

Frequently asked questions about our proposed National Peatlands Park

Q. What does 'National Park' status mean and why is it important?

A. In 1969, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommended that all governments agree to reserve the term 'National Park' to areas sharing the following characteristics:

- Where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation; where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educational and recreational interest or which contain a natural landscape of great beauty.
- Where the government of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively the respect of ecological or aesthetic features which have led to its establishment.
- Where visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes.

It is the policy of successive Irish governments, to abide by these criteria and standards for National Parks.

National Park status offers legal protection to areas of particular natural beauty and ecological and environmental importance, today and for generations to come.

Q. Why is a National Peatlands Park important for Kildare and the midlands?

A. The midland bogs of Ireland have served us well for many years, as a source of fuel and employment. But now the bogs themselves are badly damaged and must be safeguarded for the future. The bogs hold huge amount of carbon dioxide and methane so by protecting the bogs, we all benefit by reducing our climate impacts and also helping to improve our biodiversity.

Our own National Parks and Wildlife Service created this video to show the power of peatlands to help our climate and restore biodiversity .

https://youtu.be/Fu_QQQNnQg0

Q. What other National Parks are in Ireland?

A. There are currently six national parks in Ireland. Killarney National Park, Wicklow Mountains National Park, Wild Nephin National Park, Coole Park Nature Reserve, Burren National Park, Connemara National Park, Glenveagh National Park

You can read more about these remarkable natural habitats here:

<https://www.nationalparks.ie/>

Q What type of jobs would a National Park likely bring to the Kildare / Offaly area?

A. As areas of immense natural beauty and scientific and ecological importance, National Parks become important drivers of economic development and job creation in their own right. National Parks attract tourists, particularly those interested in walking, hiking, cycling and nature. They also become centres of excellence for scientific research creating jobs for ecologists and environmental researchers. For example in the UK, it is estimated that The Peak District & Derbyshire's tourism industry generates £2.5 billion for the local economy, supporting 31,000 full time jobs and attracting 45 million visitors annually.

Q. Is the proposed National Peatlands Park just one really big bog?

A. The proposed NPP will be a mosaic of different bogs with a range of other habitats such as woodlands, open water and former raised bogs that were drained and cut for turf in the past. Some of these former bogs, just left alone to rewild naturally, have now becoming species-rich calcareous grasslands, woodland, heath, scrub and fen. So while bogs are at the heart of the project, we want to preserve these other valuable habitats.

Q. If the National Peatlands Park is designated will this mean that the bogs in Kildare will be closed off to the public?

A. No, the National Peatland's Park will be open to the public, similar to Ireland's other National Parks. In fact National Park designation would likely grow tourism to the area supporting local job opportunities and giving the region national and international significance as a destination.

Q I have turbary rights to turf banks will they be affected by the Park?

A. No, existing turbary rights would not be affected by the National Peatland Park designation.

Q. Will I have to pay to enter the National Peatlands Park?

A. No, similar to other National Parks in Ireland entrance will be free. As the National Peatlands Park would incorporate towns and villages in West Kildare / East Offaly and a wide variety of attractions and activities, payment will be required to access some of these individual activities and services e.g. guided tours. Donations

and new members welcome to our volunteer and NGO groups including *Birdwatch Ireland*, *Butterfly Conservation Ireland* and the *Irish Peatland Conservation Council*.

Q. Who owns the National Parks?

A. National Parks are owned by the Irish state on behalf of the people of Ireland. These areas of stunning natural beauty, environmental importance are cared for by the State for now and generations to come.

Q. My farm is within the boundary of the proposed National Peatland Park, will this affect my farming operations in that area?

A. No, similar to other National Parks, farming operations are not affected.

Q. Is there a danger of flooding in the area around the National Peatlands Park due to rewetting the peatlands?

A. Evidence from other rewetted areas shows that rewetting will reduce the risk of flooding. Detailed management plans are currently being developed with bogs already proposed for rehabilitation to ensure agricultural and other lands adjacent to the bogs will not be flooded.

Q. Is there an increased risk of fire in a National Peatlands Park?

A. All peatlands are at risk of fire during extended dry warm periods. The rewetting of peatlands in the NPP will reduce the risk of fire. Visitors will need to be aware and respectful of potential fire risks especially during dry weather periods. Designated picnic area may be provided.

Q. Will the National Peatlands Park affect housing property prices within the proposed boundaries?

A. No, like the other National Parks around Ireland, housing properties were not negatively affected by the National Park designation.

Q. When do you expect the National Peatlands Park to come into existence?

A. It is our hope that the National Peatlands Park will be included in the Kildare County Development Plan which spans the period 2023 – 2029. Volunteer work has already commenced on the preparation of leaflets and guides to the park (see next question)

Q. What flora and fauna can we expect to see in the National Peatlands Park ?

A. As you will see from this list, the boglands of West Kildare are already very rich in biodiversity. The species richness and abundance will increase over time with larger scale areas safeguarded for nature. The park will contribute to biodiversity recovery after decades of loss and decline. Did you know that 43% of Ireland's protected species are in decline and one in five species are threatened with extinction?

Flora

Bog Cotton: May-June

Round-leaved Wintergreen: blooms May-June

Bilberry (Froghan) fruits in August

Ling or Common Heather: Flowers seen in August

Green-winged Orchid: Flowers in April-May

Pyramidal Orchid: Flowers May-June

Bee Orchid: June

Lesser Butterfly Orchid: June-July

Common Spotted and Heath Orchids: June-August

Fragrant Orchid and Marsh Helleborine: Flowers seen in July

Common Knapweed flowers July-September

Devil's-bit Scabious flowers July-November

Purple Loosestrife flowers July-September

Bog specialists plants like Sundew, Matchstick and Pixie-cup Lichens

Mammals: all year

Red Squirrel, Badger, Fox, Stoat, Pine Marten, Otter, Bank Vole, Hare thrive in the National Peatlands Park region

Pine Martens can be seen during daylight, especially April-June

Hares are especially active March-May

Otters are mainly nocturnal but their scats and feeding areas can be found at various sites

Birds

Common Buzzard, Merlin, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Long-eared Owl, Raven, Woodcock, Snipe, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Yellowhammer all year

Hen Harrier October-March

Great-spotted Woodpecker heard drumming on tree trunks in April

Whooper Swans, seen mainly November-March

Lapwing: nests April-July

Curlew: nests April-July

Sand Martin: nests June-August

Many more species associated with wetlands, including Little Grebe, Teal, Heron, Water Rail, are found on the ponds and lakes in the park

Goldfinches and Linnets especially common August-October

Crossbills can be seen feeding on cones on coniferous trees

Whitethroat, Grasshopper Warbler, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap common May-September

Cuckoo calls in May-June

Amphibians: All Year

Common Frog: spawning occurs in March-April, adults numerous in wet grassland in summer

Smooth Newt: active in ponds in April and May

Reptiles

Common Lizard mainly seen basking in April-May on dry banks

Dragonflies and Damselflies: April-November

Four-spotted Chaser: April-August, occurs in vast numbers in the area

Hairy Dragonfly: April-June, its presence indicates the presence of clean water

Emperor Dragonfly: May-August, its aerial power and agility is unequalled by other dragonflies

Common Hawker: June-August

Brown Hawker: July-September

Migrant Hawker: August-October, it is expanding its presence in the region

Keeled Skimmer: June-July, loves shallow bog pools

Black-tailed Skimmer: May-August

Common Darter, May-November

Black Darter, August-November very numerous

Damselflies: Large Red Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Azure, Variable and Blue-tailed Damselflies are numerous in May/June.

Emerald Damselfly flies July-September

Banded and Beautiful Demoiselles seen in July-August.

Butterflies: March-October

Dingy Skipper: Late April-mid-June

Cryptic Wood White: May-June

Clouded Yellow: May-October (irregular)

Brimstone: March-June, July-September

Large White: April, August

Small White: April-May, July-August

Green-veined White: April-June, July-September

Orange-tip: April-June

Green Hairstreak: May-June

Small Copper: May-June, July-September

Common Blue: May-June, August

Holly Blue: May-July

Red Admiral: April, August-September

Painted Lady: May-September

Small Tortoiseshell: June-July, August-October

Peacock: April-June, August-September

Comma: April-October

Dark Green Fritillary: June-August

Silver-washed Fritillary: June-August

Marsh Fritillary: mid-May-late June

Speckled Wood: April-September

Wall Brown: May, August-September

Meadow Brown: June-September

Ringlet: June-August

Small Heath: May-July

Large Heath: June-July

Day-flying moths: April-October

Emperor Moth: April-June

Common Heath: April-July

Mother Shipton: May-June

Burnet Companion: May-July

Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth: May-June

Narrow-bordered Six-spot Burnet: June-July

Treble-bar: May-June and August