

Burren Winterage School 2017 Press Release October 18th 2017

New technologies for feeding and watering livestock on hill farms; the therapeutic use of farms to support vulnerable people ('social farming'); agricultural policies which reward farmers for delivering environmental benefits: these are just some of the innovative concepts which will be discussed at the annual Burren Winterage School in Co. Clare this October.

The school, claim organisers, represents a rare opportunity for farmers, advisors, researchers, public servants and NGOs come together and engage constructively in creative dialogue around future directions in farming, particularly as it relates to farmland of high natural and cultural value.

Conference organiser and farm leader Michael Davoren said 'the lessons we have learned in the Burren are that we have to work with others – including the Universities and bodies like NPWS – and also that we have to come up with new ideas if we are to survive as farmers in places such as this, where it's just not realistic to intensify or expand our farms. Some of the best ideas come from the farmers themselves, but we also need to hear new ideas from other countries and we need to be aware of new approaches to farming and support new policies which in turn can support us'.

The School will open with a presentation by Aidan O'Driscoll, Secretary General of the DAFM. Of particular interest to farmers present will be an afternoon of presentations and discussions on 'European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)' – a new DAFM funding mechanism whereby farmers can build a partnership with other local stakeholders to address a local challenge or opportunity. A second call for EIP proposals is currently open, but will close at the end of October.

The event, already booked out, includes speakers from Sweden, Scotland, England and Ireland who will share their stories of innovation and farming across 18 different presentations, while delegates at the event will also get to visit Burren farms, attend an 'innovation fair' and participate in the Burren Winterage Weekend, including the by now famous cattle drove which will take place this year in Fanore. A high point of the weekend will be the Bord Bia Origin Green Farming for Conservation Awards – which celebrate excellence in sustainable farming.

The school, now in its fifth year, will take place in the north Clare village of Ballyvaughan from Oct 26th-28th focussing on a theme of 'Community Inspired Innovation for Sustainable Farming Systems'.
www.burrenwinterage.com

Note to Editors:

1. This year's Burren Winterage School is co-ordinated by the Burrenbeo Trust with support from the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, the EU HNV Link project and the FBD Trust.
2. HNV-Link: High Nature Value Farming: Learning, Innovation and Knowledge is funded under the EU Horizon2020 programme for "Closing the research and innovation divide: the crucial role of innovation support services and knowledge exchanges". It is a 13-partner international consortium. See www.hnvlink.eu
3. Further information and images are available by contacting Brendan Dunford brendan@burrenlife.com or Brigid Barry brigid@burrenbeo.com

