



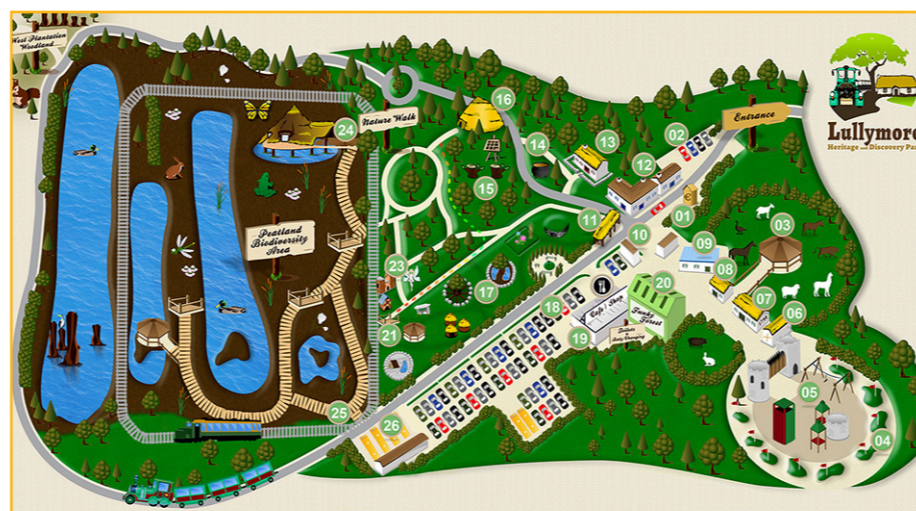
Extension to Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk – Final Phase of Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park

 Lullymore, County Kildare

This project will enhance the existing Lullymore Heritage Park through a 300-metre extension to the biodiversity boardwalk. This will enable access to the West Plantation Woodland.

Information signage will educate visitors on the Bog of Allen and its capacity to store carbon. The park is a day visitor attraction and a key resource within the region, attracting over 50,000 visitors each year.

The €83,200 grant, secured from the Just Transition Fund, will enable the park to increase its offering, which will contribute towards the continued increase in visitor numbers by 10% every year, which will support additional seasonal and full-time employment. This will support surrounding communities, who can capitalise on the benefits of tourism growth and the rewilding of the bogs.



The extension of the boardwalk is planned to open to visitors in April 2023.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?

The Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park Board formed in 1990s and are using the same mission statement which is to create a viable tourist attraction and to enable the community to become more socially and financially sustainable.

The extension of the boardwalk aligns directly to this mission statement and the board collectively agree on which projects to invest in.

How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?

The extension directly aligns with the organisation's principles as it educates people by getting local residents and tourists out into the peatlands. The long-term goal was extending the boardwalk and using a sustainable material.

This idea was developed by the board and shared in close collaboration with the community in public meetings.

Describe the process by which you achieved consensus around objectives and projects. Has that consensus held or does it remain challenged by some in the community? If so, how are you dealing with that?

The board members are all committed, understand the organisation's ethos and are there to support the paid members of staff delivering projects. The board have been key in deciding how to communicate appropriately with the community.

Some members of the community have felt threatened about rewilding and the opening of the boardwalks to increase tourism. Therefore communication has been key and the use of language. The park shared the message of having industrialised peatlands which should be rewilded and organised public meetings with the community and the local Tidy Towns group to share this message.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Funded through the Just Transition Fund and the Carbon Tax Fund

How did you approach planning and project management around your selected idea?

The park has hired experienced paid employees to develop projects, using funding generated by tourism revenues. There is a core team of three members of staff with strong project management skills who deeply understand surveying, construction and managing finances.

The first extension required external advice and expertise. However the project management team at the park has developed capacity and ability to manage the extensions internally.

How has that stood the test of time through the project? Have you had to revise your plans. How have you managed that process?

The approach to constructing and extending the boardwalk is now established and the park has built relationships with key construction contractors since 2012. This relationship is primarily with Ecoplastic, a firm specialising in manufacturing sustainable material for constructing the boardwalk.

When the design of the boardwalk has to change, the park has worked in collaboration with industry experts such as Ecoplastic to plan redesigns.

How did you identify a funding need?

The park are closely linked to contacts managing LEADER funding, the local Public Participation Network and Kildare County Council. The notification of accessing Just Transition Funding for the final extension came through these key organisations.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

The project management team at the park managed the application to the Just Transition Fund and other funding sources over time for the previous extensions, such as LEADER.

Did you have a need for specialist expertise for your project? If so how did you handle that and approach experts?

For the first extension the park procured experts and built a strong link to suppliers. This was procured through e-tenders using LEADER funding.

The park also directly procured a firm to install signage for the boardwalk and worked with research experts at Maynooth University to understand heights of the bogs and timings.

What have been the hardest difficulties to overcome and how did you overcome them?

The hardest difficulties were due to COVID-19 and Brexit which increased prices and slowed deliveries of materials. Therefore the park cut the cost of signage to increase spending on the boardwalk materials.

The park worked closely with suppliers and had to complete a change of notice form for the Just Transition Fund as it required a budget movement. This process was undertaken by the core project management team at the park.

Has the community managed to stay true to the original project vision? If not, why not? If it has, how has this been achieved?

The park is still designing projects to meet its historical and original vision, and the extension has remained true to its original vision.

The community is on board as the park has continually updated them via public meetings, sharing the key message of protecting and educating people on peatlands and increasing visitors to improve the local community.

What have been the biggest learnings from the delivery of your project?

A strong amount of trust and belief in a cause is critical for developing projects, alongside having strong leadership through a board. All members of the board have common guiding principles and a clear vision for the project.

What decisions, or elements of organisation have been the most important in the delivery of your project?

The extension began in 2012 with a united board with an overarching aim and ambition to eventually achieve a full extension. The decision to pursue the final extension was key and it involved waiting for the correct funding opportunity and the Just Transition Fund provided this opportunity.

What were the most important sources of advice and guidance for your community as you moved through the different phases of the project?

The final extension boardwalk project was largely managed by internal expertise with the support of experts on the board.

Key contact

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Links

Website for Original Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk:
<https://www.lullymoreheritagepark.com/peatlands/peatland-biodiversity-trail/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lullymore/>