

Luggala Estate Limited announces its peatland future

Luggala Estate Limited is committing to undertake a peatland restoration initiative across its extensive upland bog and heathland, aiming to restore the habitats across 1300 hectares of peatland in the Wicklow Mountains thereby starting its response towards the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

The peatlands on Luggala are made up of blanket bog, wet heath and dry heath habitats. In the past, peat harvest on Luggala was linked to the need for fuel during the “emergency” in World War II, draining and turf cutting areas of peat mainly close to the upland roads. Since then, extensive historical drainage across the peatland habitats has occurred probably to try to improve grazing or to prepare land for forestry in decades past. This has significantly affected the hydrology and integrity of the peatlands in those areas with the habitats drying out. The added pressure of grazing by deer and sheep also dramatically affected the habitat condition.

“This is an ambitious project that will take many years to complete. We will start with detailed ecological and hydrological studies, then focus on a target of restoring 150 hectares of blanket bog and improve heathland management on a further 150 hectares of wet and dry heath.”, said Anthony Blanchfield, Environment Manager at Luggala.



Image: Courtesy Alan Lauder, 2021

“We know the important role bogs play in carbon sequestration and by rewetting and restoring the peatland habitats on Luggala we can make an important contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and make a response to biodiversity loss”, he said.

The Luggala Estate extends to over 1800 hectares and is one of the most spectacular upland landscapes in County Wicklow. It is designated an EU Natura 2000 habitat a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). It is located in a ‘Blue Dot’ high water quality Catchment area as designated under the EU Water Framework Directive. The peatlands are core to the Estate’s high water quality status. Rewetting the bog will contribute to reducing high flood levels downstream.

Outlining the scale of the task, Anthony Blanchfield says “the preliminary ecological findings identified drainage and grazing levels as the primary problems and causing the habitats to be in poor condition. Our ecologist found little evidence of Sphagnum Moss present on the bog and this is so important as the building block of peatland health.”

He added, “It was in much poorer condition than we had anticipated, and we recognised the need to move quickly and decisively to establish the peatland as a carbon sink and to restore its ecology.”

“We hope to begin the peatland restoration programme this year with a range of studies, testing and planning and look forward to seeing progress quickly.” “Ireland has a particular expertise in bog restoration and we look forward to learning from the experiences of others and working closely with NPWS and others as we undertake this work”.

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