

Case Study

Project Background

The Abbeyleix Bog Project (ABP) stemmed from a local action group known as AREA (Abbeyleix Residents for Environment Action), established in 2000 to conserve and protect the bog, which was threatened with harvesting for peat moss. The Abbeyleix Bog site is 200 hectares (ha) in extent, bordered by eskers with the high or raised bog covering an area is 103 ha. Over the last twelve years the project has developed multi-level and multi-disciplinary collaborative stakeholder models and governance structures to manage, conserve and restore the site. The ABP is centred on effective partnerships and bottom-up community ownership, developed by volunteers to benefit all and the local community who will manage the bog for a period of at least 50 years.

The Problem

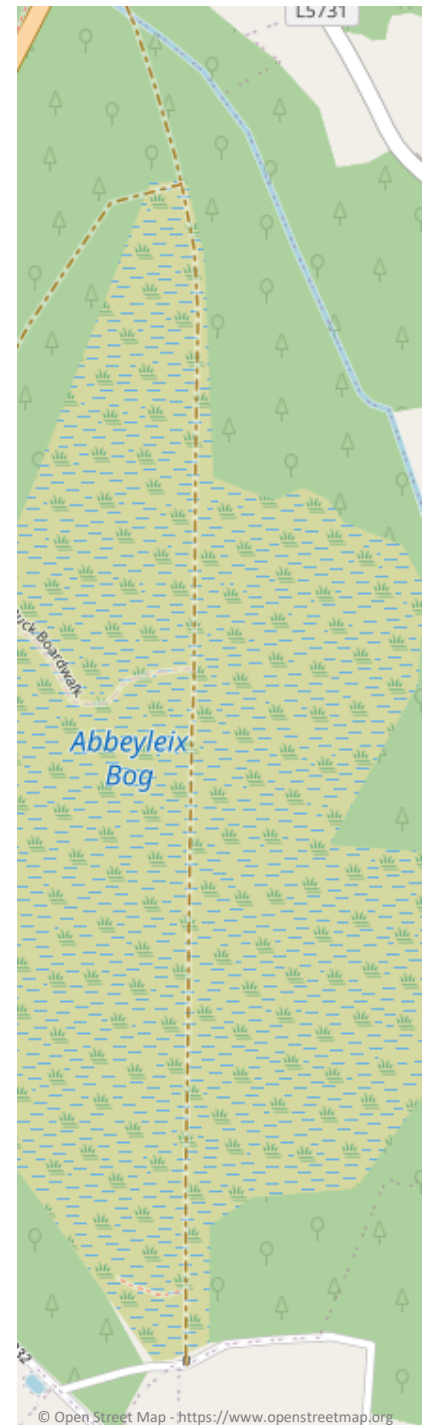
The local bog was threatened with commercial harvesting for peat moss by Bord na Móna (BnM). It was considered by AREA that it “would have effectively meant the loss of a treasured amenity for the community, not to mention the impact on the biodiversity of the area”. Preparatory works on the bog for the planned commercial activities involved the installation of a network of drains, despite local opposition. After several years and a number of legal challenges the work was halted.

Project Aims

To develop a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and Business Management Plan (BMP) to maximize the ecological benefits to the local community in terms of education, employment, income, and recreation.

Project Plan

A Community-Based Natural Resource Management¹ approach is used to develop the plans for the site. The main aim was to positively enhance the conservation and education value of the site, while retaining and improving upon the existing amenity and recreation value.



¹ Community-based natural resource management: an approach to natural resource management that involves the full participation of indigenous peoples' and local communities and resource users in decision-making activities, and the incorporation of local institutions, customary practices, and knowledge systems in management, regulatory, and enforcement processes. Under this approach, community-based monitoring and information systems are initiatives by indigenous peoples and local community organisations to monitor their community's well-being and the state of their territories and natural resources, applying a mix of traditional knowledge and innovative tools and approaches. (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) - <https://www.ipbes.net/>)

Project Stages

- Local action group (AREA) established to conserve and protect the bog
- Reclassification of the bog as a Biodiversity Area by BnM (early 2000s)
- Restoration works (drain blocking) by BnM and NPWS (2009)
- Ecological Surveys conducted (2009 & 2014)
- Limited company established (APB Ltd) and 50-year lease of site secured (2012)
- Boards of Trustees, Management Committee and Technical Advisory Group put in place
- Conservation Management Plan (2015-2020) published

Who is involved?

Abbeyleix Bog Project Limited has a three-fold structure for the management of the bog comprised of:

- Board of Trustees to ensure various aspects of the lease are adhered to,
- Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which includes two ecologists, business people, representatives from Bord na Móna, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Laois County Council and the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC), and
- Eight-member Abbeyleix Bog Management Committee, which meets regularly to discuss and approve various plans for the bog.

Project Appraisal

So far the site has had an increase of over 12% of active raised bog since restoration works commenced in 2009, with the blocking of 64 km of drains.

“This successful project to protect and restore Abbeyleix Bog, located in County Laois, Ireland, has been hailed as a model for community-centred peatland restoration efforts and recognized as a textbook example of sustainable peatland management.” Global Peatlands Initiative

“This significant restoration effort serves as an excellent example for other projects, both locally and globally. Communities worldwide need good models for sustainably restoring and managing their peatlands, and the Abbeyleix Bog Project provides a remarkable one!” Dianna Kopansky, coordinator of the Global Peatlands Initiative

More information here: <https://globalpeatlands.org/the-abbeyleix-bog-project-a-model-for-community-based-peatlands-restoration-and-management>

Useful Links

See website for more information: <https://www.abbeyleixbog.ie/>



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An Roinn Tithíochta,
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