

# Nature and sustainability in Rural Communities

Peter Carvill

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Department of the Environment, Heritage  
and Local Government

Dublin

# EU Law – Protecting the Natural Heritage

EU law strongly protects the natural heritage.

- Birds Directive
- Habitats Directive
- Environmental Liability Directive

# Ireland Catching Up

- Ireland has been slow to come up to the mark on protection of our natural heritage.
- European Court judgments against Ireland for failure to implement aspects of the Birds and Habitats Directive
  - State obliged to comply with these judgments or face fines running to tens of millions of €.

# Pressures on the Irish environment

Particular challenges for Ireland as late starters in the development “race”.

- National infrastructure
- Farm modernisation and intensification
- Dispersed character of Irish rural settlement
- Widespread urban growth and sprawl
- Mechanisation of turf-cutting

have all put additional pressure on the natural environment

# EU Obligations

EU Commission and European Court much more active on the environment: Ireland is now expected to deliver.

- Legislation to implement the Directives
- Enforcement of the Directives on the ground
- Pro-active protection of designated sites
- Protection of birds and other species.

# Environmental Liability Directive

- Implemented by the Environmental Liability Regulations
- places obligation on individual to re-instate unlawful damage he/she has caused to SACs, SPAs, species and habitats.

# Assessment of Plans and Projects

Extra responsibilities on Government, local and national, in

- developing and adopting plans
- approving projects
- granting planning permissions

that are likely to be detrimental to nature sites and wildlife species.

Must carry out Habitats Regulation Assessment on proposals before adopting or approving them.

# REPS

REPS payments to farmers were introduced to support farmers in delivering on the objectives of the Habitats Directive.

However, it has not so far proved very effective in delivering because too general and not sufficiently site-specific.

In future likely to be main EU payment scheme for farmers



# NPWS Farm Plan Scheme

- For farmers not in REPS
- To cover costs and losses incurred because of designations (SAC, SPA or NHA) or commonage framework schemes

# The positive dimension

- Tourists rate Ireland highly for natural beauty: we need to protect this asset
- Ireland can benefit from a green image – our produce, tourism.
- Our heritage belongs to everyone – including future generations – to enjoy
- Everyone has a part to play.

# Ecosystem services

A properly managed environment offers:

- clean rivers and lakes
- quality drinking water

Wetlands and bogs can

- clean up dirty water
- attenuate floods
- provide important habitats for wildlife

# Hedgerows

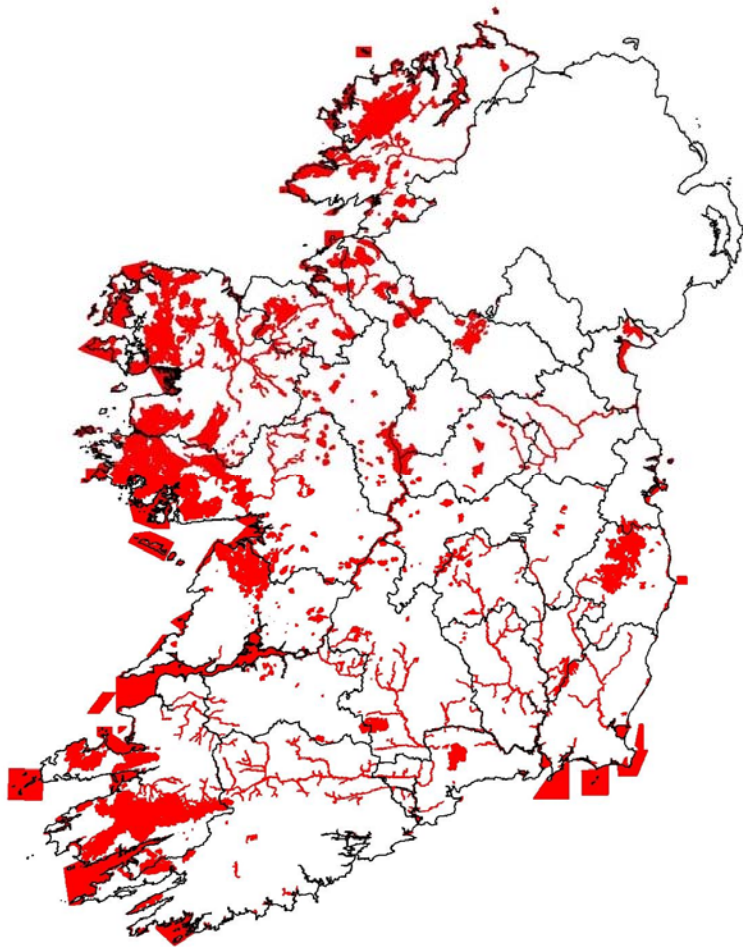
Hedgerows provide:

- shelter for livestock and crops
- protection against soil erosion
- nutrients for livestock
- havens and corridors for wildlife
- havens for plants, birds and insect life
- Ireland's distinctive rural landscapes

# Education and change

- Education is increasing our appreciation of our natural heritage.
- Growing understanding that how we manage our environment has wider- even global – effects.
- Farmers, as professional land-users, increasingly appreciate the need to farm sustainably.
- Consumers are more environmentally aware.

# Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)



# Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

