

Sand Dune Restoration at The Raven

Sand dunes are beautiful natural places that are home to many types of plants and animals. What's more, they help us by providing a recreational amenity, reducing the impacts of storms on the coast and giving refuge to pollinators.

Here at The Raven, the woodland will be managed on a long-term basis to ensure that it remains a valuable habitat for wildlife, as well as a place for people to enjoy.

As part of the EU LIFE Insular project an area at the southern tip of the reserve, marked in red on the map, has been identified as most suitable for sand dune restoration and conservation.



When these trees were planted, it was thought that they might reduce erosion and stabilise the dunes. However we now know that this is not the case and that sand dunes by their nature are dynamic systems which naturally change over time.

Over 2022 a detailed ecology survey was carried out, as well as visitor surveys, interviews and consultation walks at this site. With this information, a detailed management plan has been developed for this site, with works starting in early 2023.

In Ireland the project is being managed as a collaboration between the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Coillte Nature. The Raven is part of a Special Area of Conservation and works will be carried out in a way that disturbs wildlife as little as possible, and will have a long-term benefit for biodiversity here.



What works will take place? In early 2023...

Firstly, the main walking track will be upgraded to allow for the removal of trees. The look of the track will change but over time the verges will grow back. This is short-term pain for long-term gain!

Trees growing on the dunes at the southern tip of the reserve will be felled (see map). These trees are younger than in other parts of the site, and are growing next to existing dune habitat, which gives a better chance for sand dune restoration.

After felling, the trunks and branches will be removed, and branches will be chipped.

In some areas where the trees have been removed, the top layer of soil and leaves/needles will be removed. This exposes the sand beneath and provides the best conditions for dune restoration.

This top layer of soil will be spread in areas of the site that have been identified as having lower biodiversity value.

Over time we expect to see sand dune plants like marram grass grow back in the place of trees. We may reseed marram grass in places to help kick-start the process.

These works will improve the long-term natural value of The Raven Nature Reserve.



Please take care while works are being carried out and watch out for timber lorries.

Most access will remain open but some trails may be temporarily diverted with access restricted.