



# An Choill Bheag Helping Address the Biodiversity Emergency

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Woodland  
programmes



**LEARNING  
ABOUT  
FORESTS**





# LEAF & An Choill Bheag Objectives

- Educate & Upskill
- Address Biodiversity & Climate crisis
- Provide Nature Based Solutions
- Help change attitudes towards forestry
- Engage with LAs & local communities in the expansion of urban & rural tree planting



LEARNING  
ABOUT  
FORESTS





# Goal 15: Life on Land

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

## THE GLOBAL GOALS



# 2018 – 2022

## 20 Little Woodlands



- 1 Third Level Institution
  - Mary Immaculate College Limerick – GS Memorial Foundation
- 2 Community Woodlands
  - Kenmare – SuperValu & Lidl
  - Cork – TEST SITE (Cork City Council)



# 2018 – 2022

## 20 Little Woodlands

- 17 Primary & Secondary (Green) Schools
  - 6 Limerick – GS Memorial Foundation / Paul Simon
  - 4 Cork – Cully & Sully
  - 1 Dublin - Coillte
  - 1 Donegal - Coillte
  - 1 Kerry - Coillte
  - 1 Offaly- Coillte
  - 1 Louth - Coillte
  - 1 Wicklow- Coillte
  - 1 Dublin – KBIGI







# An Choill Bheag

## Growing Native Biodiverse Woodlands

**An Choill Bheag**  
An Choill Bheag is a small, low-intensity native woodland planted by schools, colleges and community groups. It is an outdoor classroom or close to home amenity. It is also created for safety, education and community groups and managed in the same process, the planting and management. Over time they may mature and develop into a natural and beautiful ecosystem.

**A Vital Ecosystem**  
Woodlands are critical habitats for the health of our planet. Planting trees is vital for climate action and biodiversity protection for future generations.

- Biodiversity**
  - Provides habitats
  - Provides pollinator
  - Provides corridors for wildlife
- Community**
  - Close to home amenity
  - Outdoor classroom
  - Benefits health & wellbeing
  - Aesthetic value
- Economy**
  - Food
  - Fuel
  - Fibre
  - Medicine
  - Timber products
  - Jobs
- Ecosystem Services**
  - Reduce risk of erosion & flooding
  - Reduce risk of climate change
  - Carbon storage (sequestration)
  - Filters water
  - Soil fertility



**Language of the Earth**  
Native plants are the language of the earth. They are the foundation of our ecosystems and the source of many of our medicines, foods and materials. They are also the source of our cultural heritage and identity. We must learn to listen to their language and care for them as we care for ourselves.

**Brambles - Rubus**  
Brambles are one of our most useful native plants. They are a source of food for many insects and animals. They are also a source of medicine and materials. We should care for them as we care for ourselves.

**Ivy - Hedera**  
Ivy is a native plant that is often found in woodlands. It is a source of food for many insects and animals. It is also a source of medicine and materials. We should care for it as we care for ourselves.

- Species found in An Choill Bheag**
- Common Layer:** Alder, Birch, Oak, Scots Pine
  - Understorey / Shrub Layer:** Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Elder, Guelder Rose, Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly, Rowan, Spindle, Wild Cherry
  - Ground Layer:** Ivy, Honeysuckle, Dog Rose, Foxglove, Native Bluebell, Wild Garlic, Fern, Ground Ivy, Wild Strawberry and many more species
  - Underground Layer:** Mycorrhizum







# 2022 - 2023

## 7 New Woodlands

- 4 Laois Local Authority
- 3 Limerick (GS Memorial Foundation)



# Laois Local Authority Addressing the Biodiversity Emergency





# Portlaoise - Designated Decarbonization Zone

## Planting Little Woodlands:

- 3 Primary Schools
- 1 Education Centre





# An Choill Bheag

- Native Biodiverse Habitats
- Places for People & Wildlife
- School & Community Spaces
- Outdoor Classrooms
- Citizen Science
- Wellbeing





# An Choill Bheag Objectives

- Site specific
- Flexible & Practical
- Share & Collaborate
- Accessible, affordable & replicable
- Provide support via educational resources
- Purchase trees of Irish provenance (where possible)
- Use local resources (where possible)



# An Choill Bheag

## The Process

- ✓ Plant approx. 200 mixed native trees (200m<sup>2</sup>)
- ✓ Include space for seating
- ✓ Develop nature trails
- ✓ Include signage






# Hedgerows

- Essential ecological corridors
- Allow wildlife to move from one habitat to another
- Connect fragmented habitats
- Can help reduce noise & air pollution
- Elder, spindle, guelder rose are particularly good as shrubby species





# Educational Signs



## An Choill Bheag

Growing Native Biodiverse Woodlands



### A Vital Ecosystem

Woodlands are critical habitats for the health of our planet. Planting trees is vital for climate action and biodiversity protection for future generations.

#### An Choill Bheag

An Choill Bheag is a small biodiverse native woodland, planted by schools, colleges and community groups, covering approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>.

It is an outdoor classroom or close to home amenity, with space created for seating. Students and community groups are involved in the entire process, the planning, planting and management. Over time they monitor and study this essential and beautiful ecosystem.

As the little woodland matures, nature trails can be developed for everyone to enjoy and explore.

#### Biodiversity

- Provides habitats
- Provides pollinator friendly food
- Provides corridors for wildlife

#### Community

- Close to home amenity
- Outdoor classroom
- Benefits health & wellbeing
- Aesthetic value

#### Economy

- Food
- Fuel
- Fibre
- Medicine
- Timber products
- Jobs

#### Ecosystem Services

- Reduce risk of erosion & flooding
- Reduce risk of climate change
- Carbon storage (sequestration)
- Filters water
- Soil fertility

#### Species found in An Choill Bheag

**Canopy Layer:** Alder, Birch, Oak, Scots Pine, Willow, Yew  
**Understory / Shrub Layer:** Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Elder, Guelder Rose, Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly, Rowan, Spindle, Wild Cherry  
**Climbing Layer:** Ivy, Honeysuckle, Dog Roses  
**Herb & Ground Covering Layer:** Primrose, Sorrel, Foxglove, Native Bluebell, Wild Garlic, Fern, Ground Ivy, Wild Strawberry and many more species  
**Underground Layer:** Mycellium



#### Lungs of the Earth

Woodlands and forests are often called the 'Lungs of the Earth'. Also there is a web of fungi mycelium under the soil connecting all the trees and plants together. It is the original 'World Wide Web', invisible and under our feet.



#### Brambles - Dris

Brambles are often part of a young woodland system, dying away as the woodland matures. They protect young trees as they grow and are an important food source for bees, butterflies, birds and other creatures.



#### Ivy - Eidhneán

Ivy can both grow on the ground and up trees. Its pollen helps bees to sleep through the winter. It is an important winter food source for many birds and insects.



#### Oak - Dair

Oak trees are one of the largest and longest living broadleaf tree species in Ireland. Almost 20 species of birds and over 200 species of insects inhabit the oak. The oak tree was traditionally a symbol of strength, kingship, endurance and fertility and is often considered the King of Trees.

This woodland was made possible through funding from:







# An Choill Bheag The Process

- Day 1) Initial Site visit – site selection
- Day 2) Site assessment, Habitat Map, Species ID
- Day 3 & 4) Planting & Mulching
- Day 5) Follow up - introduction to woodland habitats, management skills & after care



# Tree species

- ✓ Alder
- ✓ Aspen
- ✓ Birch (downy)
- ✓ Birch (silver)
- ✓ Cherry (wild)
- ✓ Cherry (bird)
- ✓ Blackthorn
- ✓ Crab apple
- ✓ Hazel
- ✓ Hawthorn





# Tree species

- ✓ Holly
- ✓ Juniper
- ✓ Oak (pedunculate)
- ✓ Oak (sessile)
- ✓ Rowan/Mountain ash
- ✓ Scots pine
- ✓ Strawberry tree
- ✓ Whitebeam
- ✓ Willow
- ✓ Wych elm
- ✓ Yew





# Biodiversity



- Ivy
- Bramble
- Nettles
- Dandelions
- Daisy
- Wild grasses
- Mushrooms



# Biodiversity



- Woodlouse
- Centipedes / Millipedes
- Moths
- Beetles
- Bumble bees
- Butterflies
- Dragonflies / Damselflies











Website: [www.leafireland.org](http://www.leafireland.org)  
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Questions?