



Lough Carra LIFE Project Launch, May 2023.



The Lough Carra LIFE Project was formally launched at the Belcarra Community Centre, Co. Mayo, on Monday 15th May, by Minister of State Malcolm Noonan.

The event was attended by approximately 100 people, representing partner organisations, government bodies, local authorities, local communities, and a host of other stakeholder groups. The Launch was opened by Mary Fitzgerald, Chair of the Belcarra Community Council, Seamus Weir, Mayo County Council Cathaoirleach, and Kevin Kelly, Mayo County Council Chief Executive. Keynote speakers at the event included:

- Tom Byrne, Chair of Lough Carra Catchment Association.
- Ken Irvine, Chair Aquatic Ecosystems Group, IHE Institute of Water Education, Delft, The Netherlands.
- Caoimhe Hickey, Geological Survey Ireland.
- Leanne Roche, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.



LIFE20 NAT/IE/000172





- Chris Huxley, Lough Carra Catchment Association.
- Eamon Kenny, Coillte's Director of Operations.
- Tim Roderick, Regional Manager for the National Parks and Wildlife Services.



Speaking at the event Minister of State Malcolm Noonan said: “This project has the distinction of being the first LIFE Project of its type in Ireland to be coordinated by a Local Authority and I wish to congratulate Mayo County Council for taking the lead on it.

“It is my hope that it will provide an example to other Local Authorities to manage LIFE Projects for Nature and Biodiversity, and indeed other EU funded conservation programmes in the future.

“Lough Carra LIFE is an example of how organised local communities can take action on environmental issues and achieve environmental conservation successes at a grass roots level.



LIFE20 NAT/IE/000172





“And on this point, I wish to single out the Lough Carra Catchment Association, which was established to conserve and improve the lake. It has done huge work in the area in recent years and has been central to the conception and establishment of the Project. Support from local communities will be at the heart of the project and central to its success. Just as Lough Carra is at the heart of this community, providing a range of ecosystem services”.

Cllr Seamus Weir, Cathaoirleach of Mayo County Council, outlined how the Lough Carra LIFE project has been several years in its development, and is an example of how local communities can build partnerships with local authorities, government bodies, and a broad range of local stakeholders to drive policy changes.

Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive of Mayo County Council added that Mayo is currently a hotspot for collaboratively funded projects of this type focused on environmental conservation and climate action. Other examples include Wild Atlantic Nature, Corncrake LIFE, LIFE on Machair, Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark, and the Climate Action Regional Office. Mayo County Council hope to act as an example to other local authorities to inspire future projects of this type to be driven by local communities and coordinated by local authorities.



LIFE20 NAT/IE/000172





Project Manager Kieran Flynn highlighted Lough Carra as a rare and exceptional habitat which is in decline due to the pressures of modern land management practices, and without intervention will be lost to future generations. He thanked all the project partners, stakeholders, and the local community for their support to date, and looks forward to their continued support through the course of the project.



The formal Project Launch was followed by an Open Day with stalls and information displays managed by project partners, including:

- The LIFE Project Team
- Lough Carra Catchment Association
- Geological Survey Ireland.
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
- Coillte.
- National Parks and Wildlife Services.
- Southeast Technological University, Otter Research Project
- Local Authority Waters Programme.
- Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark.

This Open Day was well attended by local schools and other visitors from the local community.





Kieran Flynn, May 2023