

## Annual report for the year 2023

**State:** Ireland

**Name of the area:** The Burren

**Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:** 2023, 6 (EDPA adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 10 July 2013, renewed in 2017)

### Central authority concerned:

**Name:** The National Parks and Wildlife Service

**Address:** 90 King Street North, Dublin 7, Ireland

**Tel:** 353 – 1 888 2000 (Dr Andy Bleasdale)

**Fax:**

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**www:** [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)

### Authority responsible for its management:

**Name:** High Nature Value Services Ltd (Acres Burren Aran Cooperation Project)

**Address:** Old Schoolhouse, Carron, Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland V95 K0NA

**Tel:** 353 – 65 7089000

**Fax:**

**e-mail:** [brendan@burrenlife.com](mailto:brendan@burrenlife.com) or [info@acresburrenaran.ie](mailto:info@acresburrenaran.ie)

**www:** [www.acresburrenaran.ie](http://www.acresburrenaran.ie)

**1. Conditions:** List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

**1. secure a budget from 2022 onwards for the development of a successor programme to the current Burren Programme; share with the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas the details of the successor programme to the current Burren Programme prior to its entry into force;**

The Burren Programme closed in December 2022 as planned, in line with the end of the (extended) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). A new CAP began in 2023 and within Pillar 2 of this CAP provision was made for a National Agri Environment Programme called 'ACRES'. One of the innovations of the new Programme – which drew heavily on the lessons learned under the Burren Programme – was the 'ACRES Co-Operation Project' (ACRES CP) model whereby 8 'CP teams' across Ireland were appointed to manage a targeted programme to protect and enhance their High Nature Value Landscapes.

The Burren was one such area, though the target area for this CP was extended to include the Aran Islands and a section of south Galway adjacent to the Burren (map attached). HNV Services – who previously managed the Burren Programme - won the contract to deliver this CP for the duration of its anticipated funding (5 years plus). Over 14 staff (some part-time, many of them carried over from the Burren Programme) will manage this project – with the EDPA area at its core – which will work with c.1,300 farmers and a 5-year budget in the region of €45m (based on an average payment of €7,500 for 1,300 farmers over 5 years).

The full details of this new programme are available at [www.acresburrenaran.ie](http://www.acresburrenaran.ie)

**2. Recommendations:** List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

**1. prepare an overarching management framework document for the Burren Region diploma-holding area, outlining the various management initiatives and their inter-relationships;**

Under the ACRES Burren Aran Project, a Local Area Plan (LAP) will be developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. This plan will outline the key attributes of the area, the management challenges facing its natural and cultural heritage, and the measures which will be taken to address these challenges under ACRES. A copy of this plan will be posted on the project website (the plan is currently in Draft).

**2. aim both to increase the quality of the natural heritage and to prevent damage to the cultural heritage in those areas of the Burren Region not included within the three Special Areas of Conservation;**

Under the ACRES Burren Aran Project, a whole-farm approach will be taken across a wider geographical area than previously under the Burren Programme (which targeted only species-rich areas of the farms, mostly within SACs). The new Project will include protection, and enhancement of, the Burren's natural and cultural heritage over a much wider area as part of its key objectives.

**3. work with other stakeholders, especially those involved in tourism predicated on the farm holdings, as well as the natural and cultural heritage, to support communities living and working in the Burren Region;**

A local Steering Committee will be established to help guide the new Project and to assess its progress relative to the objectives and targets set out in the Local Area Plan. Stakeholders dealing with tourism and heritage will form part of this Committee, as well representatives of the local community.

**4. consider the development of further walking trails throughout the Burren Region.**

While this is out width of the remit of the ACRES CP team and project, the LAP Steering Committee will include these developments in its discussions.

**3. Site Management:** List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

In 2023 the new ACRES Burren Aran Project was launched. This Project, like the Burren Programme before it, will support the management of land within the EDPA holding site through a combination of results-based payments, funding for conservation support actions and locally targeted advice and support via a local team. However, in 2023 the new ACRES Project was still in its early phase of development so, while fields were assessed for result-based payments and a local team was in-situ, no conservation support actions were

undertaken. This will change in 2024 and it is hoped that the new project – which will also include ‘Landscape Actions’ – will be fully operational by mid-2024.

As the ACRES CP Project is new, it is too early to say how impactful it will be in delivering on the conservation management objectives for the region. Baseline scoring of fields took place in 2023 and by the end of 2024 the first real test of the Project’s impact should become evident.

**4. Boundaries:** Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

There have been no changes to the boundary of the European Diploma area since the adoption of the resolution.

**5. Other information:** List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

**Several noteworthy events were held in the Burren in 2023:**

Burren in Bloom (Burrenbeo Trust, May 2023)

Communities for Heritage (Burrenbeo Trust, June 2023)

The Burren Winterage Festival (Burrenbeo Trust and the Burren Programme), October 2023

In addition, Burrenbeo Trust carried out heritage-education courses in 9 local schools as part of its ‘Calf and Cuckoo Programme’.

HNVS Staff hosted a number of international study groups – from Austria, Wales, Northern Ireland and elsewhere as well as addressing a number of National conferences on sustainable farming.

The Burren case study continues to regularly features on National TV, Radio, Newspapers and social media.

The ACRES Burren Aran Cooperation Project Team hosted, or contributed to, a large number of farmer training and advisor training events in the second half of 2023.

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The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

**6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation**

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

**7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context**

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
  - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
  - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

**8. Education and scientific interest**

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
  - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
  - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
  - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
  - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
  - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

**9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)**

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

**10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)**

- 10.1. Improvements made
  - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
  - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
  - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
  - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
  - 10.1.5. Waste management
  - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
  - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
  - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
  - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
  - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

**11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

The EDPA award positively influenced the 2016 decision to continue, and expand, the Burren Programme, a decision which has been fundamental to the management of the Burren's natural and cultural heritage across 30,000ha of the Burren region, including most of the Natura 2000 designated land. This in turn has helped inform the ACRES Burren Aran Cooperation Project which is the successor to the Burren Programme, operating over a much wider area (with the EDPA area at its core). It is hoped that this Project will be a success – its impact will be reported upon in the 2024 EDPA Annual report.

\* Attached is a map of the new ACRES Burren Aran Project area.