



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



**Burren**  
PROGRAMME



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



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development: Europe  
investing in rural areas.

## The Burren Programme (BP) Annual Report

No. 5: April 2020-March 2021

### Executive Summary

The Burren Programme (BP) is a locally-led Agri-Environment Climate Measure (AECM) under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020. It is a 'Hybrid' programme, funding both results-based habitat management and complementary non-productive capital investments. Its aims to improve the condition of the natural and cultural heritage of the Burren. The Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) are the main funding authority for the BP, with additional support from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The BP is overseen by a Steering Group, made up of representatives from the main stakeholders. The BP is managed by a local team based in the central Burren through a 5-year contract with the DAFM. 12 approved BP Farm Advisors liaise directly with the 327 participating BP farmers and the BP team in the development of BP plans. This report outlines the work and impact of the BP from April 2020 - March 2021 (inclusive) – BP 'Year 5'.

There are three planning 'formats' within the BP: the (overarching) Farm Plan, Intervention 1 (I-1) Score Sheets and Intervention 2 (I-2) Work Programmes. Farm Plans act as the farmer's 'contract' with DAFM and these simple, 'overview' plans can be amended once annually. Of the current 327 participant farmers who have signed such plans, 191 joined in 2016 (Tranche 1), 79 in 2017 (Tranche 2), and 57 in 2018 (Tranches 3 & 4). No further recruitment is planned. The total BP area in Year 5 was 23,120ha which equates to an average of 70.7ha of SAC plus Additional Annex 1 habitat per farm. 59% of this area is 'eligible' under BPS rules and 11,387ha (49%) is assessable under the BP I-1 scoring system. BP encompasses 71% of the designated land in the three main SACs in the Burren.

I-1 score sheets were submitted for all 327 farmers in Year 5, though 11 of these farmers received no I-1 payment. The total I-1 'results-based' payment approved by the BP team in Year 5 was €876,549, €2,714 per qualifying farmer (range €41 - €9,347), an increase of 4% from the Year 4 equivalent. The average I-1 score across the entire BP area in Year 5 was 7.27, a 1.9% increase from 7.13 in Year 4. Analysis of I-1 data per 'Tranche' recruited shows that I-1 scores have increased annually by a small amount (e.g., for Tranche 1 farms the I-1 score has changed from 7.23-7.26-7.3-7.35-7.48 in Years 1-2-3-4-5). Longer term analyses (2010-20) of a subset of farms which have been in the BP/BFCP since 2010 also shows a steady annual increase, from 6.88 (2010) to 7.65 (2020), a 12.3% improvement over 11 years. Improvements in grazing are one of the main drivers of I-1 field score increases, though careful planning and execution of I-2 works on the farm are another major factor.

510 I-2 work plans, consisting of 5,318 individual tasks worth €1.834m (average of €3,596 per plan), have been approved by the BP team (163 in Year 5). €1.171m has been approved for payment by the BP team for works completed. An analysis of I-2 work completed shows that scrub control accounts for most of the budget (65%), followed by Stone wall repair (9.3%), Water installation (8%) and Access provision (5.5%). Farmers co-fund all I-2 works, contributing an estimated €719k (38%) to the total cost of I-2 works. Total

works completed since the inception of the BP include the removal of 145ha of encroaching scrub, the repair of 33.5km of stone wall, the installation/upgrade of 19.5k of access tracks and over 225 gates – all of which will help improve the management of key habitats.

The total funding allocated under BP thus far is estimated as €5.59m (avg. €1.12m p.a.) and the anticipated overall spend will be under €9m. An external evaluation of the BP by AECOM Consultants showed that the economic, environmental and social dividend of this investment has been huge. In summary, Year 5, despite the global pandemic, has been a positive one for the BP. The local team have carried out a high level of oversight (I-1 scores checked on 68% of farms, almost 100% of I-2 works checked) confirming the strong improvement in I-1 scores. The 327 BP farmers, 12 Advisors, local and national stakeholders continue to engage well with the BP and contribute to its success.

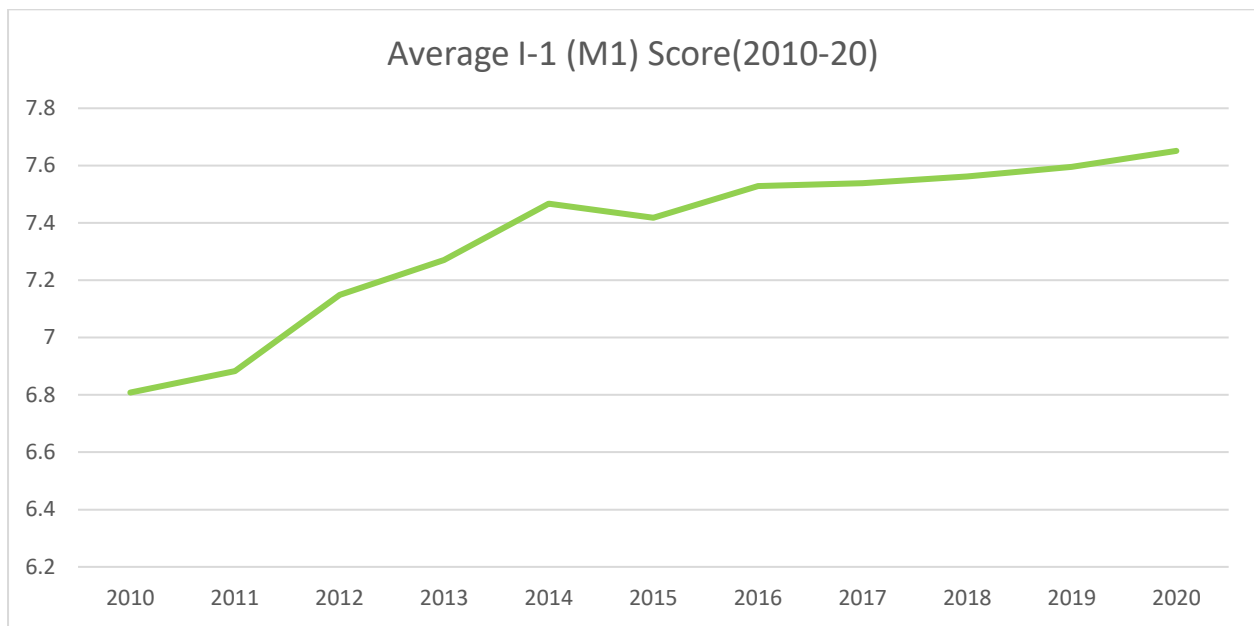


Figure: Change in the average I-1 (M1) score between 2010-2020 for all fields which were continuously in BFCP-BP since 2010, calculated on the basis of overall area per I-1 score (574 fields, 4,567ha).

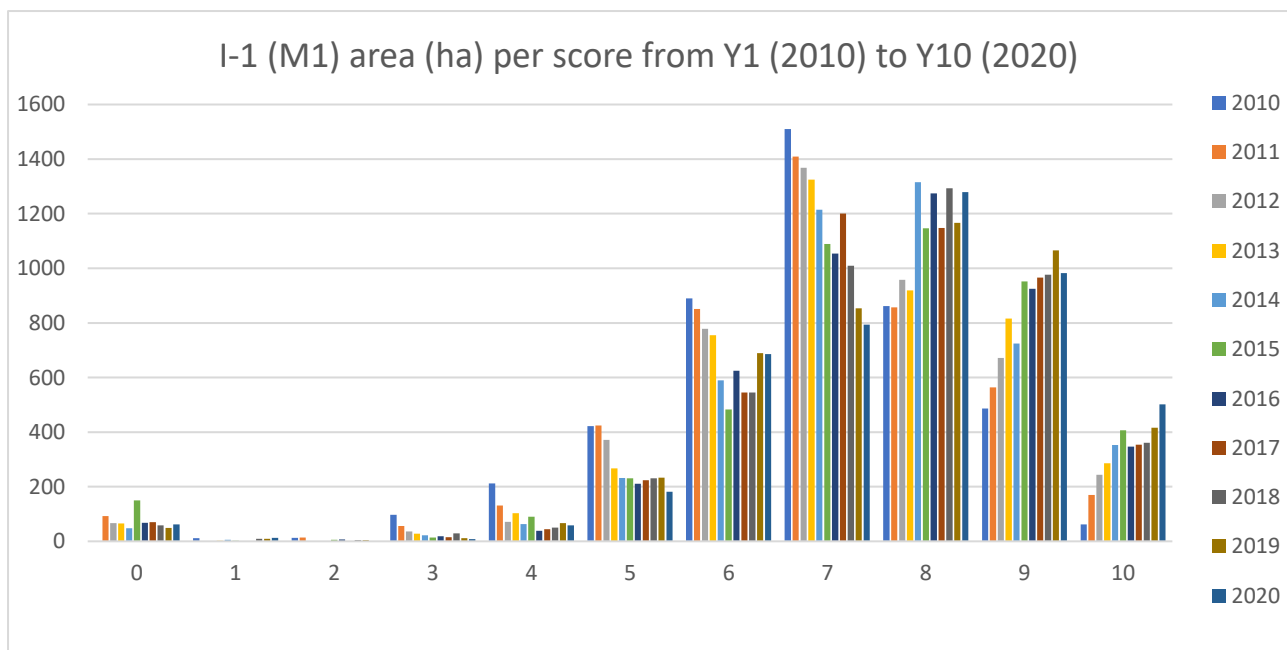


Figure: I-1 (M1) area (ha) per I-1 (M1) Score, Y1 (2010) to Y10 (2019) (574 fields, 4,567ha).

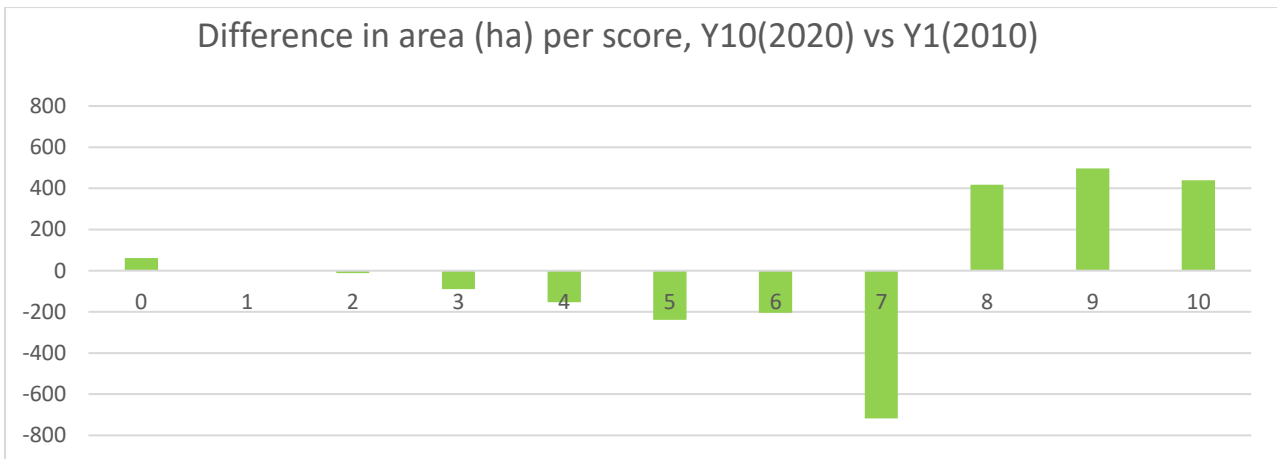


Figure:: Change in the area per I-1 (2020) scores compared with M1 (2010) (574 fields, 4,567ha).



Task Type	Claimed €	% of total	Extent	Additional Info
Scrub Removal - Areas	€548,994.32	46.11%	114.49ha	49.65ha cut using brushcutter
Scrub Removal - Bands	€88,218.23	7.41%	16.01ha	8.29ha brushcutter, 5.86ha chainsaw
Scrub Removal - Paths	€112,281.52	9.43%	14.76ha	70,240m length equivalent
Scrub Burning / Chipping.	€22,573.81	1.90%	13 tasks	4 chipping tasks, 9 burning tasks
Wall Repair	€110,756.63	9.30%	33,496.5m	25,905m internal; 7,591m external
Water Installation	€95,828.97	8.05%	3,564 units	161 troughs, 200 pipe rolls
Access Tracks	€ 64,738.39	5.44%	19,569m	10,376m new, 9,193m upgraded
Fencing	€ 36,448.94	3.06%	25,136.16m	21,818m post and wire
Gates	€ 50,841.81	4.27%	226 units	89 Burren gates, 137 field gates
Feed Equipment	€ 17,296.64	1.45%	143 units	76 feed bins, 4 silos, 63 troughs
Habitat Restoration	€24,360.26	2.05%	72 tasks	56 bracken control tasks
Livestock Handling Facilities	€ 12,382.10	1.04%	9 units	3 Cattle pens, 5 Crushes
Other (incl. Stonefacing, PPE)	€5,956.28	0.50%	15 units	15 sets of chainsaw safety gear
<b>Total Allocation</b>	<b>€1,190,677.87</b>	--	--	--

Table: Overview of main types of work carried out under BP I-2 (data from 165 farms).

An evaluation of the Burren Programme was completed by AECOM Ltd., in November 2020. The evaluation assesses the environmental, economic and social impacts of the Burren Programme. Commenting on the evaluation, Minister Hackett stated “AECOM Ltd found that the Burren Programme has been successful in encouraging sustainable grazing and feeding systems, and removing encroaching scrub on over 23,000 hectares, providing space for rare flowers, such as orchids and gentians, to flourish. AECOM Ltd estimates that the value of habitat and landscape improvements delivered amount to €32.8 million since 2010, and highlights that the Burren Programme is an efficient and effective model for delivering environmental improvements.”

# THE BURREN PROGRAMME

2005

BurrenLIFE

2010

Burren Farming for Conservation

2016

The Burren Programme

The Burren Programme is a locally-led agri-environment scheme that aims to incentivise sustainable farming practices in the Burren. The Programme has helped to deliver a range of **environmental**, **social** and **economic** benefits for farmers, the local community and wider society.



Incentivising sustainable grazing and feeding systems and removing encroaching scrub on **328 farms** over **23,000ha**, providing space for **rare flowers**, such as orchids and gentians, to flourish

Delivering **water quality** improvements by reducing **point-source pollution** from participants' farms

Repairing over **130,000 metres** of fallen dry-stone walls and installing **199** traditional Burren Gates



At least **€33 million** worth of landscape and biodiversity improvements since 2010



**€9.4 million** paid directly to local farmers since 2010, with an average direct results-based payment of **€2,613** in 2019

Ensuring the continued use and **viability** of Burren farms by funding **land access improvements, water infrastructure** and **scrub clearance**

**€23 million** generated in the local economy

Supporting an average of **20 local jobs** each year among Burren businesses, contractors and craftspeople

Promoting opportunities for **agri-tourism** and contributing to the Burren's appeal as a **visitor destination**



Preserving **ancient** farming practices and traditions, and encouraging their use on **modern** farms

Importance of strong **local leadership** and providing representation for **Burren farmers**

**Respect** for farming knowledge and traditions, alongside growing confidence in the role of **farmers as educators**



**Knowledge sharing** and creation of **networks** between farmers and agricultural, environmental, cultural and educational groups **in Ireland and internationally**