

# Bioregioning South East Ireland

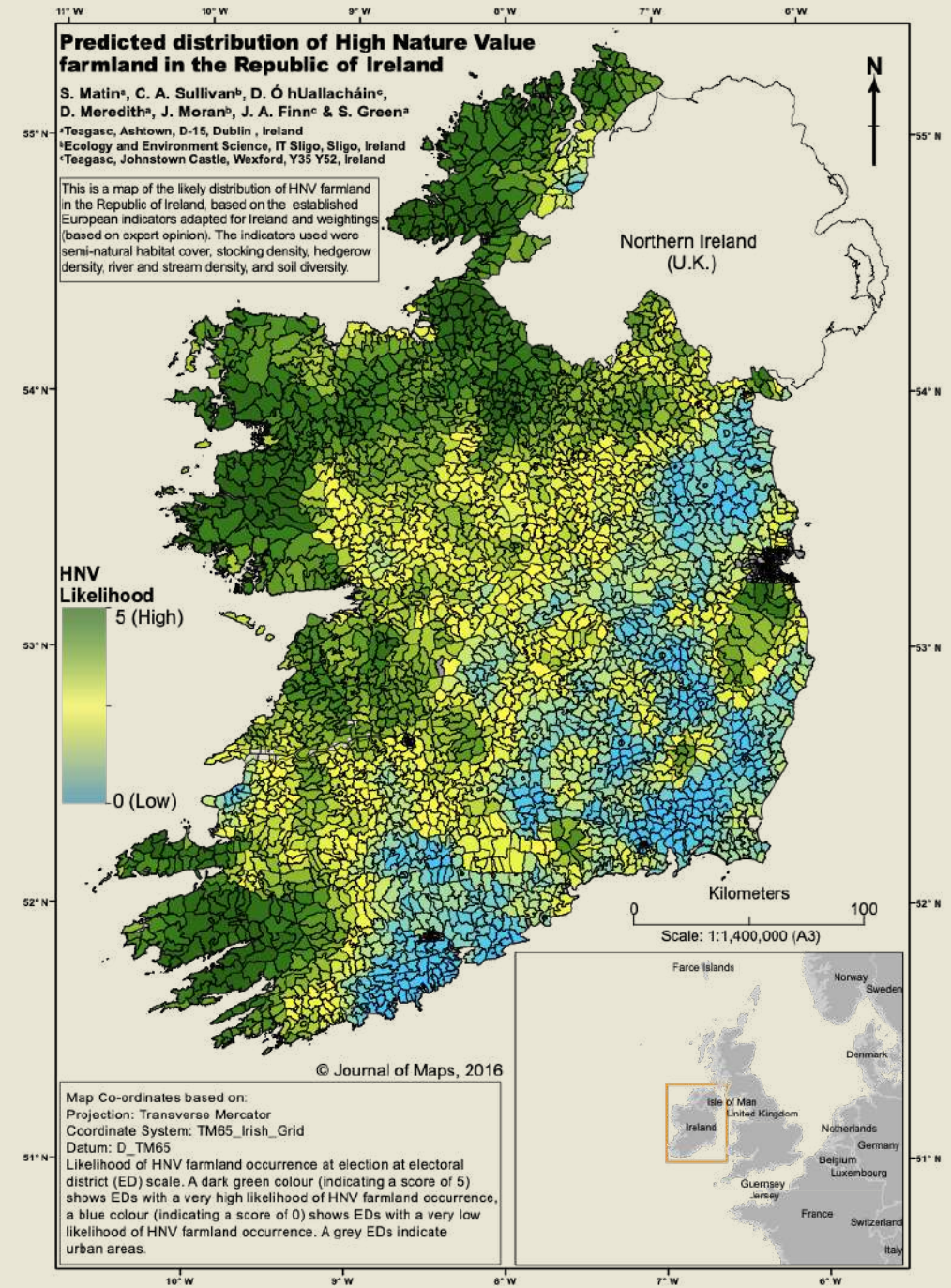
Collective action & systemic change for healthy ecosystems  
& thriving communities in South East Ireland

“We have an Environmental Scorecard for Ireland – our grades on five key environmental themes: Climate, Air Quality, Nature, Water and Waste. **Across all five headings our scores range from Moderate to Poor and Very Poor.**”

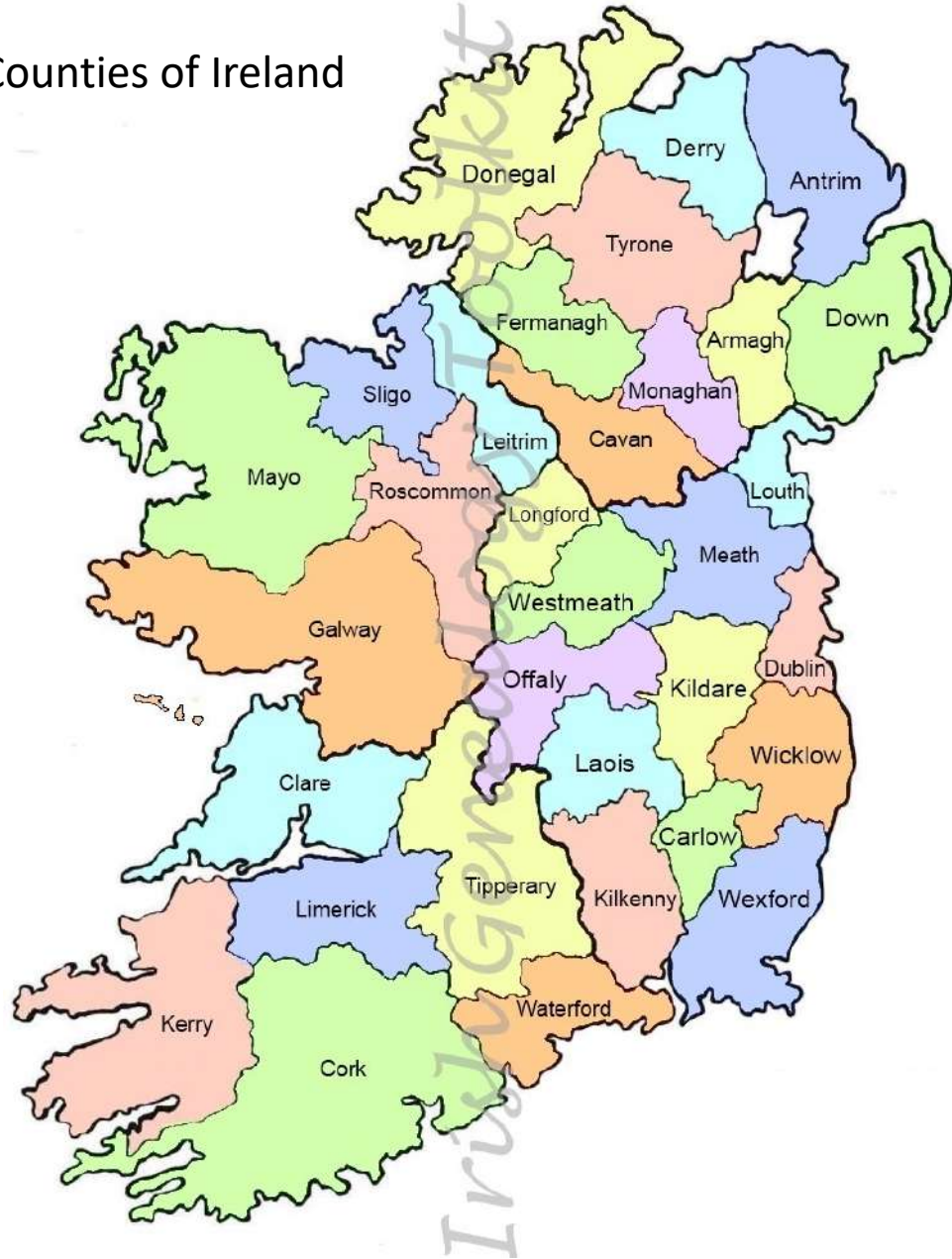
Ireland’s environment is not where it should be and the outlook is not optimistic unless we accelerate solutions across **all sectors of society**. The environmental challenges that Ireland faces are giving rise to **complex and systemic issues**. They **cut across** different environmental topics such as climate, air, soil, water biodiversity and waste, and across organisations and sectors, business and all levels of society.

We seem unable to stem the tide of nature’s destruction and may not fully understand its full impact until it is too late. While there are many national plans and programmes in place that address individual environmental challenges, they suffer from a **coherence challenge** as they are devised in the absence of a single overarching framework”.

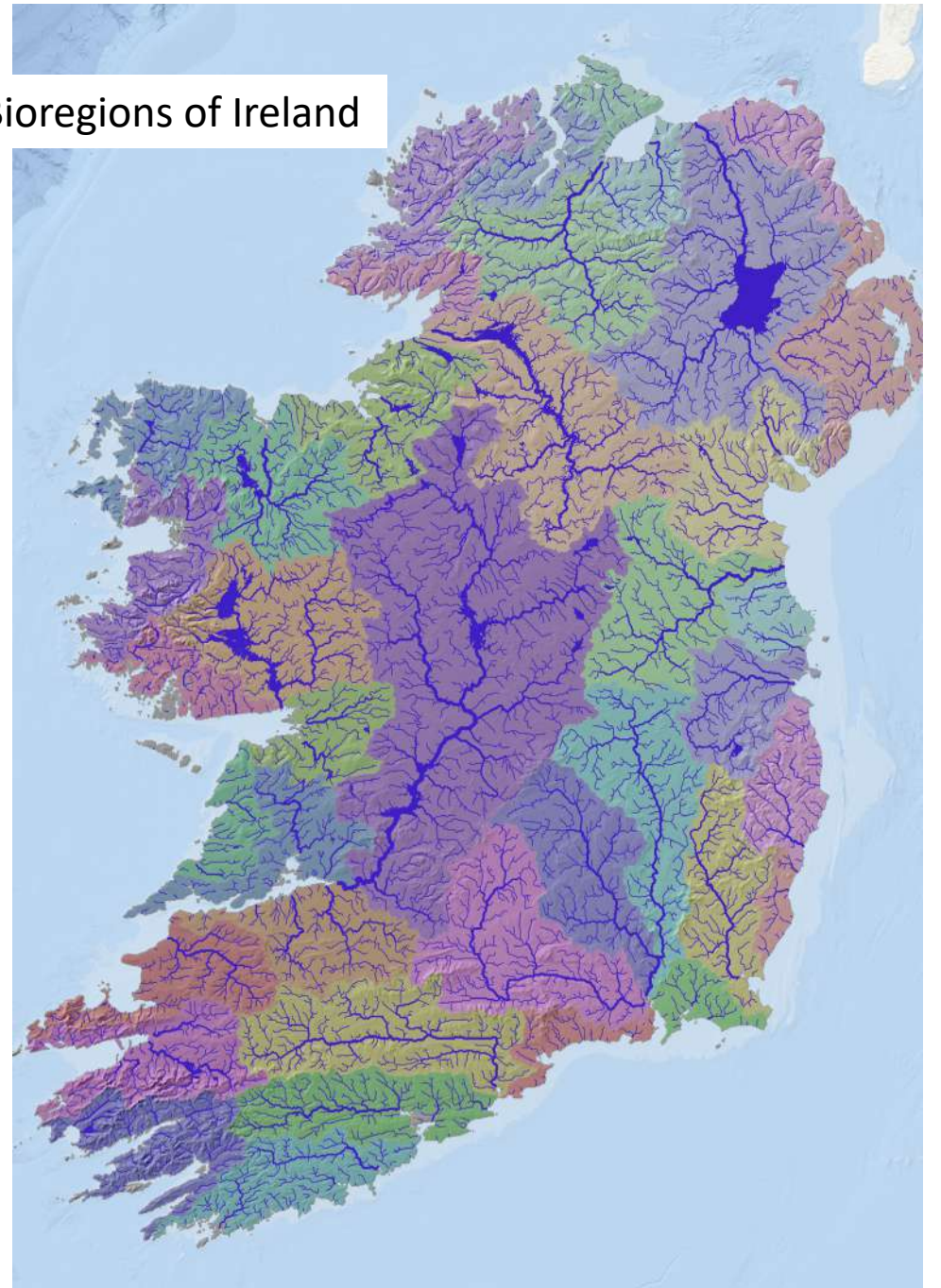
Laura Burke, Director General EPA, 2024 and 2020  
State of Ireland’s Environment



The 32 Counties of Ireland



The ?? Bioregions of Ireland



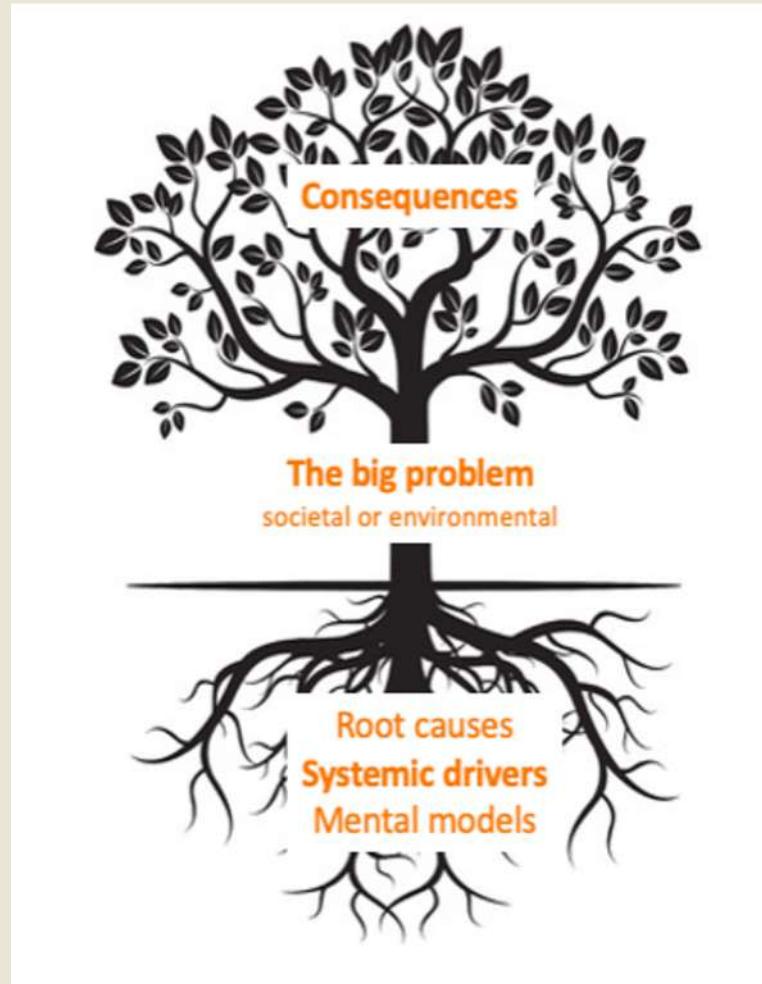


# Ashoka

## Social Innovation



## Systems Change



## Changemaking



# Process

## 5 Elements

Our landscape restoration process consists of 5 elements.

- 1 Establishing a **landscape partnership**
- 2 Reach a **shared understanding**
- 3 Building a **landscape plan**
- 4 Ensure **effective implementation**
- 5 Develop **monitoring and learning**

# Impact

## 4 Returns

Our landscape restoration framework delivers 4 types of returns to the landscape and its stakeholders.

-  **Return of Inspiration**  
Opening people's eyes to the possibility of a better future
-  **Social Returns**  
Creating jobs, businesses, networks, and social prosperity
-  **Natural Returns**  
Restoring the health, resilience and prosperity of landscapes
-  **Financial Returns**  
Realising long-term, sustainable, and local income

# Landscapes

## 3 Zones

For successful landscape restoration we distinguish, restore and connect 3 types of zones.

### Natural Zone

Regenerating a landscape's ecological foundation by restoring and protection of biodiversity within natural ecosystems such as wetlands, grasslands and forests

### Combined Zone

Combining food, fibre and biodiversity productivity through regenerative agriculture, agroforestry and soil restoration.

### Economic Zone

Delivering sustainable economic productivity with dedicated areas for activities that create value, typically concentrated in urban areas, infrastructure and processing.

# Time

## 20+ years

Successful systematic landscape restoration takes one generation, or 20 years.



A minimum of 20 years, or one generation, is needed to successfully implement large-scale integrated landscape management.



# Bioregional Weaving Labs Collective

*Restore, protect or regenerate*  
**1 million Ha**

*Use*  
**4 Returns**

*Mobilise*  
**1 million changemakers**



Altiplano Estepario, Spain



Normandy, France



South East, Ireland



The Netherlands



Brandenburg, Germany



Åre, Sweden



Thermenlinie-Wiener Becken, Austria



Oltenia de sub Munte, Romania



## Bioregion (landscape)

“A bioregion invites us to inhabit a place in a way that is full of relationship. Seeing where the natural boundaries of our bioregion are, we can then see the many ecosystems and human systems alive within it. All of these systems, such as fresh water and biodiversity, or transport and health, are connected.

There is also a connecting story that starts in deep geological time, shows up in the landscape and soil, and then in human culture.

Bioregioning is the collective practice of bringing vitality to these connections, angling the systems towards regeneration, and taking actions for a climate resilient and biodiverse future”\*.

- We see bioregions as complex wholes and seek to weave **regenerative relationships between people, and the land.**
- We **honour the local context** and strive to include all relevant stakeholders to bring forth a transformative vision that is locally owned and actionable.



# Weaving

Connecting people, projects and place together for universal well-being.

Synergetic connections can bring about collective impact and systems change in ways single solution innovations cannot.

- We strive to move **from ego- to ecosystem awareness.**
- We believe in place-based knowledge and learning: **most of the answers are already there** but may need to be woven together.
- We **practise deep listening** to self, others and earth, we embrace our synergies and hold our differences as creative polarities.
- We focus on **nurturing trust-based relationships** of mutual empowerment, care and belonging to create community and build energy. Alone we can go fast, together we can go far.
- We believe **everyone can be a changemaker** and has a role to play.



# Lab

Spaces of belonging and collective strength

Social innovations

System innovations

Nature-based solutions

4R concepts - co-innovation

- We create **brave and supportive spaces** within which we trust each other's positive intent, *and* that encourage constructive dissent, *and* allow for healing. We consider our *own* work of healing, growing and taking agency vital.
- We take a **non-dogmatic approach** and focus on what works: we are willing to look at our blindspots and to change.
- We **learn globally, connect regionally and act locally.**





# Bioregioning

## South East Ireland

- 2019 Social innovator gathering -> 8 BWLs
- 2022 Start of project BWL Waterford at GIY
- 2023 Emerging **4R concepts** and partnerships
- 2024 Independent governance **BWAI** with **South East** focus
- 2025/2026 Solid **platform of support** and **portfolio Bioregioning** in Ireland
- 2043 Thriving landscapes and communities



ASHOKA  
Everyone A Changemaker™



COMMONLAND



**Sarah Prosser**  
Weaver and CEO



**Keeley M O'Brien**  
Regenerative Business Developer



**Peter Ploeg**  
Board Member & Commonland



**Una Fitzpatrick**  
Board Member



**Thomas Ball**  
Strategic Advisor



**Ray McGrath**  
BWL Ambassador

Trust and togetherness



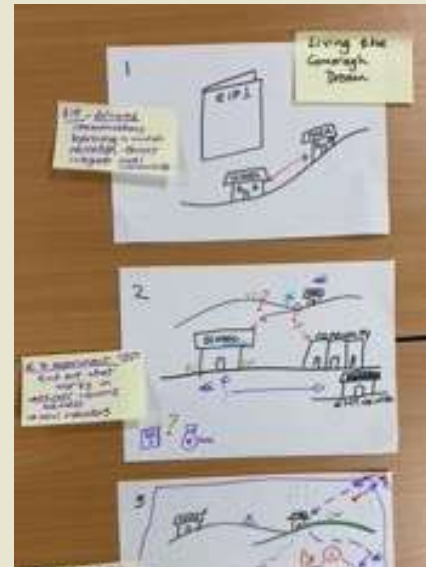
4Rs, systemic innovation tools



Portfolio of concepts  
Platform of support



System modelling



Action pathways 1

Stakeholder projects and participation

From the outputs of the future thinking workshop the following patterns for action could be seen:

1. Reframe producer-consumer relationships – neighbourhoods and townships, work to establish food partnerships and biodistricts
2. Develop strategy to create a new body to promote organic, regenerative and non-chemical farming in Ireland
3. Look for opportunity to partner with, or start new, media channels that communicate quality assured stories about org/vegan/ho-chem farming, food, and changemaking for future we aspire to.
4. Campaign to stop spreading protected areas
5. Building a proper support structure for community participation – e.g. water-related
6. SETU as a beacon of sustainable and regenerative mindsets, research, teaching and practice. Demonstrations of what works for soil, water, food and education.
7. Short and long skills training (NOTS ++ ) for Regan Farming, foodbiodiversity and more
8. Farming with Nature – can this game to be played in the bio-region?
9. Community processing hubs and mobile units – what would these look like and how to get them going in the bio-region?
10. The power of procurement and new business forms
11. Schools – schools in community, heritage and place. Schools as places to give children opportunities to experience being changemakers



Three horizons



Three steps to vision

Portfolio of concepts

1. A mission driven geopark
2. Rural hubs and 4R valleys
3. Older people as changemakers
4. New farms, new farming, new farmers
5. Good food for all – consumer/producer contact
6. Weaving as a platform for change
7. Community-led land use management
8. Local communities for collective eco-impact
9. Rivers and seas: for and by communities

Creating enabling conditions



# A common vision – our manifesto



## Waterford Bioregion's Food Manifesto (to be read out loud)

Food is not a luxury.  
Food is a basic social need to which everyone has a right. It is a right not only to enjoy food,  
but to be able to create it.  
Food is a way of building habits, connections and communities. Through food we become  
part of ourselves and of each other.  
Food is a common good. It is grounded in our common need, and our common vulnerability.  
Food is revolutionary. How we grow food, how we consume it, how we think about it, can lead  
to radical change.  
Food is not only about the present; rethinking our relationship with food is a call for a  
different future, a better one.

We, the local producers and consumers of food in the Waterford Bioregion, assert:  
We have the right to disagree, to disrupt the status quo.  
We have the right to respect, even while we dissent.  
Our dissent is moral, philosophical, cultural, affective, economic and political. Sometimes  
all at once.  
Our dissent is about building a better world.

We stand for:  
The breaking down of barriers between producers and consumers. We are, all of us, both thinkers  
and doers.  
A reconnection of the relationships between producers and consumers, because we are the  
ultimate decision makers.  
Food that is sustainable for our health.  
The protection of the land.  
The richness of the soil.  
The flourishing of the imagination.  
New ideas, new stories, new investments.  
New ways of relating to the land we grow and eat.

We want future food to come from a place where community is core. Our  
aims are both visionary and practical. We want to create new habits, and  
new ways of working. We want viable ways of living. We want to protect  
our rivers, restore nature, cherish life. We want a world where  
everything is connected, from rocks to the human heart.

We want our children and grandchildren to know the taste of wild salmon  
and the roots that nurture us on land. We want to be good guardians of  
the soil, and of our traditions. We want to become good stewards.

We want future food to be:  
Green and eaten with passion, without which we will fail.  
Inspirational.  
Easy to get and affordable for all.  
Connected to people and communities.  
Fertile.  
Surprising.  
Secure, in a system where farmers and consumers share an interest in:  
- the security  
- Price  
- Fair  
- Seasonal  
- Delicious  
- Nutritious

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# Taking the time it needs...

4: Visit. *April 2024*

## 1: Event. *Dec 2022*

**Theme:** Connecting food to consumers through co-owned farms in the Netherlands

### Geert van der Veer Herenboeren

**Background:**

Geert van der Veer is a pioneer in the regenerative food and agriculture space in the Netherlands. He is co-founder of community owned farm Herenboeren, a model now replicating across the country, and the principles are replicating across the world. He was once a more conventional farmer and started his own regenerative journey in 2012.

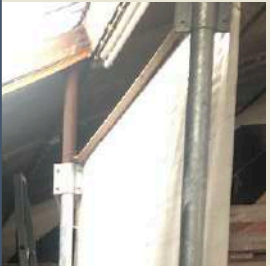
**Summary of talk**

- How to address modern farm challenges such as soil, climate, biodiversity? but also importantly: **Can we earn decent income** if we are also to contribute to solving other things? And is there a concept where **society really connects to food**?
- Model: 200 families lease a farm, becoming **co-owners**, and they **employ a farmer** who fully operates it. The farmer produces the food the community wants to eat. They know where their food comes from and how it is produced. They help out sometimes on the farm (average 40). By doing so they are also contributing to a **new food system** in the Netherlands.
- The families **pay 2000 Euros** per person, multiplied by 200 is 400K Euros to lease the land. **20 hectare** farm. Mixed use: vegetables, cows, eggs, fodder – through a mix of **permaculture and regenerative farming methods**.
- **Farmer is paid a salary**. So the **entrepreneurs is no longer the farmer, but the co-owners**. Once a year the cooperative takes the big decisions, day to day decisions are made by the farmer.
- **Herenboeren supports the communities**, they do not buy or organise the farm. Key task now, instead of pushing products in the market, is to find people who want to start farms. In 2022 – **22 farms up and running**. 35 in the pipeline. 12,000 households, **25,000 people eating from the farm concept**.
- Big enough numbers now to be seen by Ministry of Ag. Need them because we were **creating small scale farm concept** and these were not seen in Netherlands **any more** – **all legislation created to service big farms for global market**. Also since were a mixed farm, no laws. So was **almost impossible to be a legal farm concept in beginning** – eg. pigs were not allowed outside. So they had to get **legislation** for small scale farmers working sustainable ways.
- Promise we made to society was: **let us build our farms and we think we can build a better world**. Being connected with your food is a Trojan horse – it opens more conversations about everything. So we have to connect everyone **with their food production**. Not necessarily as close as through the farms, but somehow. Society will be more beautiful.
- **Troisdes Bank** now funding to see if we can reach our goal of 350 farms in the Netherlands.
- It is very difficult – many failures along the way!



Link to Geert's talk  
<https://youtu.be/Boffj4d814>  
(hop over the minute around 2:45 with tech)

Interested in more?  
Herenboeren model in English:  
<https://farmcommunities.org/>  
Podcast and interview about Investing in Regenerative Agriculture and Food  
<https://investinginregenerativeagriculture.com/2019/09/29/geert-van-der-veer-2/>



## 2: Dialogue. *2023-24*

## 3: Workshop-what would you do with land?

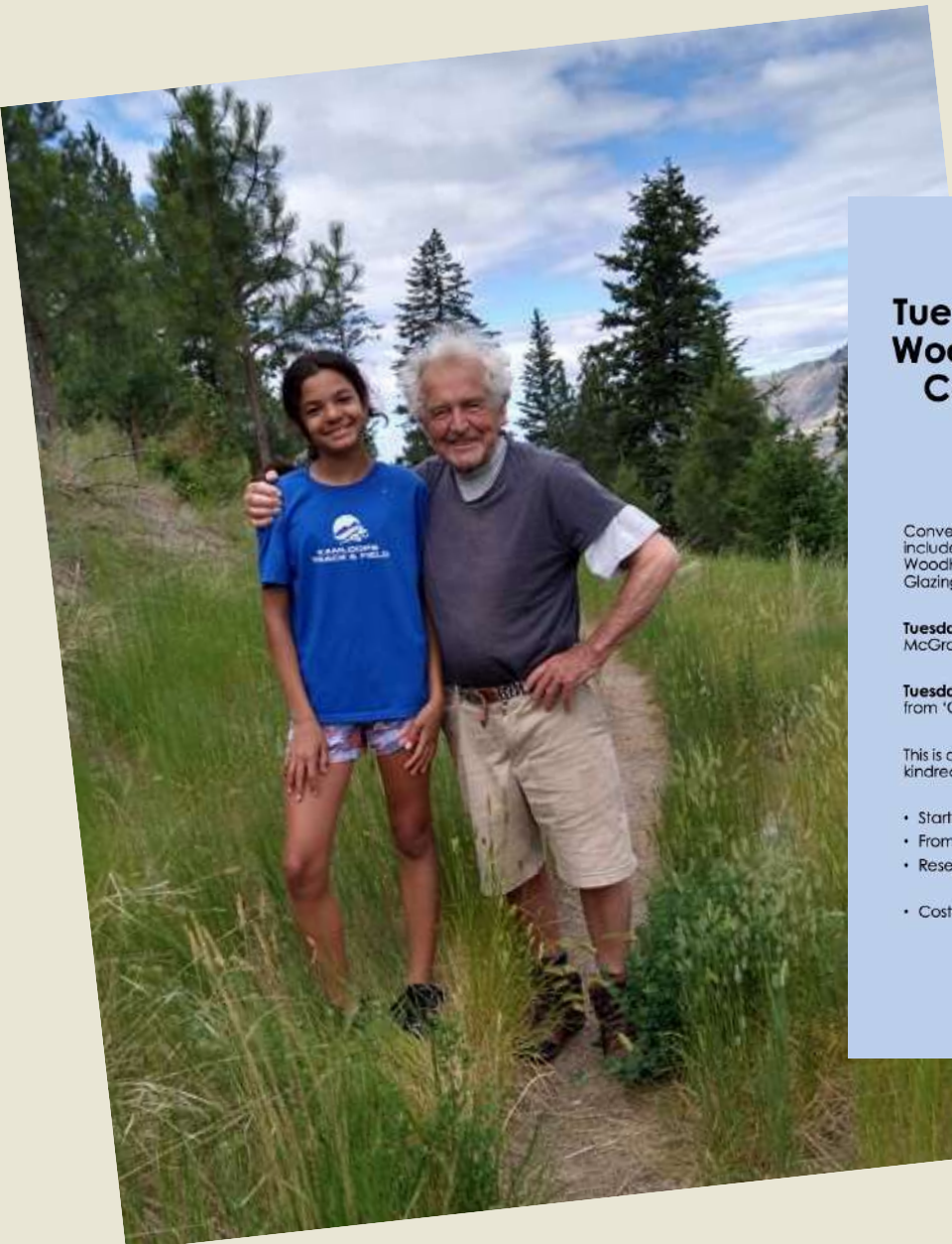
*Jan 2024*



... and doing it



Our  
Farm at  
Bushy  
Park



## Tuesdays at Woodhouse Cottage



Conversation, storytelling, music and woodland strolls are included in these Tuesday afternoon soirées at the 200-year-old Woodhouse Cottage, where the Barrow and Suir meet at the Glazing woods in Cheekpoint.

**Tuesdays at Woodhouse Cottage** is hosted by storyteller Ray McGrath, accompanied by musical and storytelling friends.

**Tuesdays at Woodhouse Cottage** draws its inspiration and format from 'Concert by the Fire' a weekly event held during Covid.

This is an innovative opportunity to develop friendships between kindred people, sharing stories, favorite poetry and music

- Starting December 12<sup>th</sup> 2023
- From 3pm-5pm
- Reservation necessary: tel. 0838353673  
or email [woodhouseduo@gmail.com](mailto:woodhouseduo@gmail.com)
- Cost: 5 Euros

Looking forward to seeing you,  
Ray

# SEASONS of CHANGE



Unleashing the wisdom of older (and younger) people



## Monday 29<sup>th</sup> Sept & Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2025

A two-day festival of food for everyone in their 'third age' that could be interested in learning more about the stories behind our daily food: focusing on the way food is grown and produced and the ways it can bring health to us as individuals and to the future of our food systems.



**Why it Matters how Food is Grown?** *Monday 29<sup>th</sup>, 10am-1pm*  
Spend a morning with growers of local food. Take the time to understand key words/concepts around the food we buy - and why they matter for your health and the health of our farming futures. Ballybeg Greens (Waterford), Hew the Grower, Ballinkina (by Jaybees) and Glen Farm (Dunmore East).

**A Currency for Health?** *Tues-Thurs, redeeming vouchers*  
Avail of vouchers that can be exchanged for locally produced food and see how they might contribute to more nutritious eating - and to unleashing new narratives for wider change? Voucher exchange points: Ballybeg Greens, Glen Farm, Hew The Grower, Waterford Country Market Fridays', TBC, plus others - see voucher information sheet.

**Bread and Beyond...** *Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> from 3pm*  
A cultural social event celebrating better bread, your stories of change and a food system for the future. Seagull Bakery factory (Tramore).

**FREE limited places - Registration required**

More details and registration:

Phone Ray McGrath 083 83 53 673 or Email Sarah Prosser: [sarah@bioregion.ie](mailto:sarah@bioregion.ie)



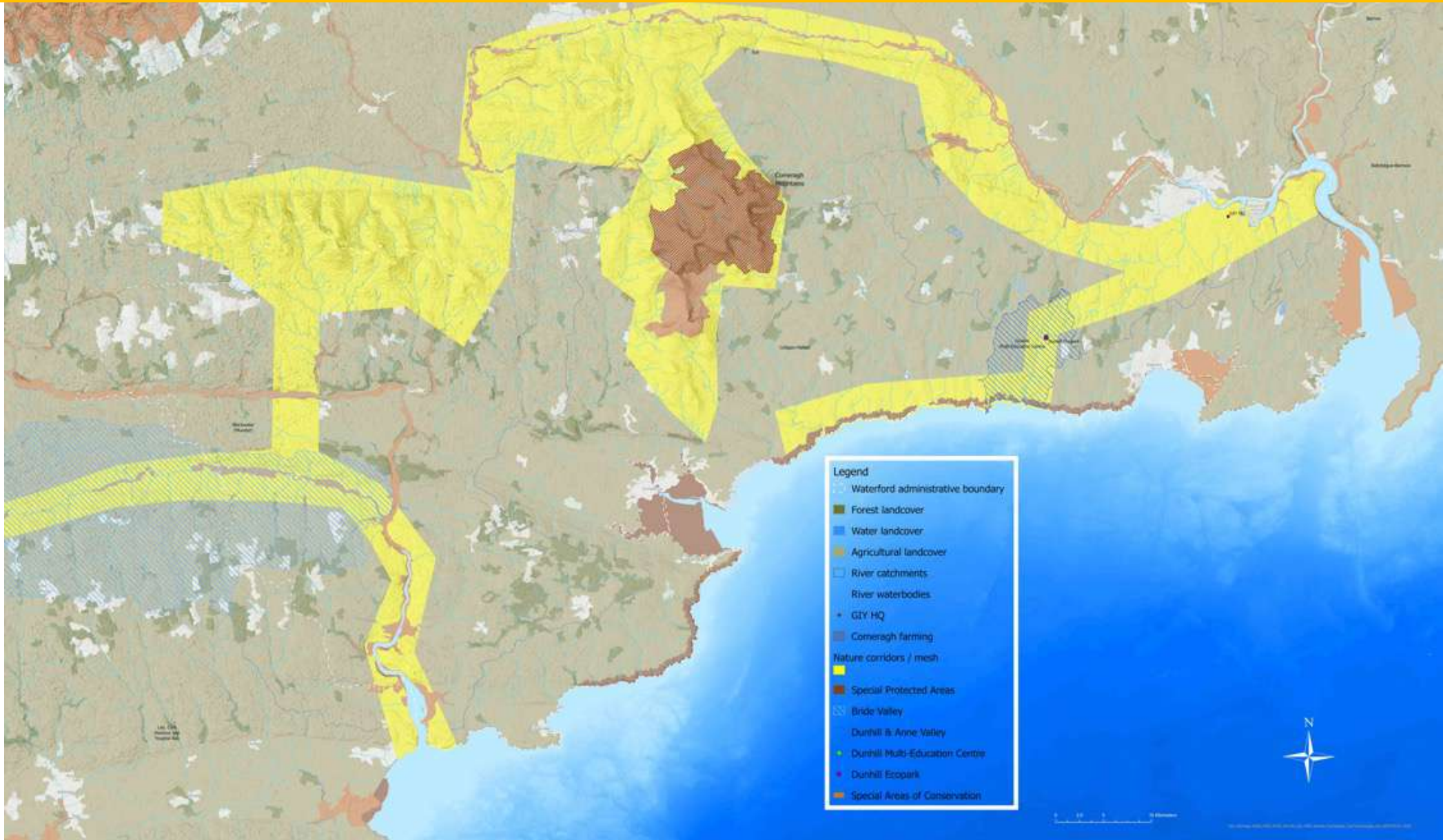
# Resilient Local Food Ecosystems

infrastructure: physical and human (governance)

- Meat
- Grain
- Dairy
- Horticulture



**AMBITION:** Create new nature networks across the bioregion – to weave the initiatives together, restore hectares of landscape, and create a community of changemakers



# Comeragh Upland Communities Concepts - CU2C



Land Use & Ecosystem Services



Bracken & Upland Restoration



Wool



Succession



Rural Community Engagement

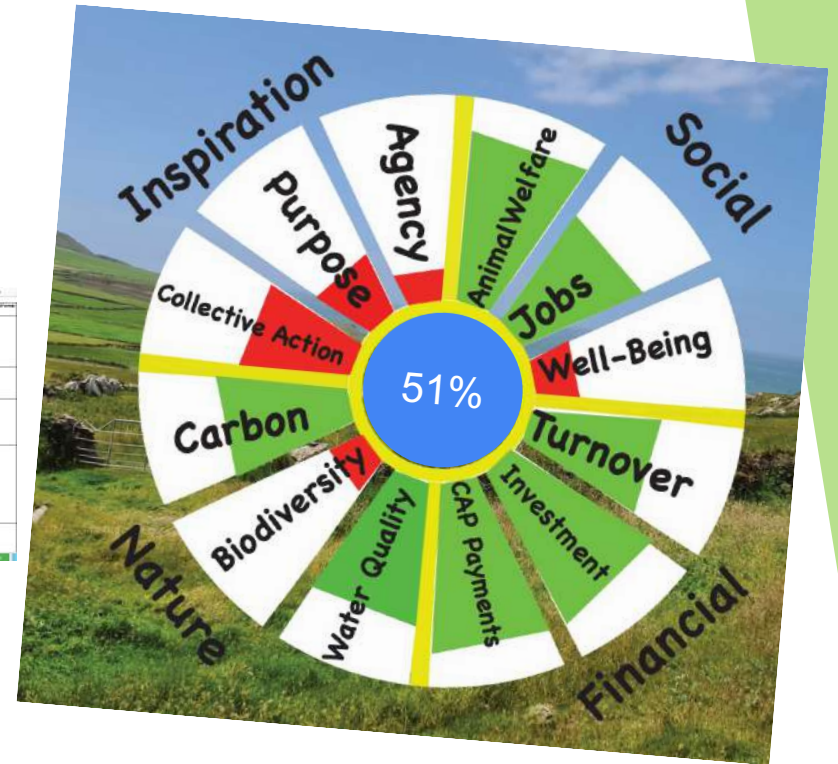


Lighthouse/ Demonstration Farms



# Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment (BRIDE)

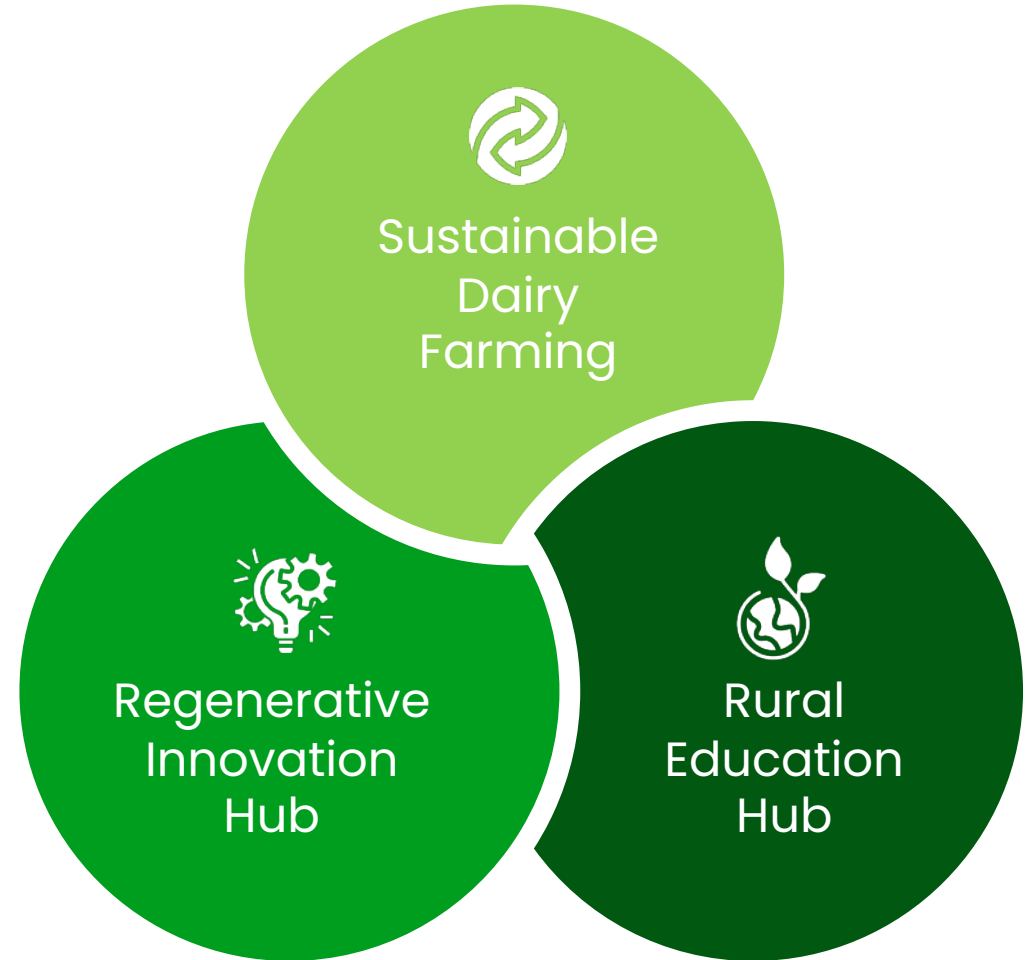
*Farming with Nature*



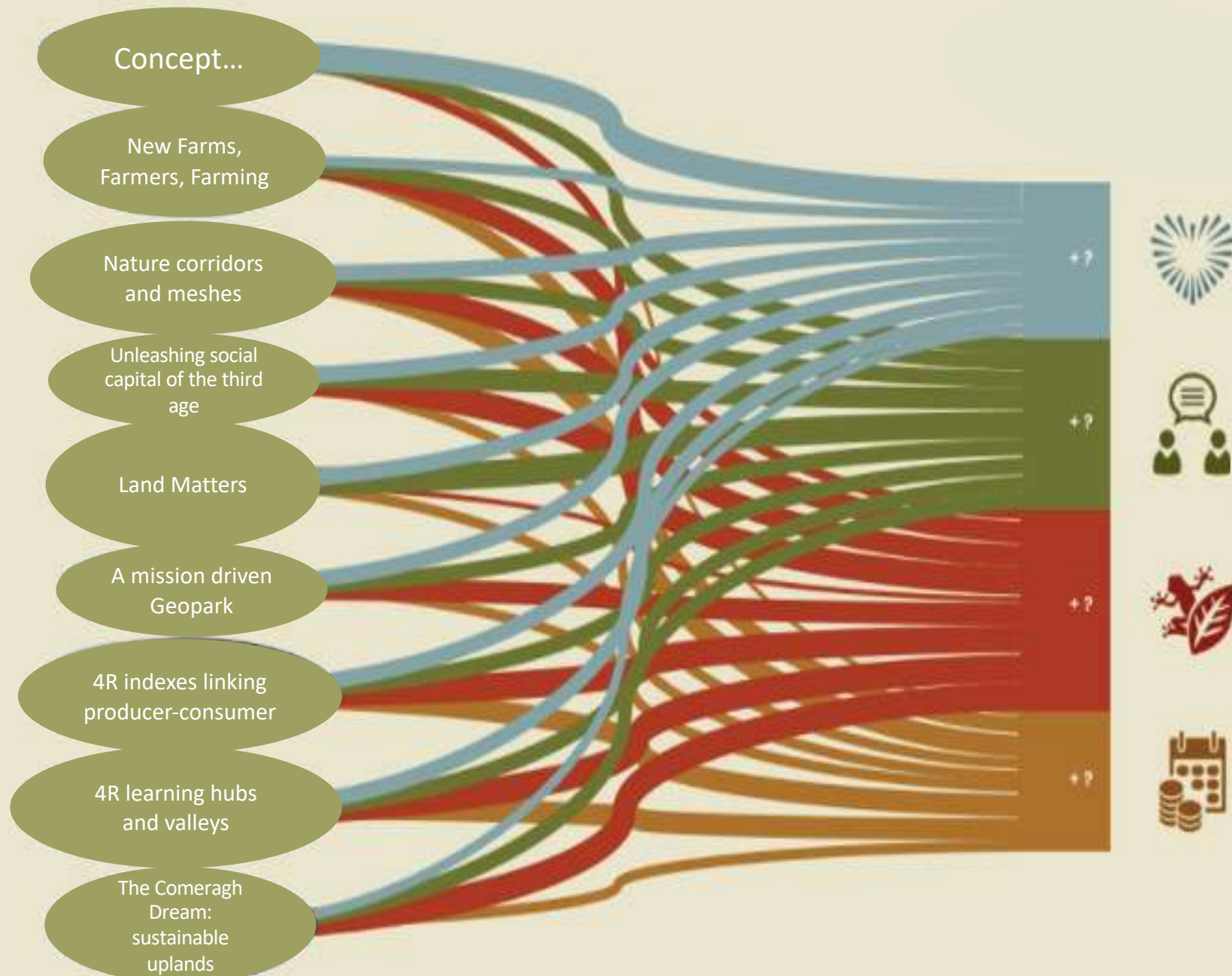
# 4R Rural Hubs

## 4 Return Valleys

(and a bioregional learning hub linking opportunities across the region, and an observatory collecting the data)







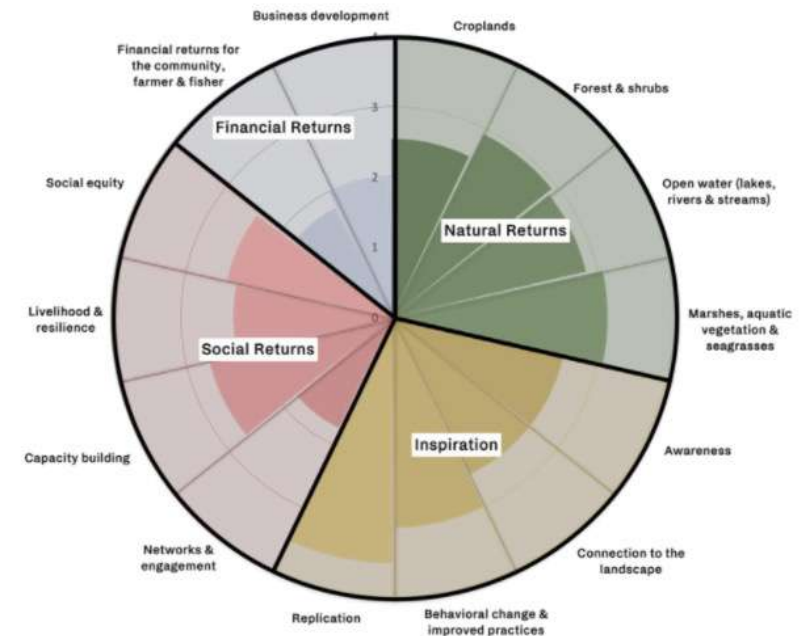
# Co-evaluate for 4 Returns

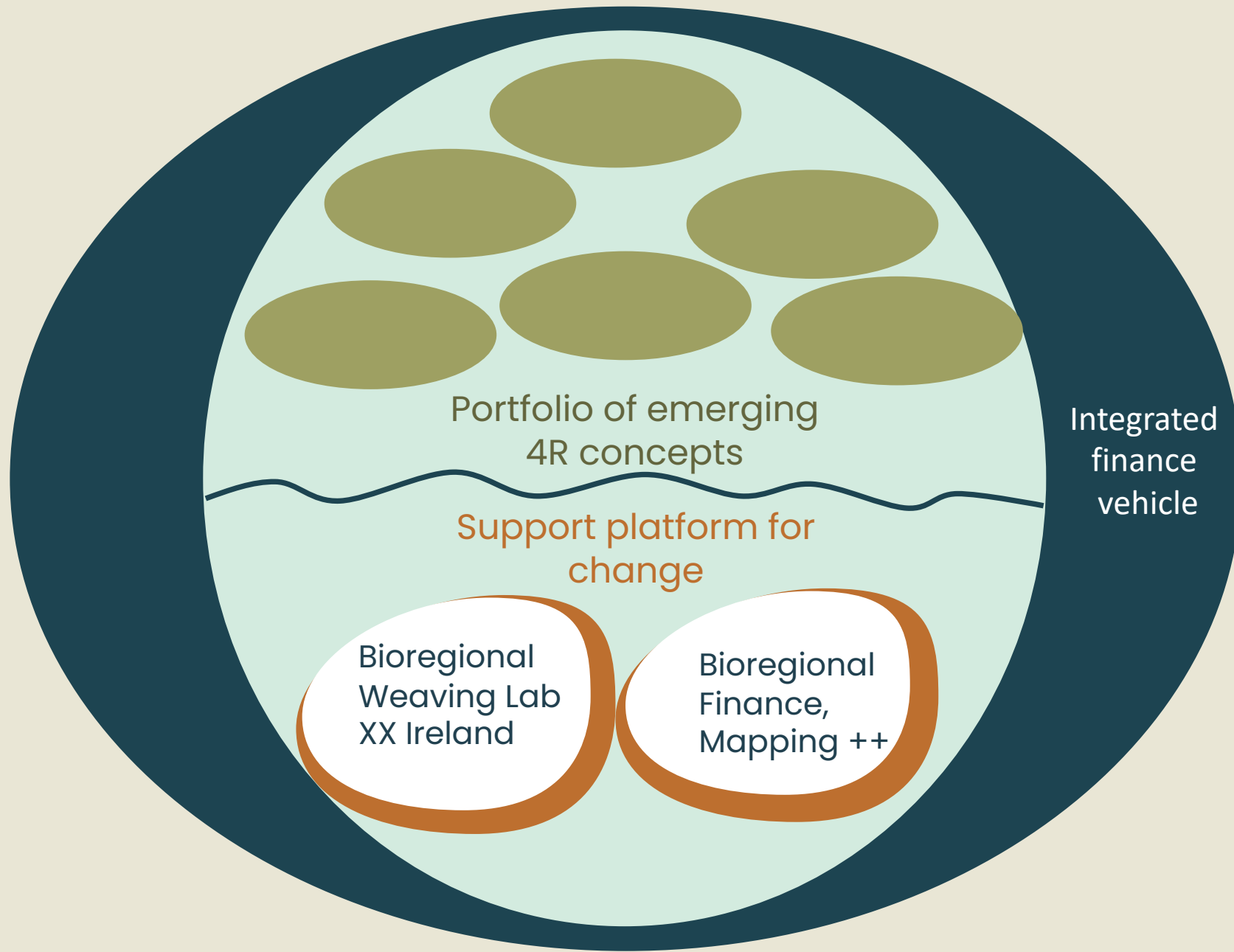
## Diagnostic tool

Return of Inspiration	Social return	Natural return	Financial return
<b>Connection to the landscape</b>	<b>Community resilience</b>	<b>Ecosystems and biodiversity</b>	<b>Land user and business profitability</b>
Hope & purpose	Connection within communities	Land cover and land use	Land user profitability
Attachment to culture and place	Resilience to climate change	Species	Business profitability
Connection to nature	Food security	<b>Soil health</b>	Return for investors
Sense of healing	Ecosystem services	Erosion avoided	<b>Finance mobilised</b>
<b>Awareness &amp; Participation</b>	Access to community services	Soil health	Access to (innovative) finance
Restoration awareness	<b>Knowledge and skills development</b>	<b>Water security</b>	<b>Sustainable markets</b>
Participation	<b>Networks &amp; Learning</b>	Water quantity	Access to markets
<b>Behavioural change</b>	Network building and participation	Water quality	Certification
Land-users adopting improved practices	Community groups	<b>Carbon</b>	
Replication	<b>Social equity and governance</b>	Carbon sequestration and storage	
	<b>Employment</b>	Greenhouse gas emission reduction and avoidance	



4 Returns in the Chilika catchment landscape





# Mapping the SE bioregion – detailed community mapping

Mapping of community-led water quality projects (in collaboration with Dunhill Multi-Education Centre (funded by Lawpro)).

The image shows a screenshot of the Explorer.Land website. The left panel displays the project details for 'Anne Valley Water Conservation Initiatives'. The right panel shows a satellite map of the project area with several numbered markers (1, 2, 7) and a 'Show project area' button. A notification bubble is visible on the map.

**explorer.land** EXPLORE FUND ABOUT BLOG HELP FEEDBACK LOGIN REGISTER

**PROJECT**

## Anne Valley Water Conservation Initiatives

Home News Sites SDGs Contact

County Waterford • Ireland Started in January 2023 Active  
Education

### Sustainable Development Goals

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION Life Below Water  
14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Share your conservation initiative

Show project area

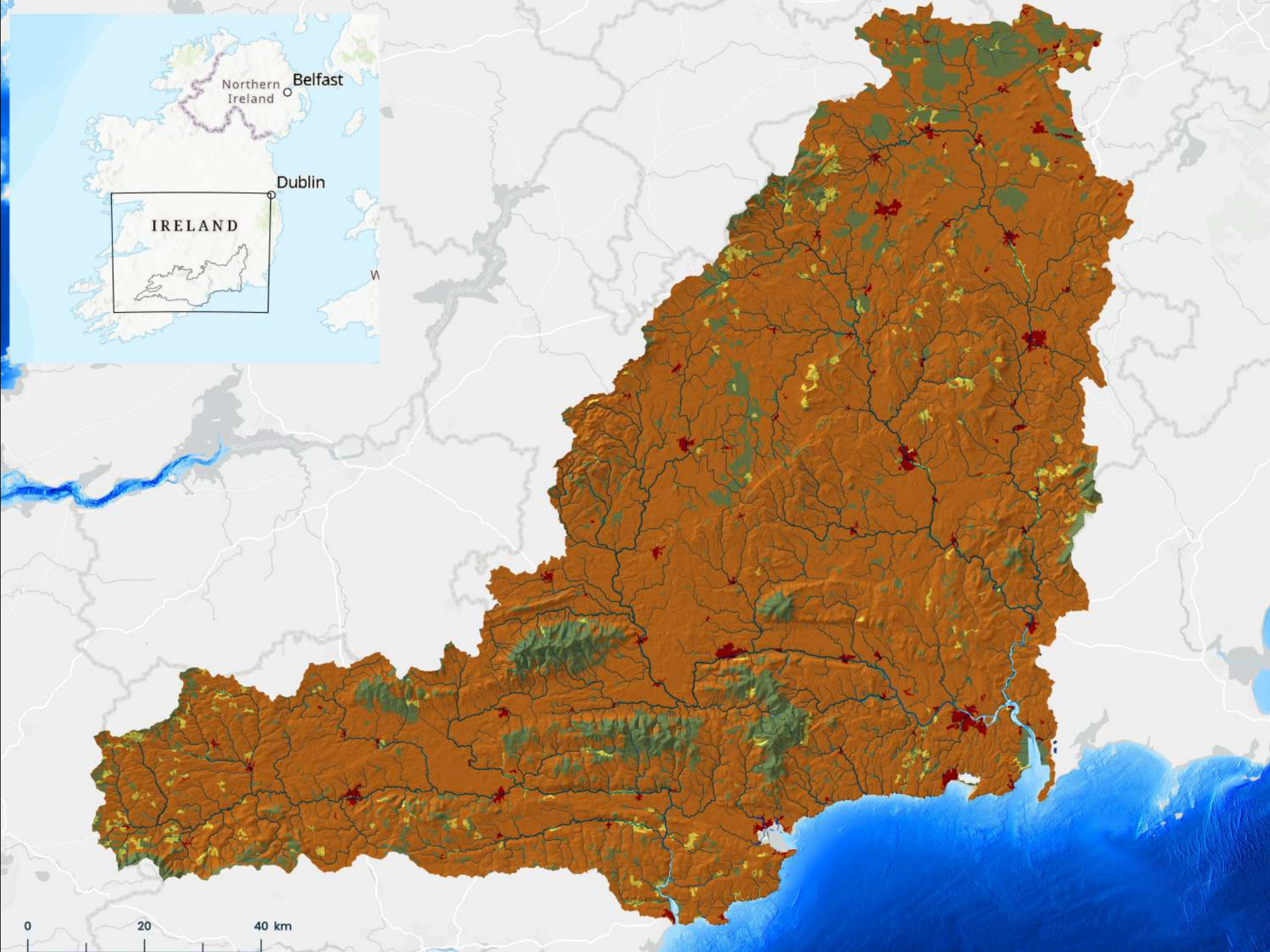
Anne Valley Water Conservation Initiatives

Check out the latest post  
Integrated Constructed Wetlands...  
about 2 months ago

explorer.land mapbox 3000 ft 500 m

# We make maps





0

20

40 km

# 3 Zone Map, with Counties

□ Counties (partially)  
inside the Bioregion

Rivers in the Bioregion

— Rivers

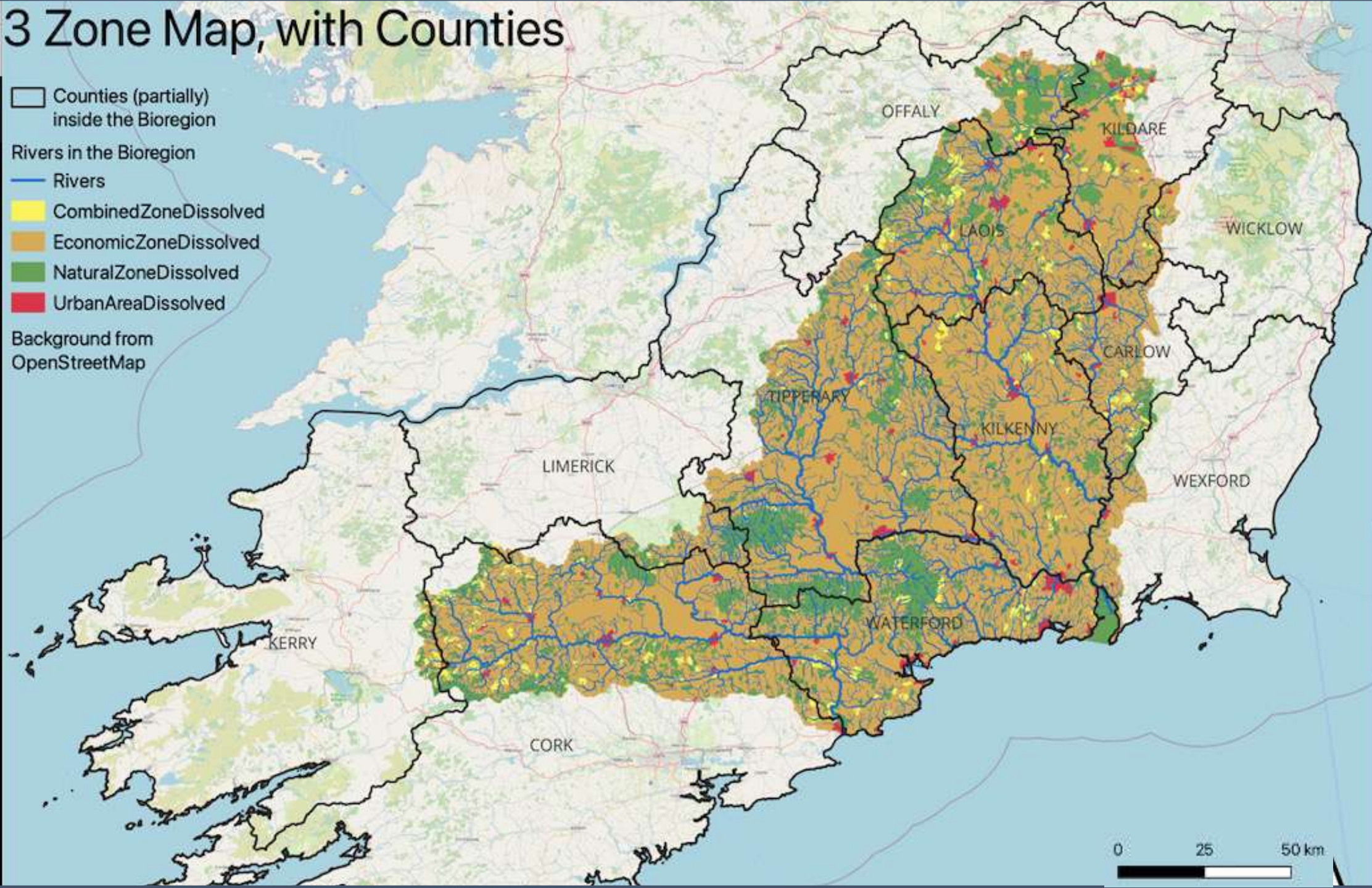
■ CombinedZoneDissolved

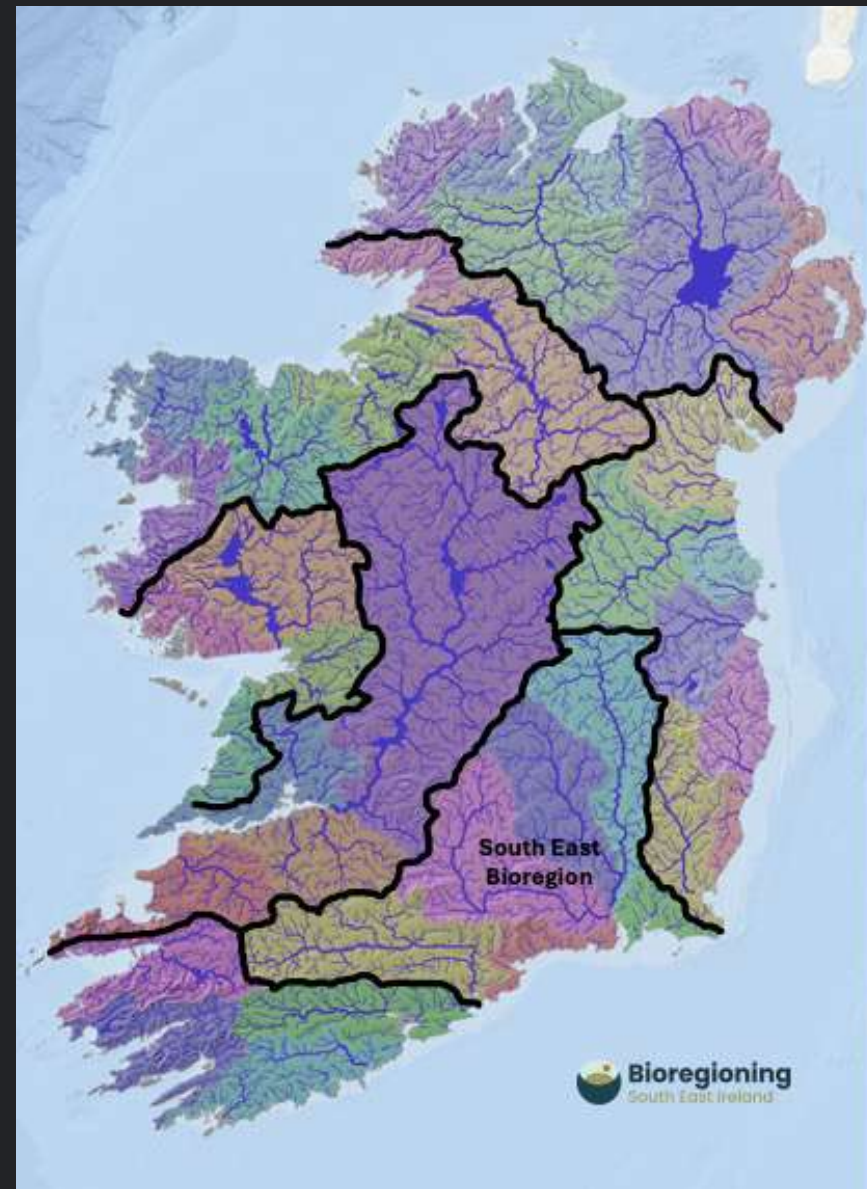
■ EconomicZoneDissolved

■ NaturalZoneDissolved

■ UrbanAreaDissolved

Background from  
OpenStreetMap





“We know there are practitioners and funders and practitioners out there who **want to do things differently.**

... a rethink of how we **organize and fund real work** on the ground.

If everything is connected to everything else, and we're in a polycrisis, then we need a **whole-system approach.** A bioregion is the **smallest actionable scale that maintains whole-system integrity.**

This is about **ecological regeneration** (watersheds, large landscapes, food systems) and social regeneration (Indigenous reconciliation, education, economy, health, grassroots stewardship) – **all together**, in a way that multiplies the impact of funding.

... a multi-year, multi-donor approach that **combines the best of many existing approaches** to philanthropy: Emergent Strategy; Collective Impact; Multi-Donor Fund Pooling; Trust-Based Philanthropy; Flow Funding; Future-Focused Funding; Developmental Evaluation; Systems Complexity Research.

We're moving from **point-solution funding to financing system health**, from a "fixing" mindset to a **healing mindset.** This work meets the global moment – emergent, complex, synergistic, adaptable, innovative, and answering to the next seven generations.

... the bioregion is "**both a way of doing things and a way of thinking.** It's not a new concept. Indigenous peoples, (farmers), have long understood their connectedness to the ecosystem – the land, water, air, and other life. Thinking about the whole bioregion helps **focus attention on the interdependencies...** Everything is connected to everything else."

... This **is real work already in progress**, with experienced Core Teams, a network of trusted relationships, and a diverse Portfolio of Projects. Our current funders leverage and de-risk the contributions of new funders.”