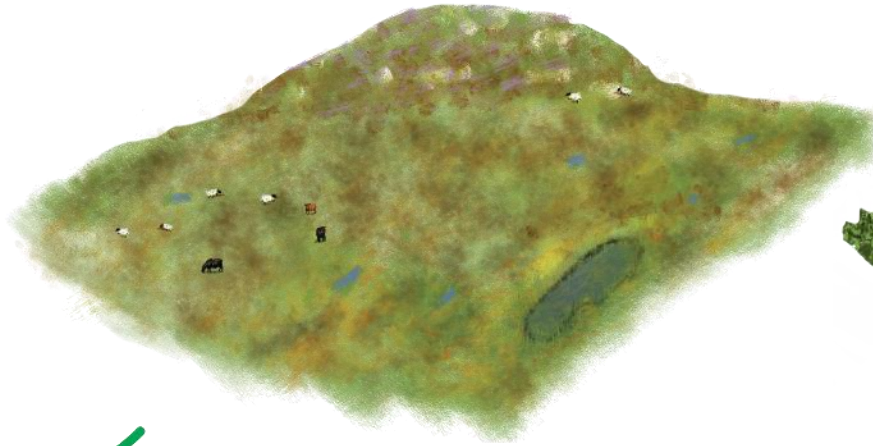


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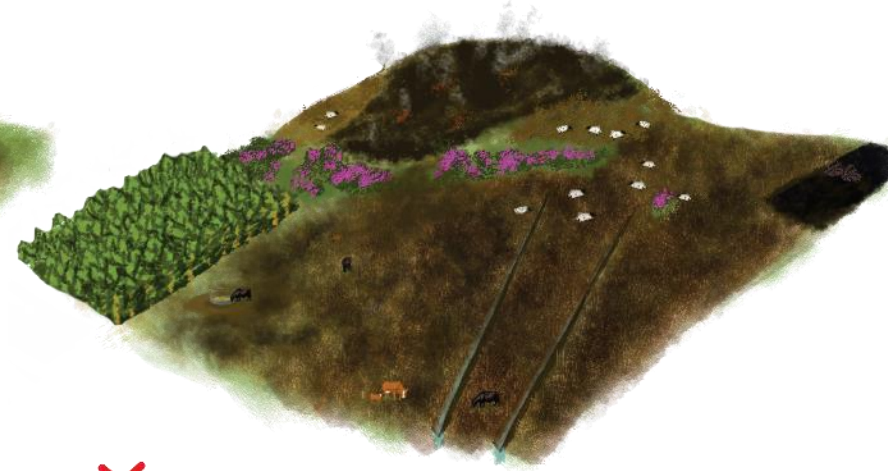


HIGHER SCORING fields:

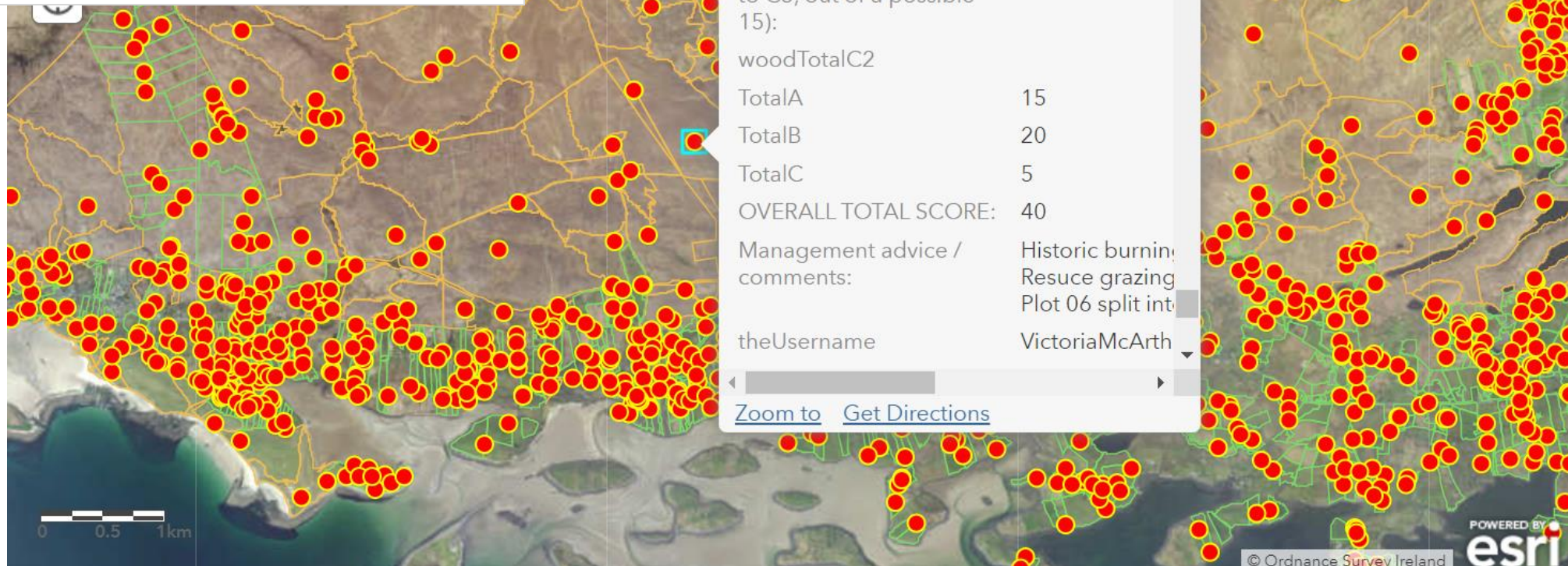
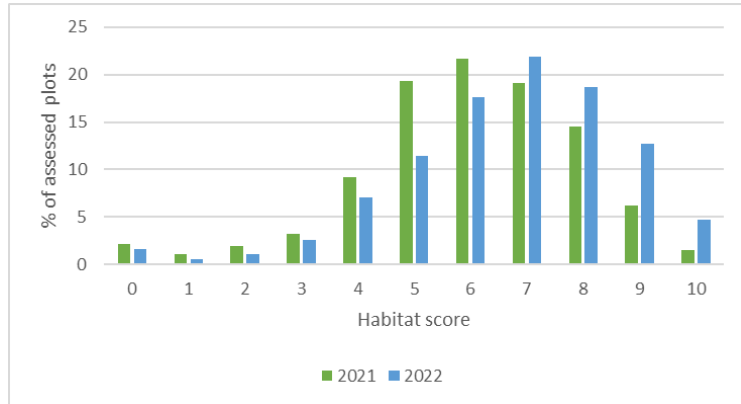


- Positive indicator plants
- Good vegetation structure
- No artificial drainage
- Natural wet features
- No bare soil
- Absence of invasive non-native species
- Absence or very few negative indicator plants
- No active turbary
- No evidence of damaging activities (e.g. dumping, quarrying, herbicide use)

LOWER SCORING fields:



- Negative indicator plants
- Poor vegetation structure
- Artificial drainage
- Poached or bare ground
- Scrub encroachment
- Invasive non-native species (e.g. self-sown conifers, rhododendron)
- Turbary
- Burning
- Damaging activities (e.g. dumping, quarrying, herbicide use)



(1 of 2) Select if present:
Specify other:

Total score C (sum of C1 to C5, out of a possible 15):

woodTotalC2

TotalA	15
TotalB	20
TotalC	5

OVERALL TOTAL SCORE: 40

Management advice / comments: Historic burning
Resume grazing
Plot 06 split into

theUsername: VictoriaMcArth

[Zoom to](#) [Get Directions](#)



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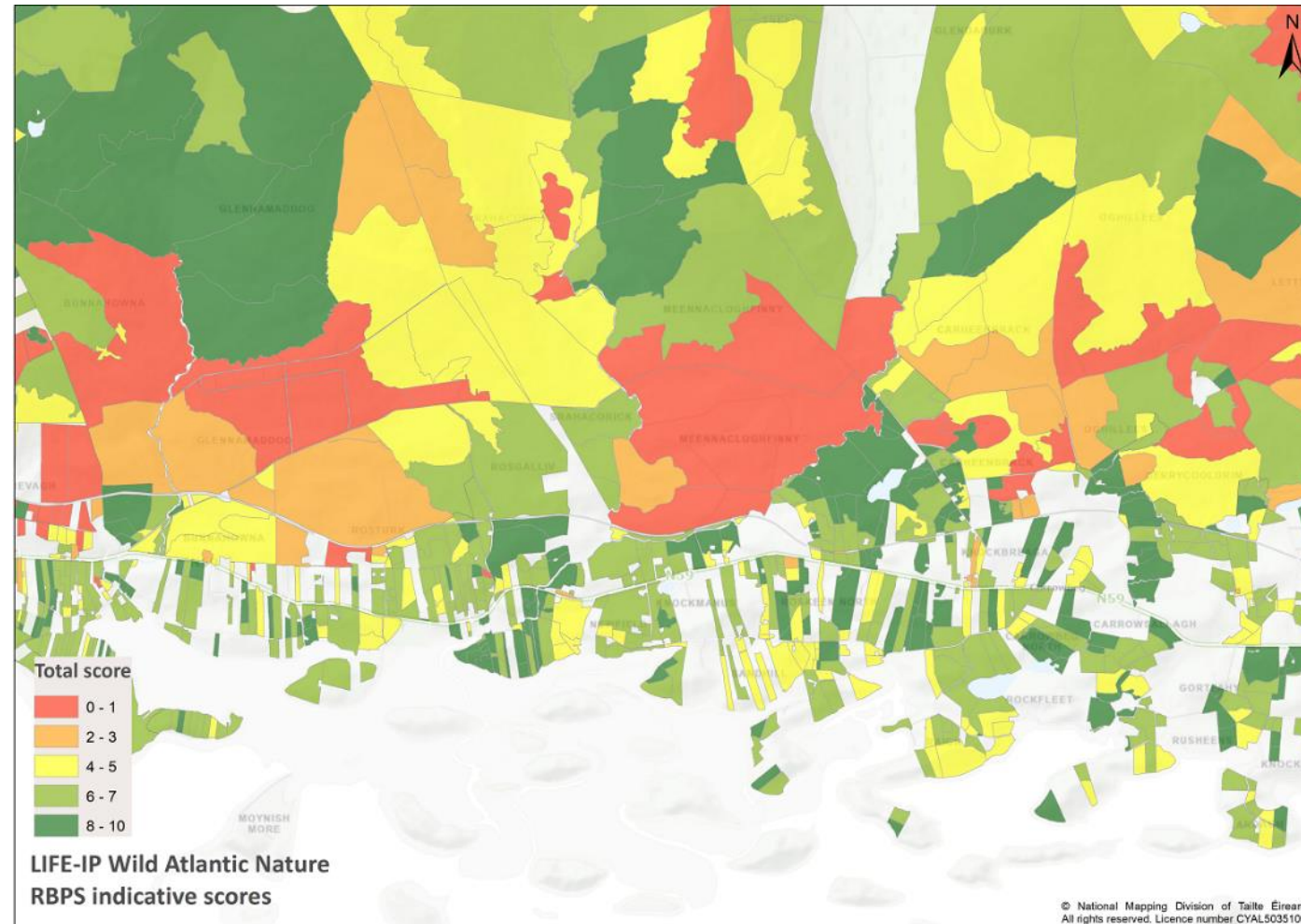


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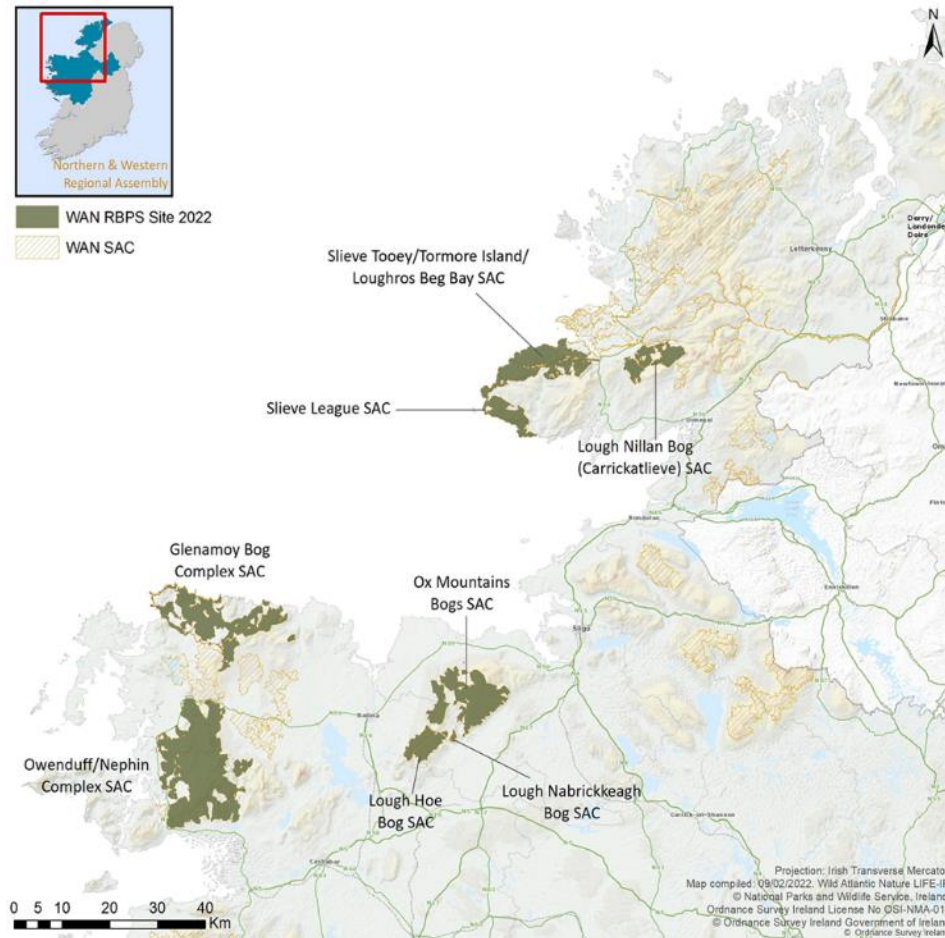
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LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature RBPS 2021/2022



- 50 farmer information events, 600 attendees
- 823 farmers (>85% uptake)
- 52 advisors trained
- 19 RBPS training events for farmers
- 6 workshops, 100 public servants and others
- 26 cross-sector collaboration events
- 7 RBPS dissemination workshops
- 63,000ha land surveyed – 6,000 plots
- ~ €3m direct farmer payments
- >100 restoration actions funded
- Network of demonstration farms



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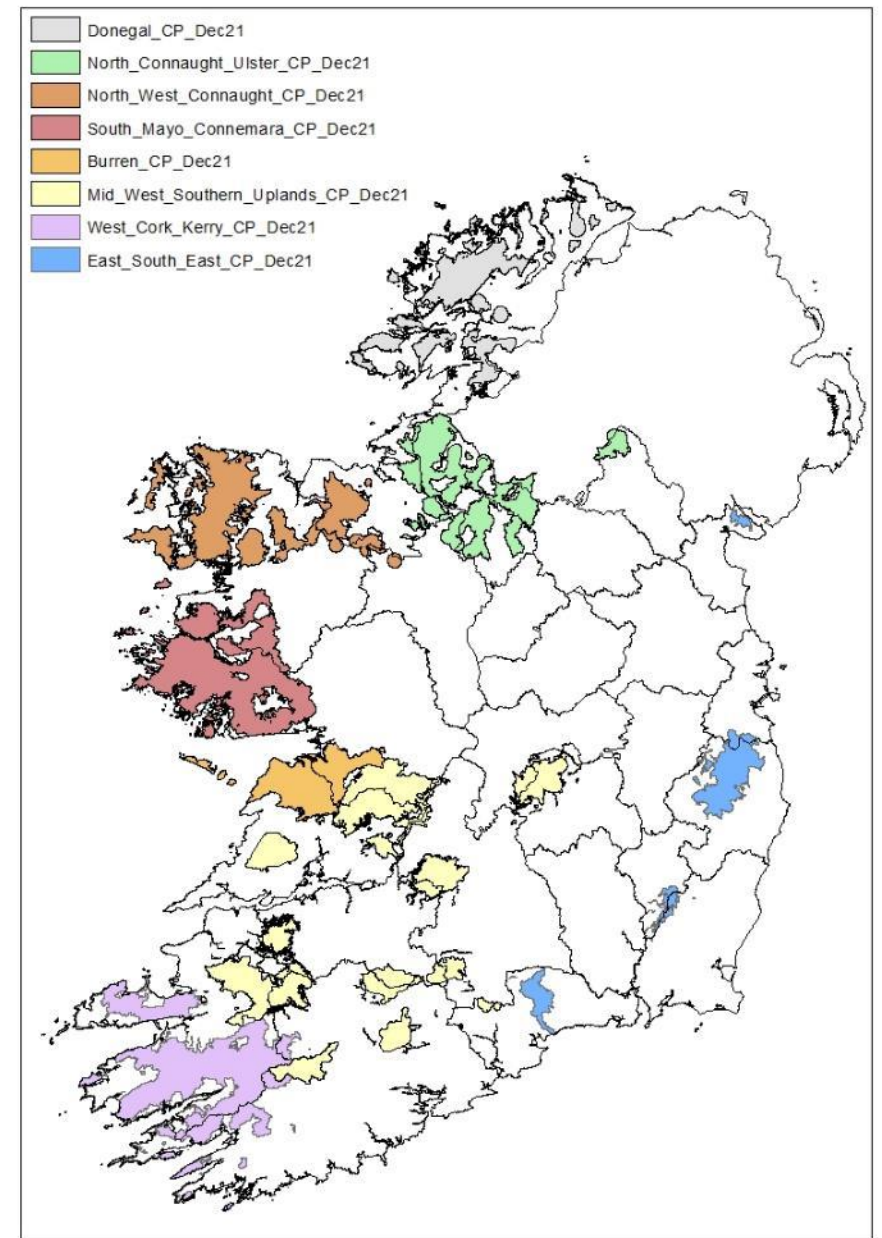


Upscaling of RBPS approach

- Eight ACRES Cooperation Project teams
- Roll-out of results-based model to 20,000 farmers
 - Results-based, supporting actions & landscape scale payments
 - Funded via CSP AECM, NPIs, Cooperation Articles

We now have an implementation mechanism for conservation measures & restoration actions

- Integration of land use policies
- Incentivises delivery of environmental services (water, biodiversity, climate)



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RBPS approach, as a driver for restoration (positive feedback loop)



A locally embedded nature conservation programme, guided by national policies on biodiversity, climate, and water

Policy driven

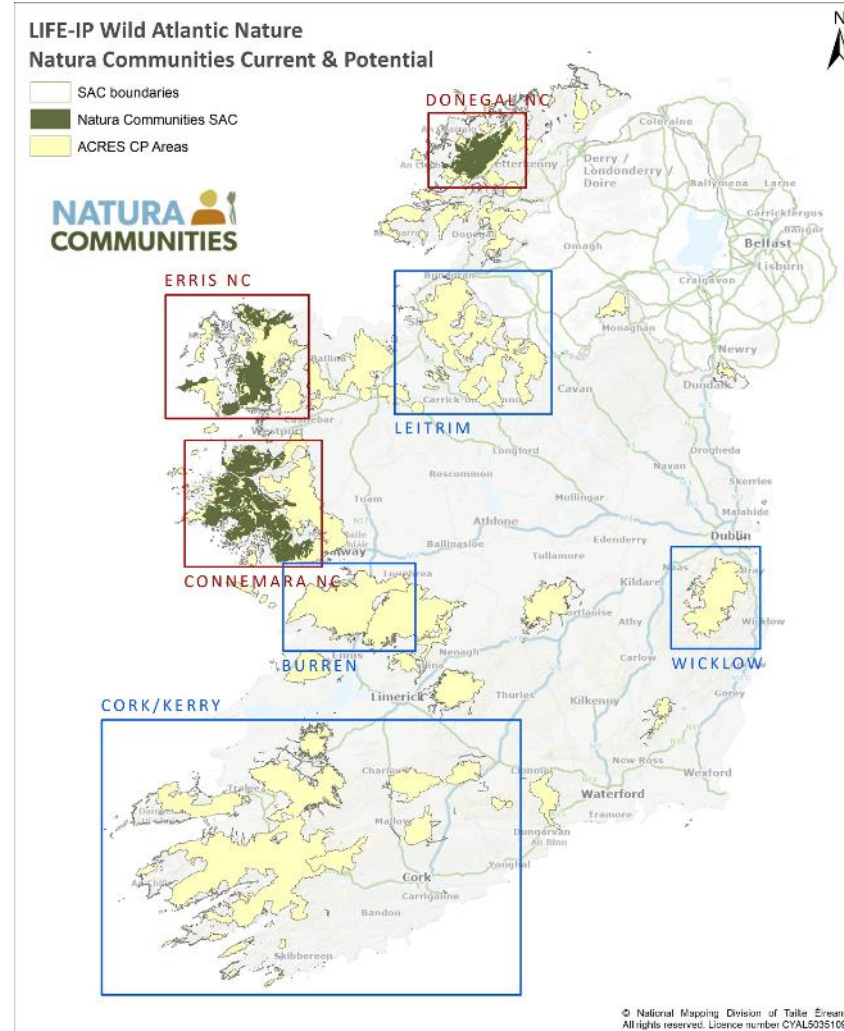
- Birds and Habitats Directive
- National Biodiversity Action Plan
- Nature Restoration Regulation
- Common Agricultural Policy
- Water Framework Directive
- Climate Action Plan



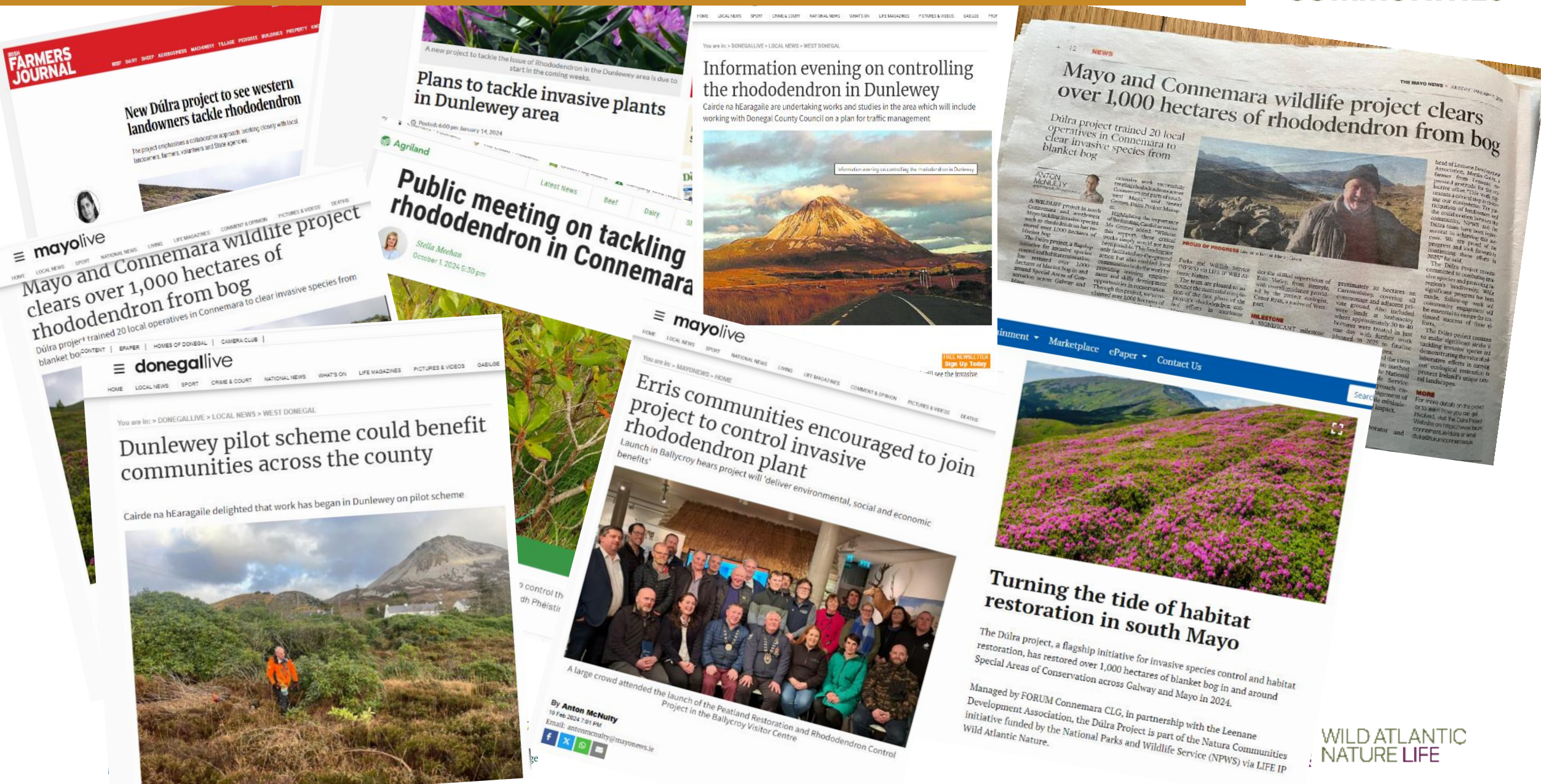
Locally embedded

- Creating local employment
- Building knowledge and skills
- Raising awareness and education
- Engaging local stakeholders
- Sensitive to land management
- Meeting policy objectives

Building capacity to enable community-led nature conservation



Building capacity to enable community-led nature conservation



Delivery of large-scale restoration projects

- Leveraging (non-CAP) funding
 - Outside scope of CAP
 - Co-designed with landowners & local stakeholders
 - Benefits for landowners & the environment



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Capacity building: Training, knowledge, new networks



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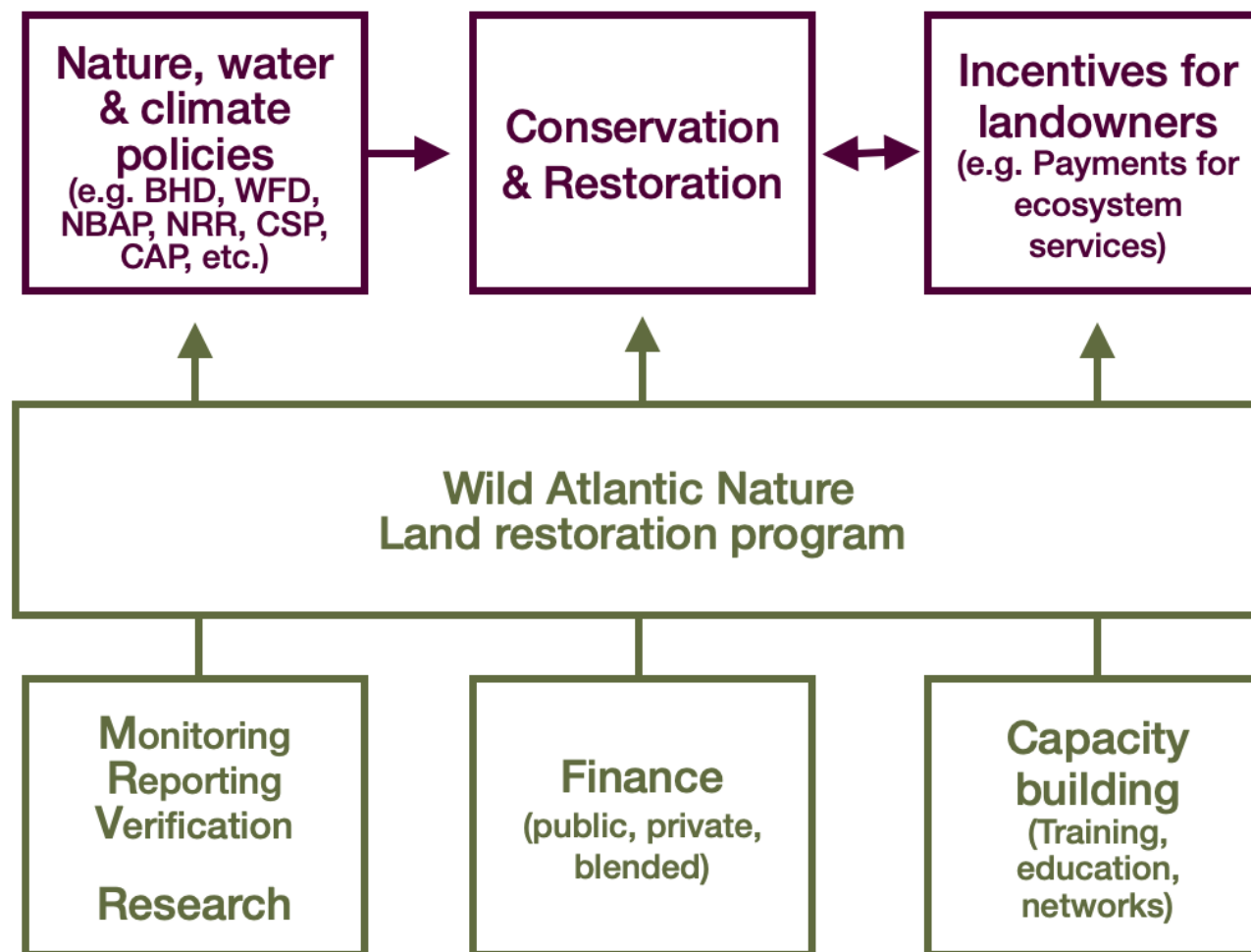
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Towards an integrated approach to (peatland) conservation



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Key messages

- (Hybrid)RBPS approach is an effective mechanism to deliver small and large-scale conservation and restoration
- Well-designed RBPS can align and integrate multiple policies
- RBPS can deliver cross-sector collaboration
- Complementary processes are required to manage delivery
- Consideration of the social and institutional context can improve project effects
- Need for long-term funding mechanisms



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BORD na MÓNA



Fáilte Ireland
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USC IBADER
Instituto de Biodiversidade
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