



Cloonlarge Bog Loop (Lough Ree SAC)

Study Visit

Site & trail details

- Cloonlarge Bog is part of Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- It is located in Kiltewan, Co. Roscommon.
- Ownership of the bog rests with the state and individual private landowners. NPWS manages the state-owned parts of the bog
- There are three trails on Cloonlarge Bog Loop – 5km, 7km or 10km. The trail is made up of public roads



Story of Cloonlarge Bog

Turf cutting was carried out by hand in the area for centuries. Road works in Doogarymore Cloonlarge began in 1927 and were completed in the early 1930s. Men cycled from Roscommon, Knockcroghery, and Athlone and walked miles through bogs to build the roads. The pay was two shillings a fortnight. In the 1940s the Land Commission divided up the land and locals were allocated bog for turf cutting. From the 1960s, larger machinery was used to cut turf on the bog.

Turf cutting in Kiltewan began to cease in 2011 after a long process of negotiations and compensation for turf cutters around Ireland. There is no turf cutting on Cloonlarge Loop now. The head of a *sleán* is one of the items that was placed in Kiltewan Time Capsule to mark The Gathering 2013.

In the 1960s there were two archaeological finds in the area. A chariot wheel and a sunflower brooch were found. Both items are now on display in the National Museum of Ireland on Kildare Street, Dublin. The wheel was the first found evidence of wheel technology in Ireland. The finish on the wheel indicated high social status that may have been used for ceremonial purposes and was in use during the final phase of the Bronze Age period (2500BC – 500BC). There are replicas of the wheel at the Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre in Co. Longford and at Kiltewan Community Centre.

*"We have
breathed new life
into the place.
It is alive again
and we did it
ourselves."*

EILEEN FAHEY, CHAIRPERSON
KILTEEVAN TIDY TOWNS



Kilteevan Tidy Towns

Kilteevan Tidy Towns (KTT) was formed in 2015. In 2017 the group's attention was drawn to Lough Ree SAC. Turf cutting had more or less ceased in the area by this time. The group got involved with the bog project to help the community recover from the cessation of turf cutting. The end of turf cutting was considered a major cultural and social loss to the people of Kilteevan. KTTs aimed to change local perceptions of the bog from wasteland to oasis.

There are 17 people involved with KTT and Cloonlarge Bog Loop. They all have different relationships with the local area and the bog. Some are former turf cutters of Cloonlarge Bog or surrounding bogs, and others settled in the area in more recent times.

The group manages a number of aspects relating to the project: liaising with stakeholders, writing funding applications, signage development, recording biodiversity, project management, heritage, and litter picking, to name just a few. KTT worked with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) which manages Lough Ree SAC, and Roscommon County Council in the development of the Cloonlarge Bog Loop.

CLOONLARGE LOOP
Láb Chluain Láir



About the project

Cloonlarge Bog Loop focuses on three key areas: trail development, signage, and school engagement.

Cloonlarge Bog Loop was already in existence before its official establishment, though some locals were unaware of it. Eileen Fahey, Chairperson of KTT, says "I was new to the area and explored every nook and cranny." Through the Peatland Community Engagement Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Scheme, Agenda 21 funding and The Living Bog Project they were able to reopen 3 cul de sac roads that were formerly used to access the bog for turf cutting. Once the trail was opened, KTT proceeded to develop a trail map, brochure and signage for the Cloonlarge Bog Loop.

KTT set about developing interpretive signage for the Loop to raise awareness of the bog and its biodiversity. Signs were developed by the citizen scientists of the group highlighting key flora and fauna on the bog, butterflies, damselflies, and trees. KTT prepared the text, provided images, and researched information on the archaeological finds and turf cutting machinery once used in the area. The group managed the development from start to finish with proofreading, reviewing drafts, and giving the final sign-off. Information for signage was provided by the Conservation Ranger who worked closely with KTT on developing a sign for Lough Ree SAC and on birds and bog pool wildlife. All the signs that KTT produced were made using a designer and fabricator. Most of the signs were installed by Roscommon County Council.

KTT began engaging with schools when a school in Roscommon approached them to host a learning day for pupils. A teacher worked with them on the curriculum and presentation for the students. Working with the NPWS Conservation Officer Kilteevan Community Centre was decorated with nature posters. The school group walked the 5km loop and along the way were hidden biodiversity facts that the pupils had to find. The pupils were then invited to participate in a biodiversity art competition based on anything they noted during their walk on Cloonlarge Bog Loop. Each child received a folder with a trail brochure and biodiversity leaflets that were provided by the Roscommon Heritage Officer. The pupils were presented with a certificate of completion at the end of the day.

Key features

- The project is completely community-led
- It puts Kiltreevan firmly on the map
- The project is a success – people are using and enjoying Cloonlarge Bog Loop
- It's a beautiful place that has been opened up to all
- Acknowledges the past respectfully
- It has a family focus and children are engaged
- Increases awareness about biodiversity and it is appreciated
- It's a positive contribution towards the well-being of people
- KTT used their own creativity in shaping and designing their own locality

Impact on the wider community

- The community has re-engaged with the bog in a totally new way.
- It provides people with a safe place to meet and chat.
- Community well-being has improved
- Locals have somewhere to bring visitors and feel proud of it
- It has raised awareness about the importance of protecting the environment.
- There is an increase in visitors to the area.
- The community is very proud of the place and often comments on the beauty and the peace of Cloonlarge.
- KTT has used local businesses in the design, development, and completion of the project benefitting the local economy.

Key challenges

Any project has its challenges. For KTT and the Cloonlarge Bog Loop it's getting to the next phase - restoration - and securing the support of all the bog and land owners of Cloonlarge Bog. Along with this, KTT recognised that there is a lack of local expertise who understand the science and value of the ecosystem services bogs provide. KTT is struggling to get new members and volunteers to continue the project and upkeep of the Loop into the future. This is a challenge facing many community-led projects as younger people move away or simply do not have the time to get involved.

What's Next?

The wish of KTT is that Cloonlarge Bog will undergo restoration works and will be in caring hands and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

KTT hopes that the Cloonlarge Bog Loop will be prominently highlighted by Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and marked the Mid Shannon Wilderness Trail to increase the number of visitors and raise awareness about this beautiful landscape and amenity just kilometres from Roscommon town.



"Creativity is about joining the dots between seemingly unrelated phenomena...Connecting the dots was an unforgettable experience and an amazing success."



"A member of the medical profession commented to a committee member that we 'should never underestimate the importance of the work [you] are doing' on the project. This comment really impressed on us the intangible impact of our work."

EILEEN FAHEY, CHAIRPERSON KILTEEVAN TIDY TOWNS



"Kilteevan is now the talk of The Town. Many people from Roscommon are surprised to find this gem on their doorstep."

Information

<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000440>

<https://www.kilteevancommunity.ie/>

<https://www.facebook.com/kilteevantidytowns>



John and Richard Mooney of Doogarymore, at the discovery site in 1969.



"It is most gratifying to see people using and enjoying the Cloonlarge Loop."

EILEEN FAHEY, CHAIRPERSON
KILTEEVAN TIDY TOWNS