

Incorporating Landscape Action into a national agri-environment scheme: Lessons from ACRES

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ACRES
Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme



Funded by
the European Union

ACRES 
BREIFNE

ACRES CP Overview

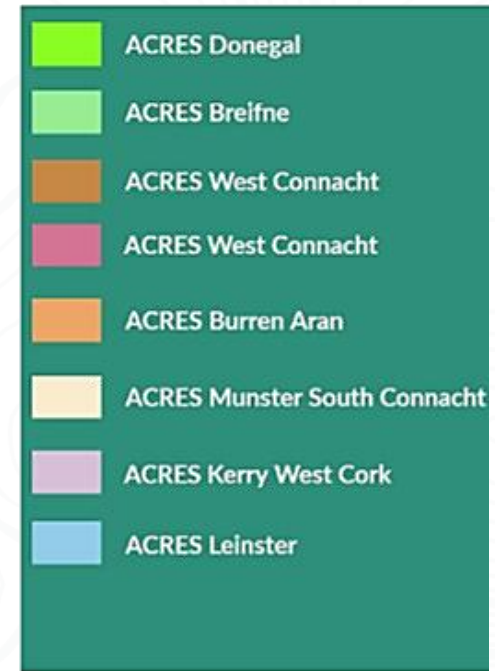
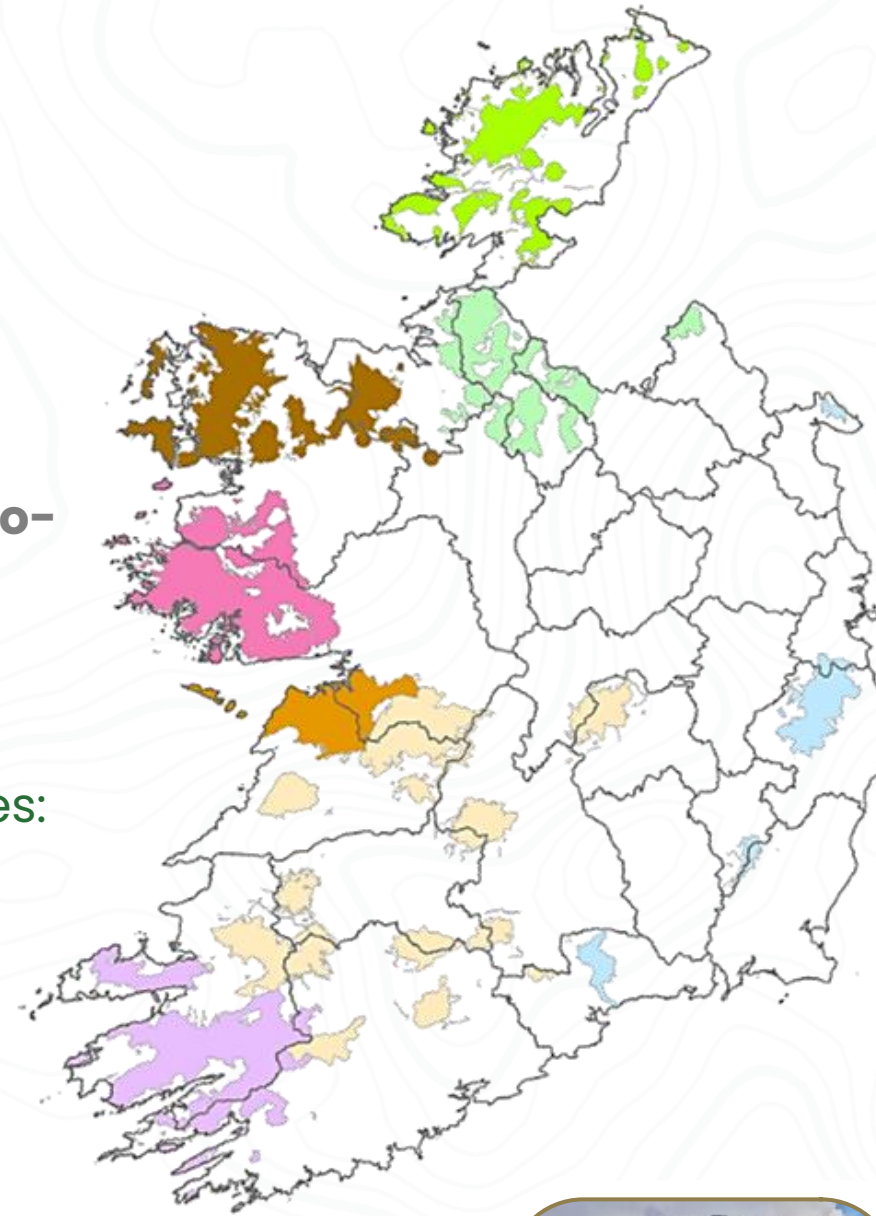
National agri-environment scheme is ACRES- Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme

Two streams: ACRES General and **ACRES Co-operation Project (CP)**

- 8 CP zones
- Outside of CP zones: ACRES General

Aims to deliver national & European policies:

- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Water Framework Directive
- River Basin Management Plans
- Bird and Habitat Directives
- Prioritised Action Framework for NATURA areas



ACRES CP Overview

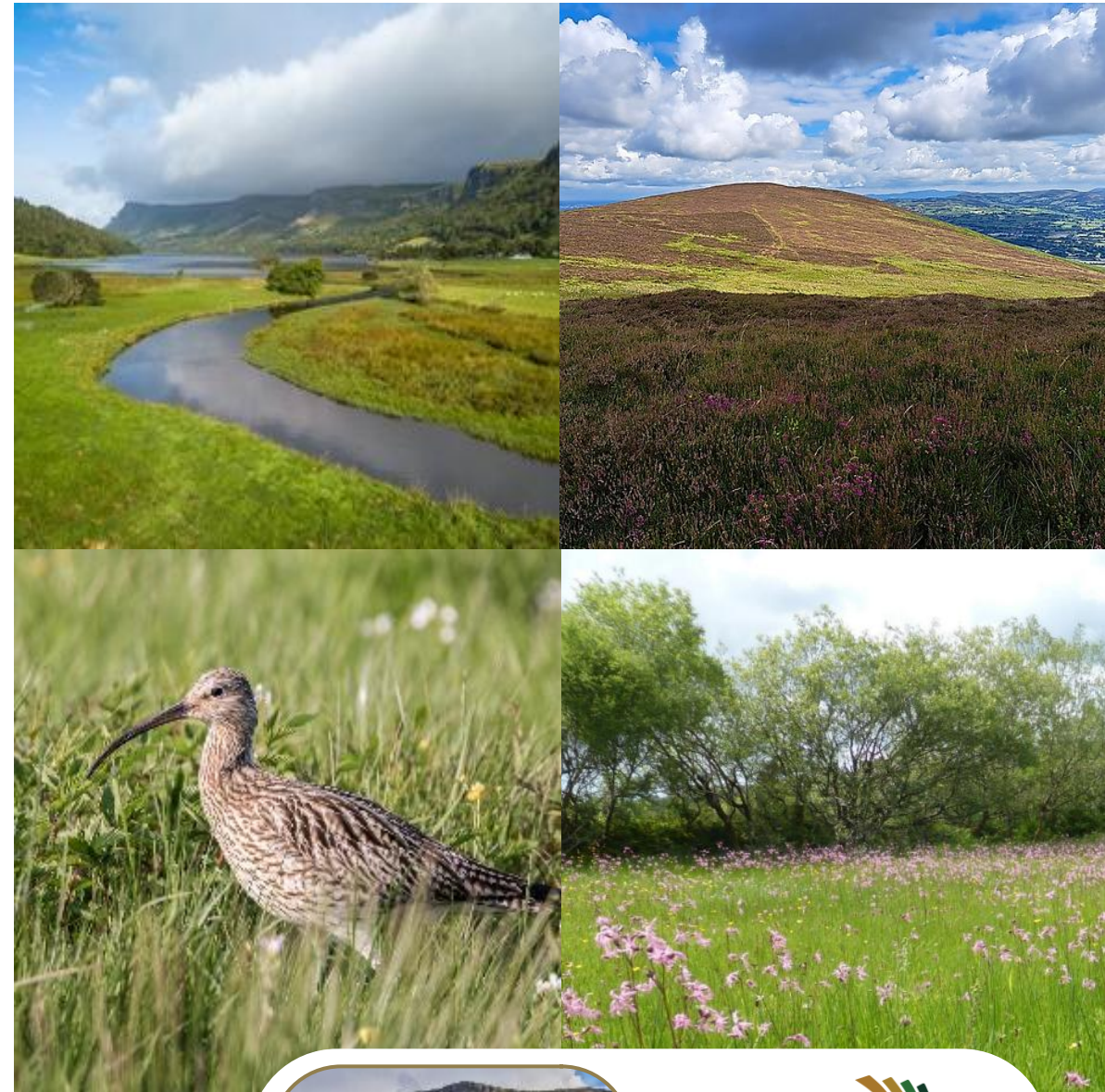
CP zones are dominated by High Nature Value (HNV) farmland

Payment relates to quality of biodiversity, water quality, carbon etc, using **scorecards**

Decisions stay the farmers hands; an incentivized, results-based payment system

Farmers in CP zones have access to CP teams:

- How to maximise ecosystem service delivery on farm
- Screen actions: appropriate & archaeological assessment
- Deliver training for farmers, advisors & other stakeholders
- Connect with the wider public through public talks, field demonstrations, collaborations etc



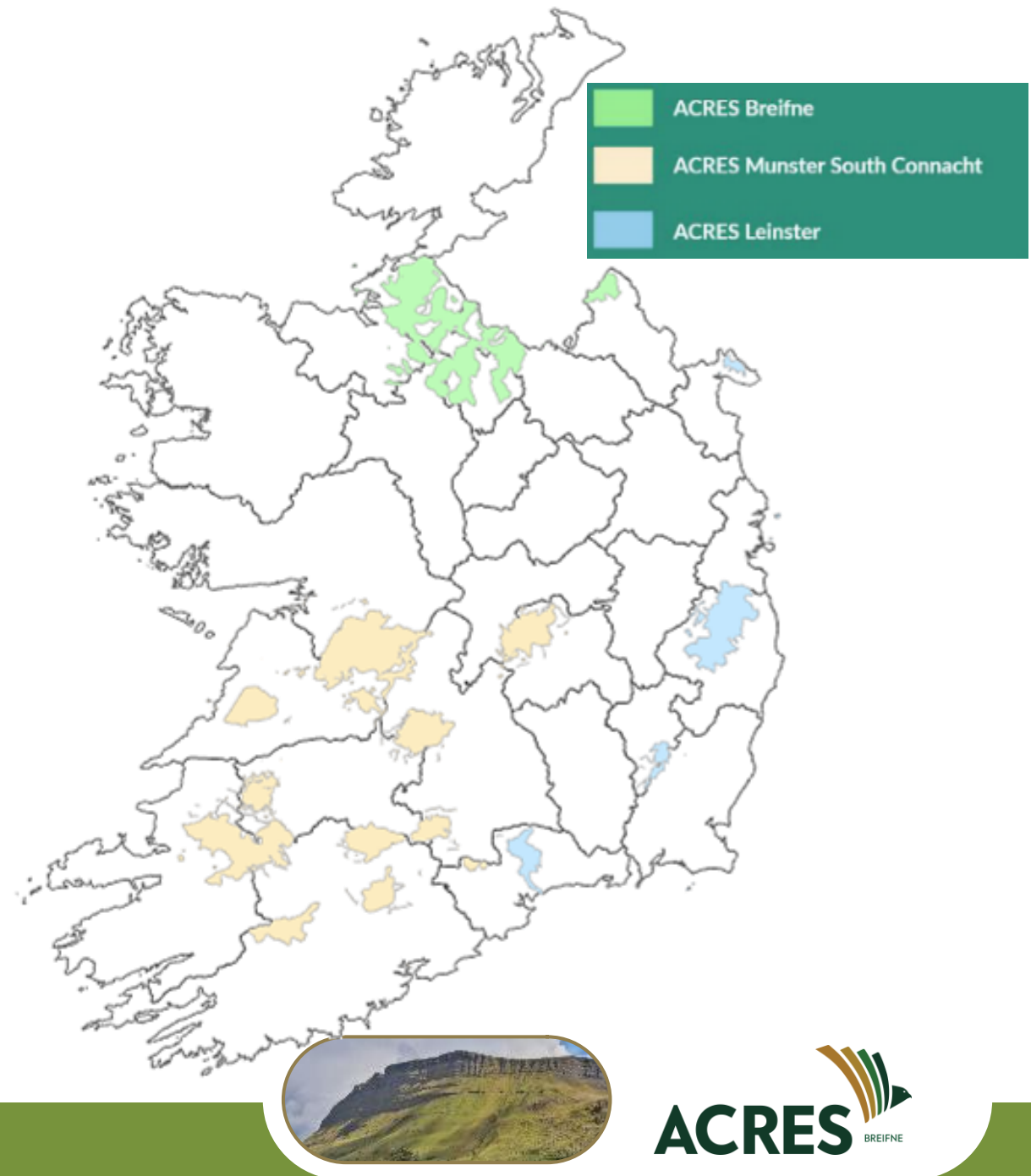
The CP Team

Private companies; our company, Hen Harrier Programme Ltd have contracts for 3 CP zones

233,600 ha of farmland; 80,900 ha commonage/upland

Suckler, dry stock, sheep (mostly hill), small amounts of dairy

CP Zone	Farmers
Breifne	2880
Leinster	780
Munster/South Connacht	3690
Total	~7350



Scorecards

All scorecards are designed to deliver

- biodiversity
- carbon
- water
- soil
- flood resilience
- fire resilience

Higher score = higher target delivery = higher payment

Scorecard	Target
Peatland	Peatland habitats, upland birds,
Grassland	Semi-natural grassland habitats, pollinators
Rough Grazing	Hen harrier, Barn owl, small birds and mammals
Scrub/Woodland	Scrub and/or woodland habitats
Winterage	Dry calcareous grassland on winterage sites
Low Input Peat Grassland	Wet grassland habitats
Coastal	Coastal habitats such as dunes and saltmarshes
Breeding Wader	Snipe, Curlew, Redshank and Lapwing
Chough	Cliff habitats, Chough
Corncrake	Corncrake, hay meadows



Scoring Private Land

Scorecards assigned to each field by CP Team; scoring in summer

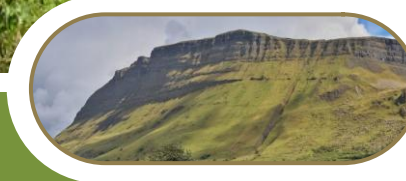
Scorecard on App on the phone for farm advisors

CP Team score commonages

Scores range from 0-10

- Flowering plants / Native trees
- Sward/ Canopy layers
- Damaging activities
- Water quality
- Non-native invasives...

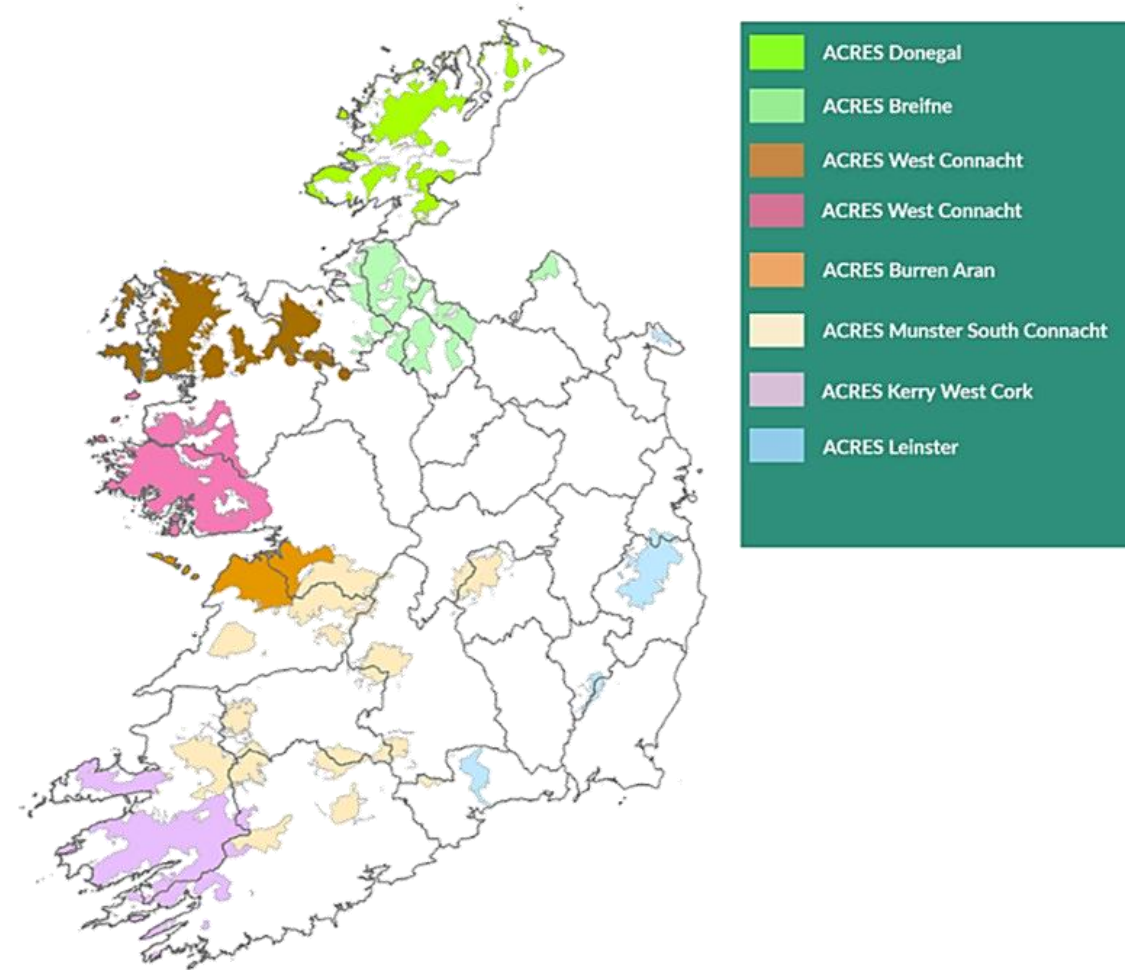
Field scores submitted to DAFM who issue payments



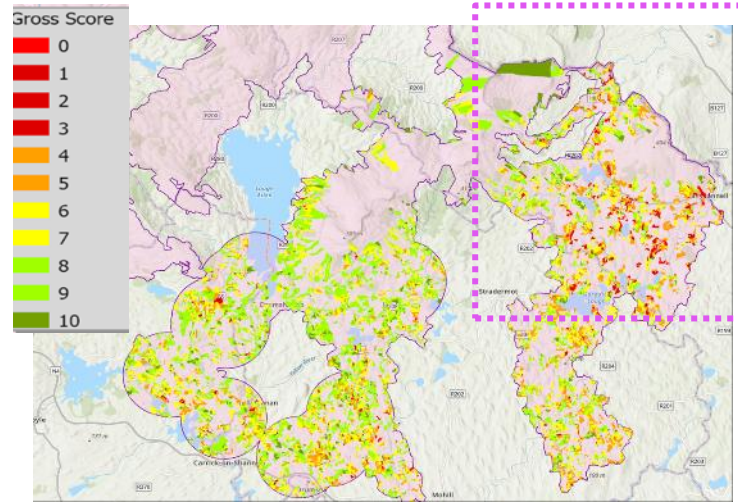
National Scorecard Overview

Incredible area under results-based scheme!

Type	Area (ha)
CP (private)	523,800
Commonage	428,000
ACRES General	136,000
Total	1,087,800



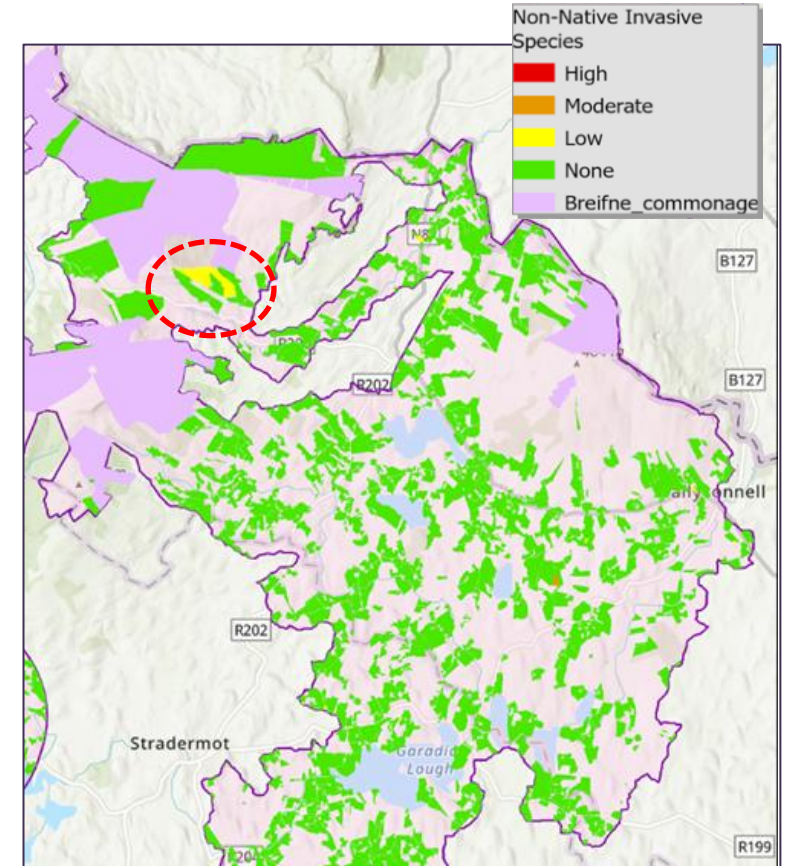
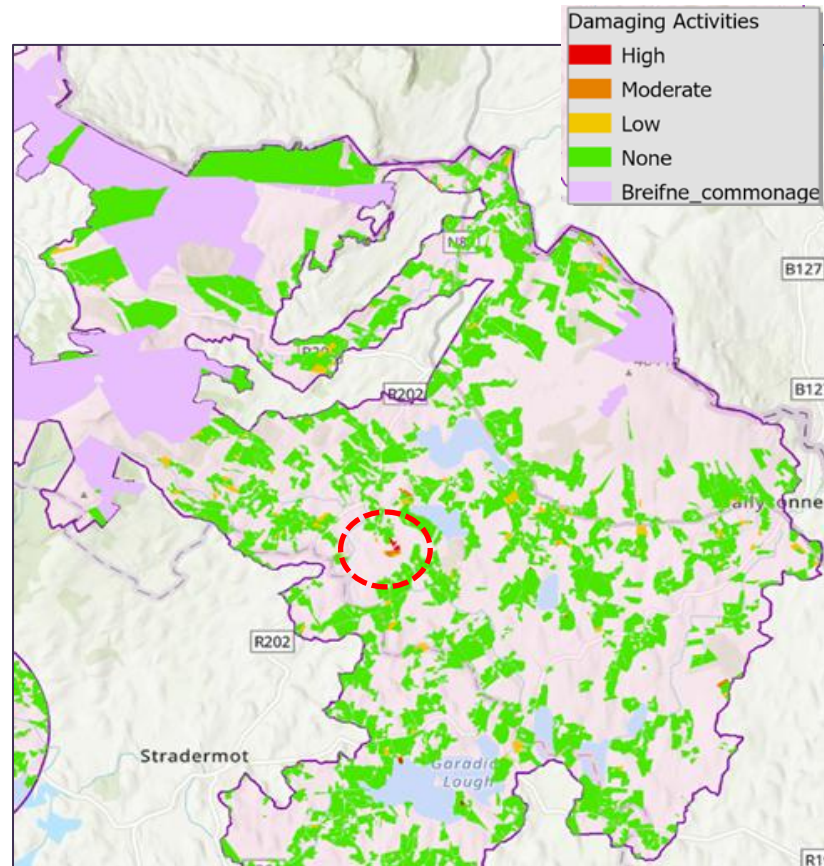
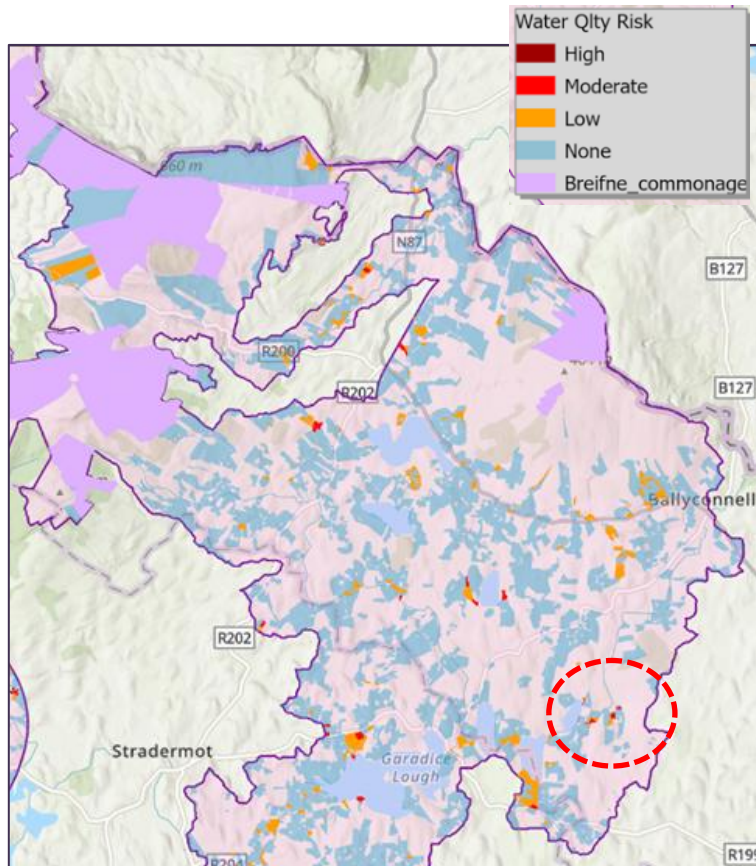
Scorecard data



Scorecard gross score can highlight landscape-scale issues

Further analysis of score variables is possible- e.g.

- Water Quality
- Damaging Activities
- Non-Native Invasive Species



ACRES CP Actions

Actions are key to increasing field scores and maximising Habitat Payments

There are two types of action that farmers can apply for:

- Non-Productive Investments (NPIs) applied for by farmer with their advisor
- Landscape Actions (LAs) applied for through the CP team

CP team can use scorecard data to identify issues in the landscape

They can then work to co-ordinate Landscape Actions among landowners



Landscape Action- how it works

1. Identify & highlight the issue to the farmer
2. CP team can apply for Landscape Actions that could reduce the impact of any damaging activities
 - a) Riparian margin tree planting
 - b) Water troughs, nose pumps, solar pumps
 - c) Invasive Species treatment/removal...
3. Support farmers in the delivery of these actions (e.g. training)
4. Verify that actions have been delivered correctly and submit for payment
5. Monitoring and review results of these actions



Landscape Action

These efforts are being replicated across the country, in all CP zones

ACRES CP provides the targeting data, expertise, funds and time to assist with clearing invasive species, improving habitat quality of threatened species, improving water quality etc.

A promising mechanism for effectively targeting limited resources at the places that need them most





Thanks for listening!

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