



BRIDE Project
Farming with Nature

BRIDE Project

Newsletter September 2019

PROJECT UPDATE

Landmark date this week as 44 farmers have been accepted onto the BRIDE Project to begin carrying out various measures that will improve biodiversity, water quality and lower their farms carbon footprint in the Bride river valley. Over the last month farmers were deciding on their own specific Biodiversity Management Plans (BMP's) to achieve the goals of the Project. A budget of €2000 worth of capital improvement measures per farm was available to each applicant and the full allocation was availed of by almost all farmers. The 16 measures that were offered, included creating an annual biodiversity plot of up to 0.5ha, creating a pollinator plot (wild flowers), planting a woodland (160 native trees), increasing field margin widths, creating a pond, planting tree lines, retaining winter stubble, creating buffer strips along the Bride river and its tributaries, rodenticide-free, etc. etc. The numbers of measures chosen by each farmer was entirely optional and even so, all chose over 9 of these measures to create new habitats and improve the quality of existing ones. The breakdown of the project participants enterprises is as follows; 19 dairy farmers, 15 beef farmers, 6 equine farmers, 3 tillage farmers and 1 sheep farmer. This is probably a fair reflection of the enterprise spread in the Bride valley catchment area. All of the local communities are all well represented with farmers from Glenville, Watergrasshill, Bartlemy, Rathcormac, Castlelyons, Coolagown, Conna, Ballynoe and Tallow participating in this unique pilot programme.

MONTHLY REMINDERS

- September will see the first of full-page ads being taken out in the farming press promoting rodenticides. One of the measures taken up by our Project farmers is the use of rodenticide alternatives. The Project subsidises these alternatives such as the traps in the photos shown and should result in a reduction in secondary poisoning of raptors such as

Buzzards, and Hen Harriers and also Barn and Long-eared Owls. The first trap is available from Ian Carroll on 087 3857462 and the second trap can be got at all Glanbia and other hardware stores. Nature's alternative to rodenticide can be seen in the 3rd picture! All farmers in the project have opted for the rodenticide alternative measure which is great news for Barn Owls in particular!



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- Autumn is a good time to plant pollinator plots to help our declining pollinator species. Try to use natively sourced seed and if that isn't possible try at least to use species that are native to Ireland.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR . . .

Most of our summer migrants have now left Ireland but some swallows are still present. Keep an eye out to see when the last of them leave. Painted lady, small tortoiseshell and many of the other butterfly species are still on the wing but will be more prevalent on warmer autumn days. Note the flowers on the ivy and listen to the hum of the various pollinator species that depend on this plant as one of the last flowers of the year. Although autumn signals an exodus for some species what many people don't realise is that we also get an influx of winter species

that depend on our mild climate to survive the winter. Redwing and Fieldfare arrive along with additional Meadow Pipit, Curlew, Woodcock and Snipe from more northerly countries. Not cutting hedgerows will ensure plenty of berries for the aforementioned species during the cold winter months.

HEDGEROWS: Now is a good time to see the fruits of your labour (literally!) Below are several hedgerow species and their berries that can be seen fruiting at the moment. Check your own hedgerows and see how many different berries can be seen and thus how many different species you have on your farm.



INVASIVE SPECIES PROJECT

One of our Project partners, Cork Co. Council, was recently successful in acquiring funding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to map and record the invasive plant species along the river Bride catchment area. This has now been completed and an action plan will be drawn up to determine the next phase of dealing with the problem. We are grateful to all farmers in the catchment area for allowing JBA Consultants to carry out the survey work. Thanks also to The Avondu newspaper for highlighting the problem. It is hoped that a catchment-based plan will now be devised whereby all farmers could play a part in trying to eradicate these problematic plant



Representatives from Cork Co. Council, JBA Consulting and the BRIDE Project involved in the invasive species initiative

species over the next number of years. A public meeting will be held over the winter to explain the plan for all stakeholders involved.

SPREADING THE WORD . .

It is heartening to see the interest from farmers, outside of the Bride area, enquiring about ways to improve biodiversity on their own farms. Recently we visited Niall O'Regan's farm as part of the Dairygold Mallow Grass Farmers Discussion group to explain how environmental improvements can be made on intensive dairy farms. Thanks to Niall and Adrian O'Callaghan, Teagasc for a very beneficial farm walk.



Mallow Grass Farmers discussion group

BRIDE – THE NEXT STEP

During the month of October all the BRIDE Project farms will be scored on the habitats that are on their farms. This will form the basis for the improvements needed to restore degraded habitats to a higher quality score over the 5 year period of the Project. This is the first time that this system of rewarding farmers for higher quality environmental standards (Results-based Payments – RBP's) is being trialled on intensive farmland and, if successful, could be a template for the way future environmental payments are allocated to farmers.

Contact Details

Phone ☎: 025 - 37519
 Email ✉: enquiries@thebrideproject.ie
admin@thebrideproject.ie
 Facebook 📘 : @TheBrideProject
 Twitter 🐦 : @bride_project

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