



Carrowbehy/Caher Bog

Study Visit



Site & trail details

- Carrowbehy/Caher Bog is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- It is located in Gorthaganny near Castlerea, Co. Roscommon.
- It is 343 hectares in size and has 2km of trails.
- It is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Story of Carrowbehy/Caher Bog

We are lucky that Carrowbehy Bog SAC is one of 12 Living Bog (LIFE14 NAT/IE/000032) sites. The project has brought much excitement to the community and we are fully supportive of it. We want to add to its plans for a looped bog walk from Marian Hall which will be a starting/finishing point for bog walks and an important educational resource for the West and Roscommon, which has 10 individual and 5 shared raised bog SACs in Ireland's 53 raised bog SACs.

Gorthaganny Community Development Company Limited (GCDC) was incorporated in 2003 and its current committee comprises a voluntary group of 12 [5 directors]. Its aim is to bring together key development projects including rural enterprise development and social inclusion that work to enhance the area's cultural, heritage, and natural resources and for the advancement of the people of Gorthaganny and surrounding villages. GCDC and its predecessors, Gorthaganny Community Council, have supported and assisted community projects and individuals in the area. Seamus Crawley is Chairperson and Bernie Greally is Secretary.

GCDC became involved with Carrowbehy/Caher Bog in 2019. The Living Bog Project promoted public engagement and awareness of the natural heritage in the Gorthaganny area and encouraged local engagement with the conservation and revitalisation of their raised bog.

GCDC has worked with a number of stakeholders in the development of their project, The EU LIFE Living Bog Project being the catalyst. They have also worked with the National Parks and Wildlife Service through the Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme, LEADER, Western Development Commission, Roscommon Tourism, Roscommon County Council, SEAI, and Coillte.

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About the project

There is nowhere in Roscommon where bogs are being preserved as in Carrowbehy and we want to become the go-to venue or focal point to showcase the importance of raised bogs: for school tours, tourists, day-trippers, third-level students and more. You can't beat the open, natural environment of a raised bog but we need support facilities that will encourage inward investment in our area through eco-tourism and other activities.

GCDC put signage in place with support from the Peatland Community Engagement Scheme managed by the Peatland Unit in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). They also worked with the EU LIFE Living Bog Project to open two access roads to the bog and have trails upgraded. They also developed promotional brochures for the bog and informational displays that are situated in the local community centre. They held a public meeting with the community to gather information for these materials.



Key features

- In 2019 GCDC was approached by the Living Bog Project team and informed of the plan to rewet the Carrowbehy/Caher raised bog. An outline of the restoration plans that would be involved was presented to the group, including the development of a boardwalk on the bog. GCDC gave a commitment to support the Living Bog Project and called a public meeting which was attended by many local people who bought into these plans.
- GCDC liaised with local farmers and the Living Bog Team and the rewetting programme was completed.
- Two old access bog roads were upgraded with Funds from the Community Engagement fund and preliminary work on a car park was completed.
- GCDC has built a strong relationship with the local primary school and various organisations including Community Wetland Forum, Connecting Communities with Peatlands, and Roscommon County Council.

Impact on the wider community

- The Living Bog Project was much anticipated and welcomed by the community. A huge potential for promoting the area was envisaged.
- There was significant buy-in from local landowners who were impacted by the re-wetting of the Carrowbehy/Caher raised bog.
- The Living Bog Project had a huge impact on our rural community which has few natural resources to sustain the community and has made it an attractive place to visit and live in.
- The development of two walking routes on access roads to the raised bog provides locals and visitors with safe walking routes for recreational and well-being pursuits.
- The development of the boardwalk would provide a circular route and is much anticipated. Disappointment has set in as the boardwalk development has been stalled.

Key challenges

There are considerable challenges in maintaining the momentum and investment of time and finances in the project. Currently, GCDC faces a challenge in accessing stakeholders in the Living Bog Project and maintaining the commitment of the committee volunteers to support the project.

GCDCS represents a small rural community and the community group are all volunteers committed to community development and opportunities to enhance the area. We view the restoration and development of a boardwalk on the Carrowbehy/Caher Raised Bog as an integral part of maintaining a viable community in Gorthaganny.

The challenges of navigating the various statutory bodies and agency systems and the expectation that a voluntary committee can commit to navigating the professional systems is often a barrier to progressing projects.

A project worker should be considered to liaise and assist voluntary committees that are involved in promoting rural development and restoration projects.





What's Next?

Further development of this raised bog amenity area includes the planned Carrowbehy Bog Walk will be a looped 4-kilometre bog walk with a 1-kilometre timber boardwalk that suits all ages and levels of walkers. This beautiful self-guided walk will meander the bog land habitat, introducing the walker to the biodiversity of bog land plants and animals as well as many other features of interest along the route.

The development of the Carrowbehy Bog Walk and the Carrowbehy Bog Visitors Centre as part of the Marion Hall refurbishment and a Carrowbehy Bog Story Display.

