Machaire Beo
LIFE on Machair

www.lifeonmachair.ie

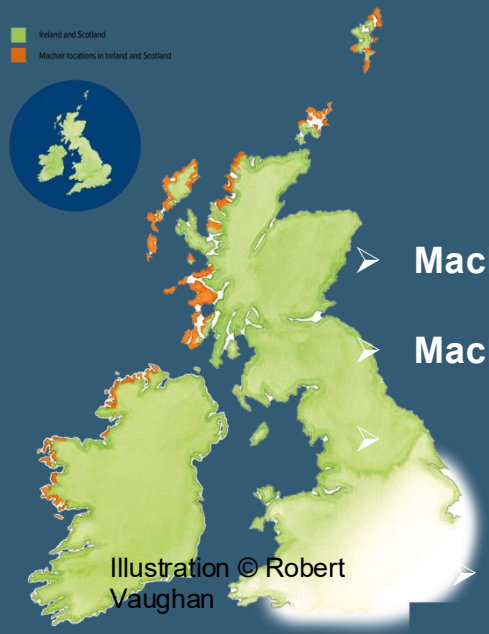

Illustration © Robert Vaughan

Machaire Beo
LIFE on Machair

What is machair?

- Machair is a flat, sandy plain sandwiched in between the beach and hills.
- Machair systems have been farmed for thousands of years.
- The traditional methods of farming results in huge diversity of wildflowers, pollinating insects, ground nesting birds and more.
- Machair is unique to Ireland and Scotland, nowhere else in the world can these habitat systems be found.

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Three main pressures: Grazing (over or under) Recreational Predation

Grazing management

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Three main pressures: Grazing (over or under) Recreational Predation

Recreational pressure

Egg loss due to trampling and pressure from dogs

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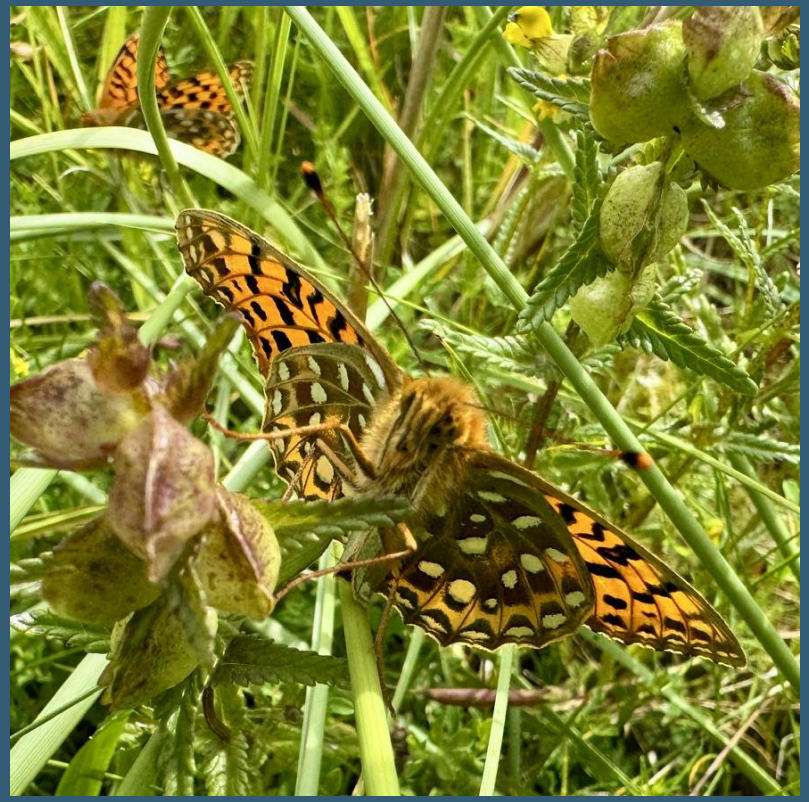
Three main pressures: Grazing (over or under) Recreational Predation

Predation

Below are just some of the actions that have been put in place by the LOM team and implemented by farmers.

Many of the actions are repeated at each site.

Every action is tailored in scale and need for each specific site and its conservation requirements.



Common blue, green washed fritillary and small heath butterflies, relying on healthy, well managed machair.

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Multiple meetings, walks, quizzes and knowledge sharing across the sites and communities.

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Land reclamation and natural coastal defence

Farmers showing project stakeholders the extent of land reclaimed

A section of the land saved thanks to farmers actions www.lifeonmachair.ie

Seaweed trials to promote regeneration, seaweed on left, none on the right

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Recreational pressure from vehicles addressed by vehicle barriers and monitoring

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Serious commitment to the cause erecting temporary fences beside the lagoon at Roonagh

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Recreational pressures addressed with boulders and signage

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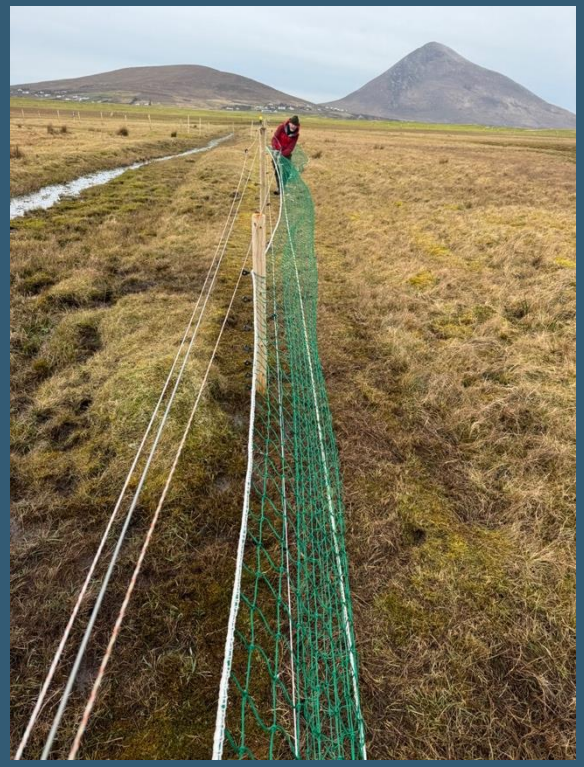
Largest temporary fence in the country, perfected by LOM team and erected by local farmers



From 1 pair of lapwing s pre fence to over 20 pairs this year!

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Farmers transported and erected chestnut fencing to limit grazing and re build sand dunes on the Inishkea s

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Large carder bee, also under threat across the country

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Great yellow bumblebee and other pollinators monitored across all sites

The Mullet peninsula supports the last population of Great Yellow Bumblebees

Image ©Karina Dingerkus

Some of our pollinator monitors counting as they go, under the watchful eye of 6 spot burnet moths

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Eithne, project lead, showing visitors from Muir is Tir , Scotland, some of LOM s work

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The Mullet community got involved by creating this spectacular quilt evoking memories of machair

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Electric collars, facilitated by the program, in use at Magheragallan to help manage sward height in winter

The result lapwing chicks!

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LIFE on Machair

Farmers trialed ploughing under license to set rye as a winter fodder for the cattle.
This is very common in Scotland, was done on a much smaller scale in Ireland in the past.

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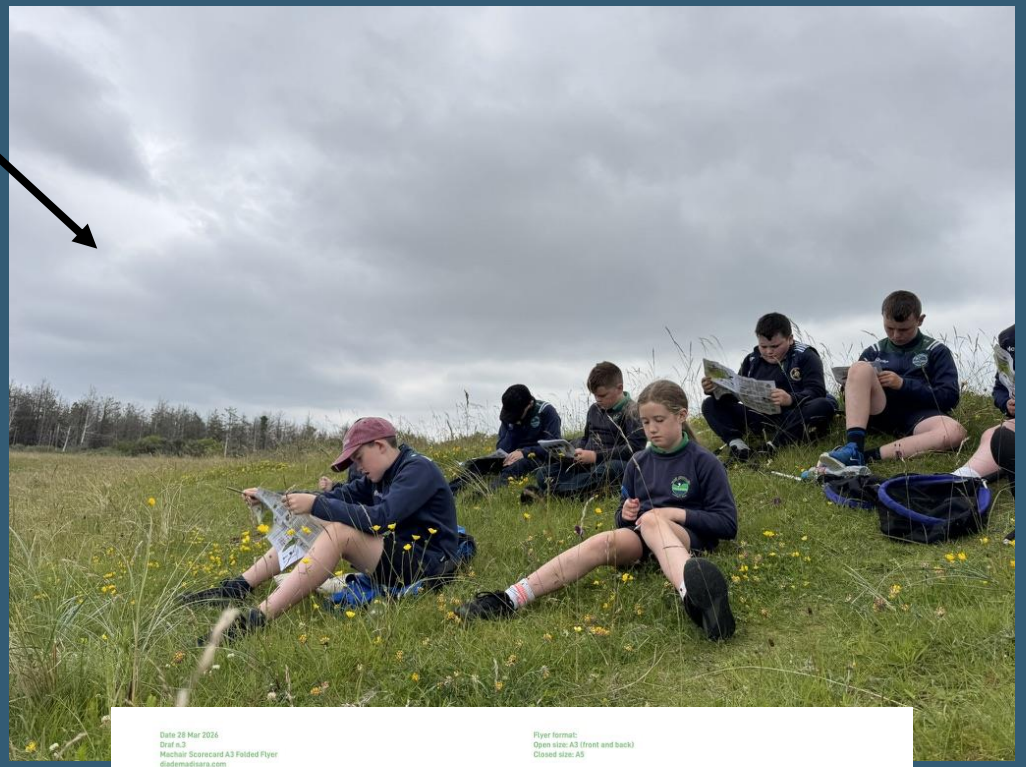
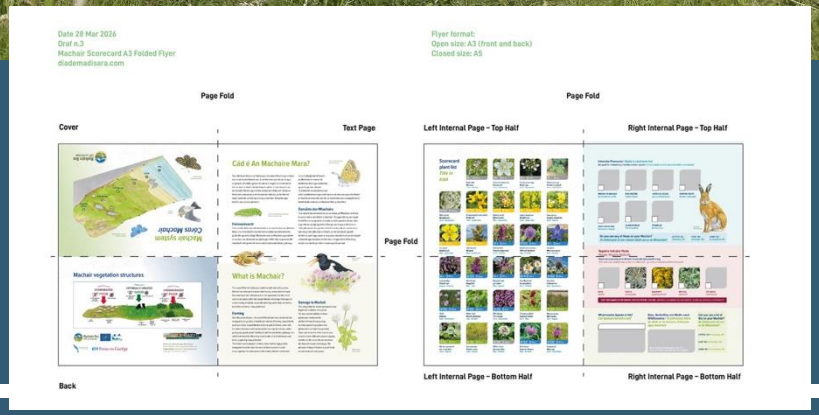
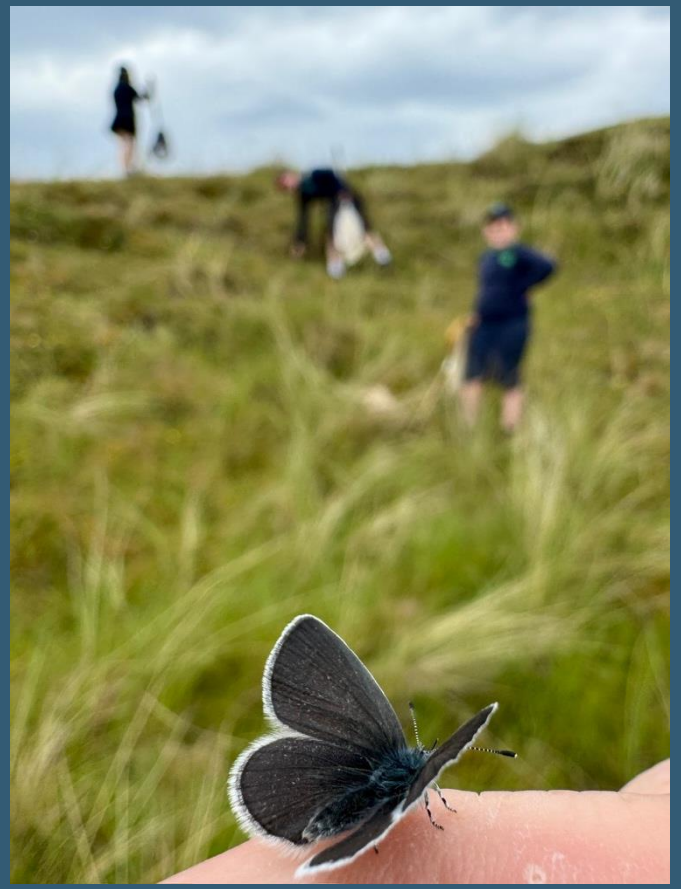
LIFE on Machair

Local school children trialing the junior scorecard developed as part of the LOM education pack



Local teachers on a department of education approved course, learning how to teach their students about machair systems





Young keen eyes were the first to find the tiny small blue butterfly on the machair

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Farmers putting cattle on Lurgabrack in September to manage the sward for summer

The result spectacular flowers and pollinators

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5 x 5 meter trial areas on all sites to demonstrate over grazing, under grazing and just right

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Follow us on Instagram and Facebook

Sign up for our newsletter

Test your knowledge by taking our quiz

LIFE ON MACHAIR 16 January 2026

LIFE ON MACHAIR ~ NEWSLETTER 1

Machair in winter | Meet the team | Temporary predator fencing

Eithne Davis - Project lead

Having grown up around the coastal habitats of Sligo, Eithne is delighted to be working with the communities who preserve these beautiful landscapes and the species they support, and very happy to be presenting you with this, the first newsletter from LIFE on Machair.

"The LIFE on Machair team have been working hard over the last three years, in conjunction with the landowners, to learn more about these pilot sites and the farming systems that have sustained them. We've trialled various conservation actions, and continue to modify them as we go. It's lovely to be able to share some of this story with you now. We'll roll out more over the next few newsletters, so watch this space!"

Eithne is the Project Manager with LIFE on Machair. Holding a degree in Environmental Science, she has completed award-winning research on prioritisation and management tools for coastal erosion, and has a PhD in Applied Ecology.

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Welcome to our first Machair newsletter!

Unique, beautiful, special, enthralling, vital - all words we have heard regarding the wonderful group of habitats that make up a machair system. A system that only exists on the west of Ireland and Scotland, a system that only functions thanks to a long-standing farming tradition.

Topics explored

In this edition we will explore how machair provides so much vital shelter for many wintering birds, we get to meet some of the team working with landowners to manage machair for nature (more intro's next edition) and we take a deeper dive into how temporary predator fencing, such a vital part of this type of habitat management, has evolved over time. More information on the project can always be found at our website; don't forget to follow us on instagram and facebook for regular updates about our unique machair systems!

28 April 2026

MACHAIR ~ NEWSLETTER 2

birds | Scottish connections | Pollinators stirring

The birds are back!

The dunes are alive with the sound of birds. First to start singing at our sites were the wonderful skylarks (pictured below). These were soon joined by lapwings with their haunting sounds and snipe, drumming as they fall towards the machair. Meadow pipits, linnets, twite and chough add to the medley, to name but a few. Some of the sites are lucky enough to have redshanks, many host oystercatchers and a number of duck species such as shovelers, teal and mallard. The latest sound, arriving like clockwork each year, is the cry of migrating whimbrel (click on the link to hear). Stopping to refuel, these beautiful, curlew-like birds will fill our frequencies for most of May, before taking on the 3,200 km, non-stop journey to their breeding grounds in Iceland.

All of this reminds us of what the continued efforts by farmers and landowners are all about. Thanks to the careful grazing, stock management and multiple other measures, these amazing sites are ready to host both breeding birds and provide life for the wandering traveller.

MACHAIR 21 August 2026

MACHAIR ~ NEWSLETTER 3

Return of the Great Yellow | Inishkea's getting hammered

Machair is alive!

Above, as you wander, lapwings, skylarks and pipits join many other species, calling out their presence and your's. Below, the most colourful carpet of wildflower diversity to be found on any habitat system in Ireland. Where to stand without trampling another incredible flower is the biggest issue. All around, adding to the chorus from the birds is the humming of bees. So many species, benefiting from the beautiful bonanza, seeking pollen for their young and sweet nectar for themselves. Zooming past, below and above are the lepidopteran's, the myriad of brightly coloured moths and butterflies. LIFE on Machair (LOM) has had a wonderful summer.

The months of managed grazing, use of electric collars on cattle, continuous checking of the sward height, species mix and site water levels, guided by our team, have all payed off. And the results are spectacular. Have a look at the map on the last page of this newsletter to find your nearest machair system participating in the project, remembering machair is unique to Ireland and Scotland alone. Machair systems deliver such rich biodiversity because of the way that they are farmed, they are possibly the ultimate case of demonstrating that without farmers, we would not have as much nature. Can you think of a better example?

1

Have you tried our machair quiz?

A fine way to test your knowledge on machair systems and to see what farmers have been doing to protect these unique areas, is to give our quiz a go. Broken into five sections including: what is machair, pollinators, flowers, birds and threats and management. It will take you on a colourful journey through machair, what it is, what life it supports and what farmers have been doing through the LOM program to maintain and sometimes restore these special places. Each section should take no more than about ten minutes.

Scan the QR code below or click on this link to give it a go!

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