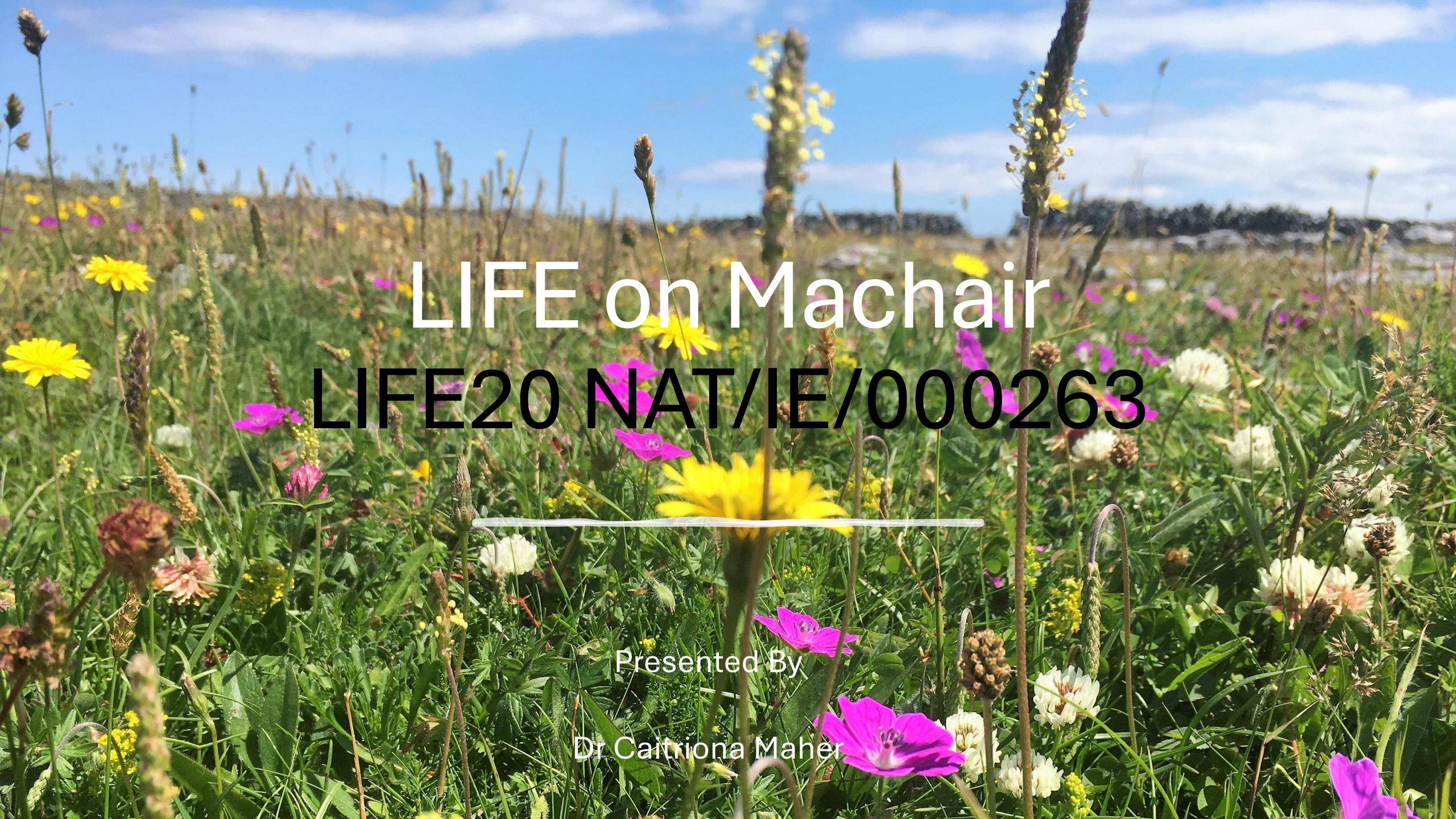

LIFE on Machair
LIFE20 NAT/IE/000263

Presented By

Dr Caitriona Maher

Using RBAPS for Coastal Protection

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Main Threats: Vehicle pressure (& coastal erosion)

Barriers: Diffuse road access, shared ownership (3 adjoining commonages), lack of empowerment, no clear message from government.

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II. Selecting Meaningful Indicators

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ACRES Coastal grassland SCORECARD

Farmer name: | Surveyor:
Field number: | Survey date:
Business ID:

Primary habitat type: (tick relevant box) Dry dunes ☐ Wet dunes ☐ Salt marsh ☐

Total Score: (A+B) /100

A Ecological integrity

Total score A: (sum of A1 to A6) /95

A1 What is the number of **positive indicators** in the field?
Tick all positive indicators present below.
Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.

Low: 0-4 **0** | Medium: 5-8 **5** | High: 9-12 **10** | Very high: 13+ **25**

Positive indicators: (tick those present)

- ☐ Bedstraws & stitchworts
- ☐ Birdsfoot trefoil
- ☐ Common stork's bill
- ☐ Creeping willow
- ☐ Crowberry
- ☐ Eyebrights
- ☐ Heathers/Ling
- ☐ Juniper
- ☐ Kidney vetch
- ☐ Lesser spearwort
- ☐ Lichen spp.
- ☐ Marsh pennywort
- ☐ Mosses
- ☐ Orache
- ☐ Orchids
- ☐ Parsley water-dropwort
- ☐ Restharrow
- ☐ Scabious *(Devil's-bit & field)*
- ☐ Scurvy grass
- ☐ Sea arrowgrass
- ☐ Sea beet
- ☐ Sea lavender
- ☐ Sea milkwort
- ☐ Sea or Buckhorn plantain
- ☐ Sedges
- ☐ Small-flowered sorrel
- ☐ Speedwell
- ☐ Spurry
- ☐ Stonecrops
- ☐ Thrift
- ☐ Tormentil *(Common & English)*
- ☐ Violets *(all)*, Harebell
- ☐ Water mint
- ☐ White/purple composites *(e.g., Sea aster, Sea mayweed, Daisies)*
- ☐ Wild carrot
- ☐ Wild thyme
- ☐ Yellow composites *(Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard) - not dandelion*
- ☐ Yellow rattle *(Hay rattle)*

Positive Indicator Plants

A2 What is the combined **cover of all positive indicators** *(listed above)* throughout the field?
(areas of bare soil are excluded from assessment)

Low: You can take up to 10 steps without encountering any positive indicators. You have to search for them.	0
Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every two to three steps taken.	10
High: You encounter a positive indicator with every step taken.	20
Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).	30

A3 What is the combined **cover of negative indicators/weeds** throughout the field?
Tick if present: ☐ **Docks** *(NOT small sorrels)* ☐ **Thistles** *(Creeping & spear)* ☐ **Perennial Rye-grass** ☐ **Ragwort** ☐ **Nettles**

High: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-20
Moderate: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field and not limited to previous feeding sites, trackways, field boundaries, water troughs and gateways. Readily visible in the sward.	-10
Low: Scattered or small clumps of weeds/negative indicators. Where present at gateways, water troughs, field boundaries and along well-used trackways, this cover should be less than 5% and the weeds should not extend into the main body of the field.	0
Very low: Absent, or scattered individuals or very small patches in the plot.	10

A4 What is the **vegetation structure** in dune and grazed saltmarsh habitats?

Poor: Most of the sward [illegible] of the area supporting longer vegetation.	-10
Moderate: Vegetation is dense and tall throughout with [illegible] a third of the sward consists of short sward (<10cm).	-5
Good: A balance of shorter (<10cm) and taller vegetation is present in the site, with neither dominating over more than two-thirds of the area.	15

Vegetation Structure

A5 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily grazed grassland

Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious? Yes ☐ No ☐

Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout? Yes ☐ No ☐

A6 What is the extent of **bare substrate?**

Poor:	**Over-grazed** with 25-100% bare substrate. **Under-grazed** with no bare sand /substrate 0% bare substrate.	-10
Moderate:	**Over-grazed** with 10-25% bare substrate. **Under-grazed** with <1% bare substrate.	-5
Good:	**Fixed dunes:** 1-10% bare sand. **Machair:** 1-5% bare sand. **Salt marsh:** Natural distribution of pans and creeks.	15

Bare Sand

B Threats & pressures

Total score B (sum of B1 to B5) /5

B1 Is there any **evidence of damaging activities** to habitat, vegetation, or soil?

High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20
Low: Damage occurring across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10
None: No damaging activities	0

Damaging activity

Damaging activities: *(tick relevant damage & describe in comments)*

- ☐ Damage from supplementary feeding
- ☐ Coastal stabilisation work
- ☐ Inappropriate herbicide use
- ☐ Artificial ponds
- ☐ Trampling
- ☐ Reclamation
- ☐ Dumping
- ☐ Silage storage
- ☐ Vehicle tracks
- ☐ Built structures
- ☐ Sand extraction
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*:

B2 What is the level of **risk to the quality of natural water bodies** within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants?
The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).

High:	-25	**Low:**	-5
Moderate:	-15	**None:**	0

B3 Artificial drainage features within plot.

Drained grassland: Frequent widespread free flowing drains or dug ponds within plot affecting >20% plot.	-20
Partly drained: Free flowing drains or dug ponds within plot affecting up to 20% plot.	-15
Past drainage: Drains present but flow is impeded.	-5
No drainage: No artificial drainage or dug ponds within plot.	5

B4 What is the cover of **non-native invasive species** *(excluding Spartina anglica)*?

High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-10
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0

Non-native invasive species: *(tick if present)*

- ☐ Red Valerian
- ☐ Beach Rose
- ☐ New-Zealand flax
- ☐ Sea-Buckthorn
- ☐ Japanese Knotweed
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*:

B5 What is the extent of **spreading immature scrub?**
(This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of <5cm Do not include established scrub).

High: >25% of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present. Scrub along field boundaries may be encroaching onto the field. Field is likely to show few signs of management, such as recent grazing, or signs of livestock.	-20
Moderate: 11-25% cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals. Some spread of scrub from field boundaries may be evident, particularly briars/bramble.	-10
Low: <10% of small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of encroaching scrub. Grass growth easily seen under the scrub.	0

ACRES payment score = 1/10 = €0

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III. Linking Payment Schemes to Indicators

POSITIVES

- Farmers understand the assessment criteria – logical, visible, understandable by all.
- ACRES payment score = 1/10 = €0
- Payment reflects condition.
- LIFE & ACRES (GOV) Supporting & Empowering farmers to take appropriate action.
- **Agreement for vehicle barrier in 2024.**

Challenges re Payments:

- National DAFM ACRES scheme
- How does LIFE sit on this with payments?
- Payments for finding solutions, & implementing bespoke actions

LIFE on Machair Restoration Programme 2024/2025 – Truska commonage, Slyne Head Penninsula SAC, Co. Galway.

Code	Level 1 Project meetings ……€280 each	Payment
L1a	**Summer site walk**, discussion of draft 2024/25 restoration plan. On-going engagement and support.	**€280**
L1b	**Habitats** – plants and floral resources. **Grazing** – timing and livestock.	**€280**
L1c	**Indoor meeting winter 2024**. Bigger LOM picture and project updates. On-going engagement and support. Restoration planning – review of actions, discussions, good practice.	**€280**
L1d	**Focus breeder wader ecology and requirements.** Review spring & summer data.	**€280**
Code	Level 2 Restoration Actions ……**€290 per action. 2024 priority actions for the site listed.** **Max. of Four actions can be selected.** **Priority Actions for the Site are shown in RED**	
9	Erosion Risk and Management	
9A	**Understanding erosion at your site** – *Natural dynamics, why increasing, management options*	**€290**
9B	**Chestnut fence installation** – *Installation and management of wind breaking &/or sand trapping fences.*	*25/hr?*
6	Breeding waders – reducing predator risk in core breeding areas.	
6A	**Temporary wader fence planning** – *Discussion and agreement on location, timing, management of fence installation and dismantle, any adjustments during wader season and maintenance. On site meetings and on-going discussions where issues arise (e.g. one hour on site chats, phone calls to check in, at agreed times).*	**€290**
6B	**Wader fence install and/or dismantle/maintenance** – *On site working to put up the fence and/or take it down (available for c. 8 hours during installation or dismantling). Checking voltage when on site, keeping touch with project re breaches or other issues.*	*25/hr?*
6C	**Breeding waders and predator control** – workshop on breeding waders and predation, best practice, legislation and licensing in predator control, including site walks, demonstration and discussion with LOM Nest Protection Officers.	*25/hr?*
5B	**Enhancing habitats** for waders – Reed control.	*25/hr?*
8	Visitor Management	
8A	**Visitor management planning** – *Discussion on options – zoning, signage, barriers, information and awareness, visit to another site, wardens, litter removal, closing off access points. Site walk and up to three meetings.*	**€290**
	POTENTIAL TOTAL	**€2,280**

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Key Messages to Share

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Top tip(s) for delivering RBaPS

- Robust habitat indicators – simplicity facilitates use across departments and upscaling
- Unified efforts –> LIFE on Machair + DAFMs RBAPS
- Stakeholder engagement – bringing the public along
  - https://www.advertiser.ie/galway/article/142830/habitat-protection-and-restoration-at-slyne-head