

Ierse Nederlandse Veen Uitwisseling

Irish and Dutch Peatland Partnership



In June IPCC's Education Officer Nuala Madigan and IPCC's Campaign Officer Katie Geraghty visited one of the Netherlands last remaining peatlands, Bargerveen Nature Reserve in the North of the country. Over 30 years ago less than 100 hectares of peatland remained on this site and the government took action to protect this bog for future generations to enjoy. Here we share with you our experience.

Over 30 years have past since the peatland connection between Ireland and the Netherlands was formed and today with both the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) in Ireland and the Stichting Tot Behoud Van de Ierse Venen still actively promoting the conservation of a representative sample of peatlands for future generations to enjoy our story continues. In 2013 the IPCC were delighted to welcome the Stichting Tot Behoud Van de Ierse Venen to the Bog of Allen Nature Centre as they marked their 30th anniversary since their foundation. IPCC had not set foot in the Netherlands since 1987. Time to visit and learn from them once again. With

funding support from the Stichting Tot Behoud Van de Ierse Venen two IPCC staff members travelled to Bargerveen in Northern Netherlands to meet with rangers from Staatsbosbeheer. This group took on the restoration of the Bargerveen peatland site in the 1980's.

Bargerveen was one of only four peatland sites nationwide identified for restoration by the Dutch Government. At Bargerveen a small portion of less than 100ha of peatland habitat remained. This was completely surrounded by cutaway bog. A series of peat dams and later boulder clay dams where built to restore

water levels around the site. In supporting the core bog area remaining the Dutch raised the level of the landscape around the site. They found that to maintain water levels at the optimum level for restoration in the core area, the height difference of the dams for every 100m distance from the core bog area could not be less than 30cm. Water level monitoring was started to record the progress on the site over the next 30 years.

Bargerveen Today

Today Bargerveen is a 2,000ha nature reserve, a peatland restored to encourage the growth of *Sphagnum* mosses. The dams have regenerated as

Top: Protected Raised Bog Habitat in Bargerveen Nature Reserve, the Netherlands. Photo: N. Madigan
Inset: Moor Frog or Blue Frog (*Rana arvalis*) the male of this frog goes blue for one day a year to attract a female
Photo: commons.wikimedia.com
Right: 30 year comparison between dams in the Netherlands.
Photos: H. Heuff and N. Madigan



peatland exchange



Above Left: Sheep and cattle are used to graze Bargerveen Nature Reserve to control encroachment of oak and birch saplings. Above centre: Water level monitoring station on Bargerveen Nature Reserve. Above Right: Visible damage patches in *Sphagnum* moss caused by atmospheric nitrogen deposition. Photos: K. Geraghty.

wet grassland while the pools created 30 years ago have partially filled with *Sphagnum* moss species.

Highlights

- The diversity of species now using Bargerveen as a habitat was fantastic to witness - foxes, hares, frogs, butterflies, deer, dragonfly species, birds and many more were spotted during IPCC's short visit.
- The site is now an amenity for the public with walking routes ranging from 1km to 7.5km and cycle paths connecting to a 17km route.
- Bargerveen has collaborated with other groups and today it is part of a cross border Naturpark with Germany.
- Bargerveen continues to look to the future with the creation of buffer zones that will have potential to supply Bargerveen habitat, local agriculture and areas further South with water in times of shortage.
- By creating these buffer zones it was interesting to learn how local families could benefit through paludiculture - a type of farming specific for wetlands, growing reeds that could be used for thatching or biomass for the production of energy.

- Ensuring community engagement the Veen Museum and information points around the reserve share with locals and visitors the restoration activities and the benefits these have for the reserve.

Challenges at Bargerveen

Bargerveen has been transformed from an open bare peat landscape into wet grassland, open water and peatland habitat. However there are still challenges facing the peatlands of the Netherlands. IPCC staff learned how local farmers graze cattle and sheep to manage encroaching tree saplings. The invasive species of Japanese Knotweed introduced as a fodder for cattle was observed between native species and an emerging threat to the site was the volume of nitrogen deposition from industry and its affect on the growth of plants including *Sphagnum* moss.

Conclusion

Thanks to the partnership between the Netherlands and Ireland, Irish

THANK YOU
 IPCC would like to thank the Stichting Tot Behoud Van de Ierse Venen for supporting our visit to the Netherlands through their Study Fund 2016 and the Staatsbosbeheer of the Netherlands for their hospitality and taking time to guide Nuala and Katie through the variety of peatland resources and habitats.

peatlands are not in the same position as the Netherlands faced in the 1980's but we can learn lessons from their experiences in restoration over the past 30 years so that in the future the Dutch and Irish bog story will continue..... - Nuala Madigan & Katie Geraghty

Throughout the Naturpark information points are designed in the shape of the old turf houses families lived in during peat extraction. To get a job on a Dutch bog no CV was necessary, you simply had to build your house using turf and once you had someplace to live you got the job!
 Photo: N. Madigan



Bargerveen Nature reserve was once a landscape where the living habitat had been stripped away. Thanks to the restoration efforts to save the last peatland habitat here a volunteer survey of the Common Blue butterfly in 2015 recorded over 25,000 butterflies in one afternoon, with rangers on the site estimating the population to be upwards of 50,000. Photo: C. O'Connell