



**For People, Places & Planet**

**'Exploring the Potential of  
Offalys Peatlands to achieve  
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve  
Status'.**

**A Just Transition Strand 1 Project**



## Green Offaly is a countywide Sustainable Development Trust

We have incorporated as a direct response to the Government's Project 2040 seminar:

'Empowering Communities in the fight against Climate Change'.

Our main objective is to advance green community regeneration as *the key factor in addressing Climate Change* whilst simultaneously creating a new identity for the region which will positively impact the long term economic and social security of the area.

To find out more about our work please go to [www.greenoffaly.ie](http://www.greenoffaly.ie)

# Project Context



Peatlands have played a significant role in defining our Midlands communities, delivering environmental, economic and social impacts over the last 80 years. This piece of research will examine how this legacy can be continued and evolved.

With Just Transition Funds we have commissioned a piece of in depth research which explores the potential of Offalys unique Peatland landscape, *in its entirety*, to achieve Unesco Biosphere Reserve Status using the Unesco guidelines as the framework around how to approach the study. The idea of unifying the Peatland Land bank through Biosphere Reserve Status came out of our Phase 1 Community Consultations

# Community Concerns arising from pre -project Consultations



How do we transition  
from this?



To this



While avoiding  
more of this?

In a way which meets the Ecological, Socio Cultural and Economic needs  
of our Communities and our Transition to a Low Carbon Society ?

## Alternative Landscape Approach

**The specific role of Biosphere Reserves is in developing a new vision of the relationship between conservation and development.**


To realize this vision, biosphere reserves aim to achieve the following three complementary functions:

- 1. Conservation:** to protect and conserve genetic resources, species, ecosystems, and landscapes;
- 2. Development:** to foster sustainable economic and human development;
- 3. Logistic support:** to support demonstration projects, environmental education and training, and research and monitoring related to local, national, and global issues of conservation and sustainable development





# Biosphere Reserves in Figures

**701**   
**Biosphere Reserves**

**Present in 124 countries** 

**21 Transboundary Biosphere Reserves**

3 in Africa, 12 in Europe & North America, 3 in Latin America & the Caribbean 

**2 Transcontinental Biosphere Reserves**

Intercontinental del Mediterraneo (Europe/Arab States) and Great Altay (Europe/Asia & Pacific)

  
**260 million people call Biosphere Reserves their home**

 **5%**

of the world's surface

Altogether, **7,040,031 km<sup>2</sup>**, approximately the size of Australia 



Strictly protected core areas, altogether, amount to **1,381,132 km<sup>2</sup>**, bigger than Peru



*1% of the entire world surface*

Transition Area

Buffer Zone

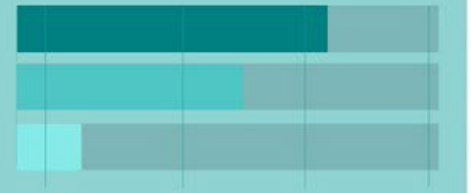
Core Area

1 million km<sup>2</sup>

2 million km<sup>2</sup>








3 million km<sup>2</sup>

4 million km<sup>2</sup>



# Four Key Activities and Three Areas of a Biosphere Reserve



-  HUMAN SETTLEMENT
-  RESEARCH
-  EDUCATION & TRAINING
-  TOURISM
-  Core area
-  Buffer zones
-  Transition area



# The Biosphere Framework - The Three Study Areas



## Core Areas



Protected zones that contribute to the conservation of landscapes & ecosystems, example being the Clara Bog Nature Reserve

## Buffer Zones



Surrounds or adjoins the core area(s), and are used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices, example being Agricultural Lands & Green Farming Practices

## Transition Area



The area where communities foster sustainable economic and human activities. Example being Peatland Towns such as Kilcormac & Ferbane.

# The Three Components of the Study



## Foundational Analysis



1. The Three Areas
2. The Changing Landscape  
- From Brown to Blue
3. The Ecological/  
Conservation Component

## Stakeholder Analysis



1. Identify and engage with Key Stakeholders
2. Explore the Scientific and Research Possibilities in Mitigating Climate Change and reversing Biodiversity Loss.

## Sustainability Analysis



1. The Economic Opportunity of Peatland Initiatives.
2. The Community Component - The Impact of Biosphere Status - positive and negative.

# Expected Outcomes of the Study



## Foundational Analysis

The compilation of a synthesis of existing data, maps and information which cover the 3 keys areas of the Core, Buffer and Transition Zones (including ecological and conservation data).

## Stakeholder Analysis

A comprehensive portfolio of stakeholders within the Offaly Peatland Biosphere

An exploration of the relationships between Stakeholders, looking for commonalities, mutuality of purpose and potential areas of conflict.

## Sustainability Analysis

An in depth analysis of the long term Sustainable outputs resulting from potential UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Designation including Economic, Environmental and Social.

The identifying of a potential location for a flagship Eden International Project.

# Project Partners to date & Working Group



## WORKING GROUP

Bridie Costello Hynes - Offaly PPN

Roisin Lennon - Head of Rural

Programming OLDC

Alex Copland - Ecologist

Dr Shane McGuinness - Community

Wetlands Forum Officer and

Research Scientist at the School of

Biology and Environmental Science

at UCD

Rebekah Keaveny - Green Offaly



**We have also made contact with Umeras Community Development - and the EU LIFE Peatlands & People Project. We will be exploring areas of collaboration and mutuality over the coming months.**

# Project Stages



Project Stage/Deliverables	Timeline
Tender Prepared/Working Group Formed/ Initial meetings with potential Project Partners/Tender sent out	11/2020 - 3/2021
Tenders received & evaluated by WG, successful applicant chosen	4/2021
Study Commences	05/2021
Foundation Analysis	21/07/2021
Stakeholder Analysis & Mid term report/Community Engagement Workshops	22/09/2021
Sustainability Analysis	24/11/2021
Summary & Conclusions & Final Report completed and signed off	21/12/2021

1

**May**

Inception meeting and project start date TBC in May

2

**June /July**

Begin the planning of the Community Consultations with Offaly Public Participation Network, Green Offaly and in partnership with the consultant.





## Contact Details

**Rebekah Keaveny**  
**Project Development**  
**Officer**

**Green Offaly**

[info@greenoffaly.ie](mailto:info@greenoffaly.ie)

[www.greenoffaly.ie](http://www.greenoffaly.ie)

0894294242