

Habitats Directive 1992

(Council Directive 92/43/EEC)

- Proposed in 1988
- Adopted by the EU in 1992
- Signed into Irish Law in 1997
- Implementation began in 1998, when letters came through the post that ordering turf-cutters to stop cutting turf. There were no consultations with turfcutters.
- The reaction was fierce. Local committees were formed at local level to oppose this, including Clara Bog.
- After national protests, it was announced that Ireland would get a 10 year derogation, this would bring the cessation date to 2010.
- Because of EU intervention and a threat to impose massive fines for non-compliance, the derogation was lifted and an order to implement the ban on 31 sites.
- Clara and Island bog tenants through the offices of Irish Rural Link engaged in discussions with Parks and wild life.

The turf cutters case was as follows:

1. Turf is the cheapest fuel
2. Most houses were fitted with the system needed to provide heat and warmth. It would be extremely costly to do any kind of retrofit. In fact, anything from 50,000 euro to 85K.
3. Turf cutters were adamant that this directive seriously infringed their rights to use their own land.
4. There were no alternatives proposed, until eventually re-location or compensation. Unfortunately, neither solution is long term or is sustainable.
5. Most rural housing is dependent on turf for domestic fuel. In the lower income bracket Irish Rural Link believe that at there is least 100,000 houses.

Following discussions:

- Clara and Island tenants agreed on a solution which did end turf cutting in Clara bog. The solution meant that some 31 tenants would re-locate to an old Bord Na Mona site around seven Kilometres. The rest agreed to take compensation over a 15-year period. It was now 2012, however tenants had ceased cutting turf in 2010.
- Since then, Clara bog has had some restoration.
- There is a pilot project in place to develop a long term management of plan by farmers whose land adjoins the bog. This plan allows the farmers to fully learn about the topography, hydrology, rare plants etc. of the area