

Respondent



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Anonymous



50:17
Time to complete



1. Name *

Sarah Jay

2. Organisation (Optional)

The Abhainn Dá Loilíoch Woodland Group

3. Email address

[Redacted]

4. Phone number

[Redacted]

5. Please select the following topics that you wish to make a submission *

Environment, Renewable Energies and Commu...

6. Do you wish to send your submission by email *

If yes please email forwardplanning@galwaycoco.ie (mailto:forwardplanning@galwaycoco.ie) and mark submission "CDP Review"

If no please go to Question No.7

Yes

No

7. Please enter your submission in no more than 4000 plain text characters. *

The Abhainn Dá Loilíoch (Owendaluleeagh River) Woodland Group was established in the summer of 2020 and is based south-east of Gort, south Galway. The Abhainn Dá Loilíoch (the river of two milch cows), flows from the Slieve Aughty Mountain range to the east of Gort into Lough Cutra. Much of the Slieve Aughty Mountains were once covered in native, predominantly oak, woodlands. Our mission is to collaborate with the local community, statutory bodies, and ecologists to restore and increase native woodlands in the Abhainn Dá Loilíoch Valley. The three woodlands were once part of the great forest of Aughty and are among only a tiny fraction that still remains. The woods are: Gortacarnaun Wood (R5097, c95ha) on the south bank of the river, Drummin Wood (R5199, c60ha) 1km north of the river and Lahardaun Wood (R5398, c20ha) on the north bank of the river and 2km east of the other woods. At 95ha Gortacarnaun is one of the largest ancient oak-woods in Ireland. Lahardaun Woods once covered a substantially larger area than it does today and only a fraction of the former oak-woods remains. Most of Lahardaun wood is now covered with Sitka spruce plantation. Gortacarnaun and Drummin woods are now special areas of conservation (SAC site codes 2081 and 2080, respectively) and both have multiple ownership. Most of Lahardaun wood is Coillte property. Our hope is to take up the management of the woodlands in the Abhainn Dá Loilíoch Valley and our vision includes: 1. Conservation and Improvement A top priority of the woodland group involves winning the buy in of land owners and Coillte to conserve and improve of the ancient woodlands Gortacarnaun, Drummin and ancient areas in Lahardaun. This includes some fencing and the use of biodegradable tubes to protect saplings to manage the high numbers of fallow deer in the area. The deer are overgrazing and stunting natural woodland regeneration in all of the woods. We are currently exploring the grants that are available for conservation activities which also involves clearing and managing the current infestation of Rhododendron and other invasive species. 2. Restoration and Expansion We aim to explore the possibility of expanding the area of woodland cover in the valley, in the green fields or other areas of commercial forestry in the target area. Our vision is to restore the previous ancient woodlands of Lahardaun to its native status, and to expand the area that it covers. We hope to replace most of the Sitka spruce plantations that currently cover large parts of Lahardaun woods, as they mature and after felling, with broadleaf and native trees. The broadleaf planted areas will require deer proof fencing and or biodegradable tubing of saplings. The purpose of the expansion is for both biodiversity and timber production in a continuous cover method. 3. Accessibility and Protection The vision is to create an accessible amenity to benefit communities as a place of recreation and to connect with nature and wildlife, for this and future generations. The aim is to create of a signposted loop walk/hike along the Abhainn Dá Loilíoch through Lahardaun woods to Gortacarnaun and Drummin woods and back along the forestry track to Lahardaun woods. We plan to organise events, talks and activities to empower people, win local buy in, for fun and educational purposes. We can empower people to be part of the solution to the climate emergency by encouraging tree planting. Native tree planting has a positive impact on the removal of carbon from the atmosphere - and native woodland provides vital new places to help people and wildlife deal with Climate change. In addition, all three woods and the river valley are rich in flora and fauna and offer a plethora of opportunities for scientific study,

survey work and recording, such as fungi and the girth and distribution of various trees, in the woodlands and in fields.