



Bringing the bogs back to **LIFE**

funded by LIFE Nature and Coillte

"RESTORING ACTIVE BLANKET BOG IN IRELAND"

End-of-Project Conference: 4-5 October 2007

Westport, County Mayo, Ireland



coillte



Blanket Bog Restoration Project

Forestry & Blanket Bog

Coillte

4th October 2007

**Tim Crowley
Managing Director
Coillte Forest**

Presentation Outline

- History of Forestry on Blanket Bog
- Management Challenges Today
- Management Options
- Restoration Project
- Conclusions

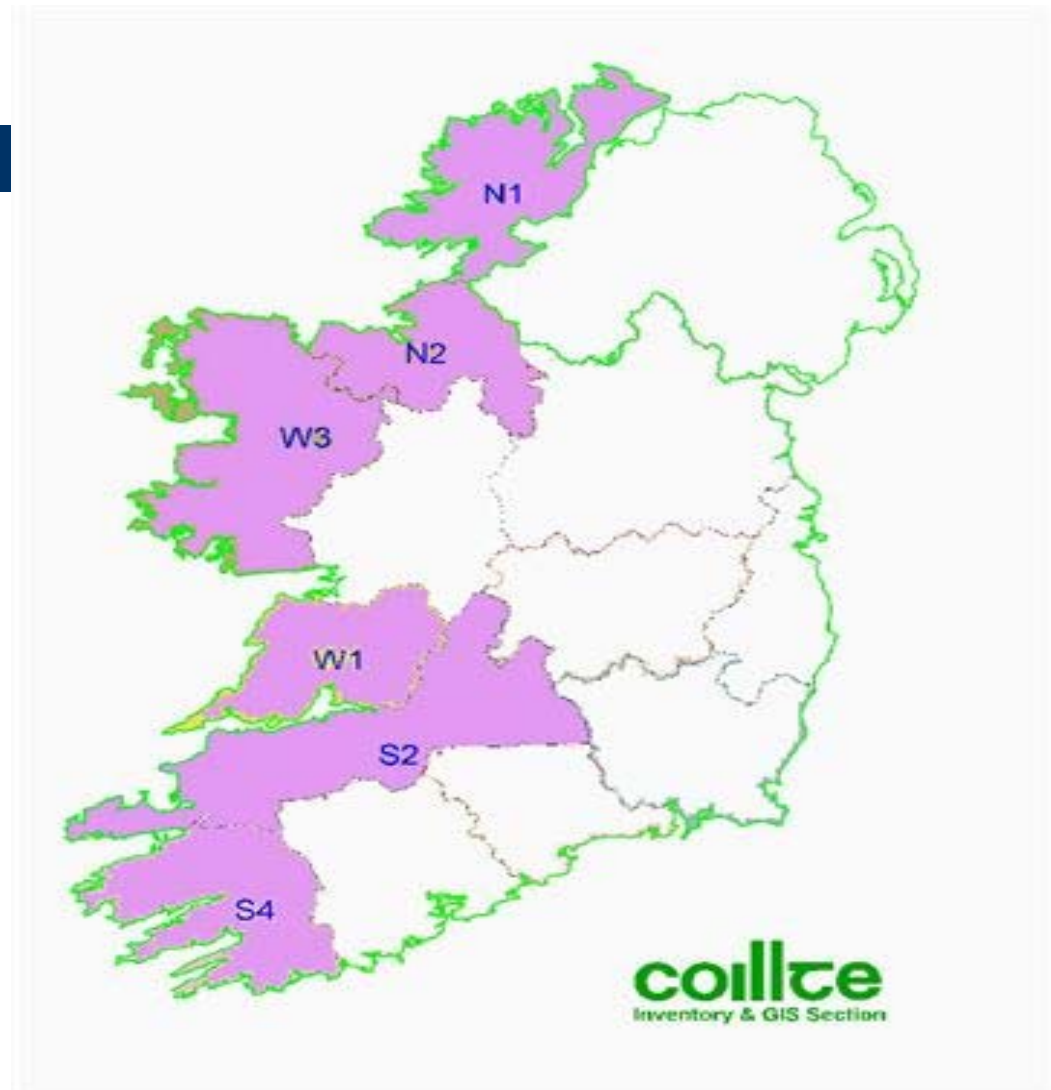
History of Forestry on Blanket Bog

Bogs Historical context

- Government policy – 1950 – 70s to have annual 10,000ha afforestation programme mainly on impoverished soils unsuitable for agriculture.
- Forestry identified as a source of employment in remote and deprived rural areas particularly in the West.
- Waste land – unsuitable for agriculture.
- Major research – 1960-80 to raise their nutrient status by drainage and fertiliser.

Coillte's Western Forests

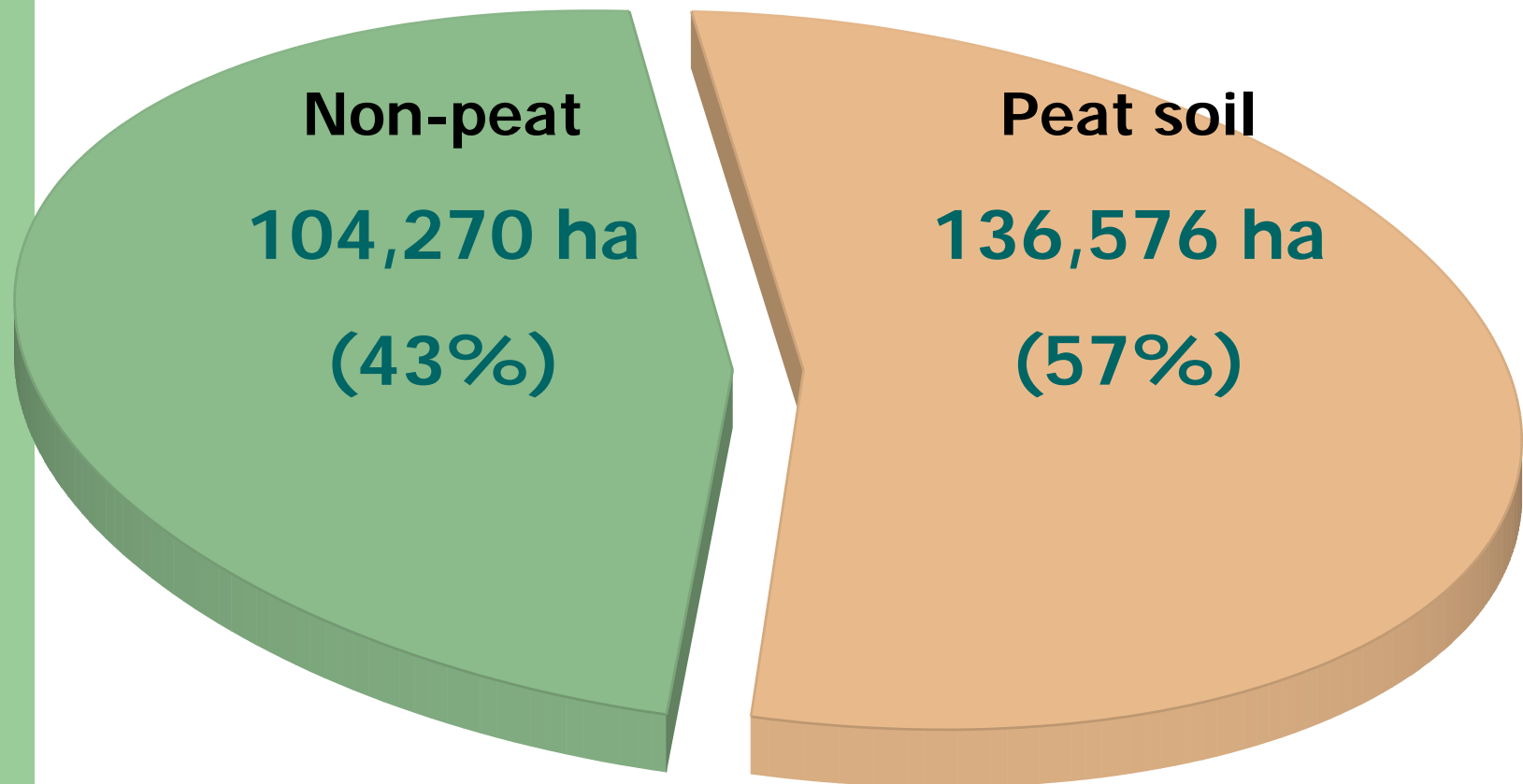
Total Area = 240,846ha
Districts:-
N1, N2, S2, S4, W1, W3



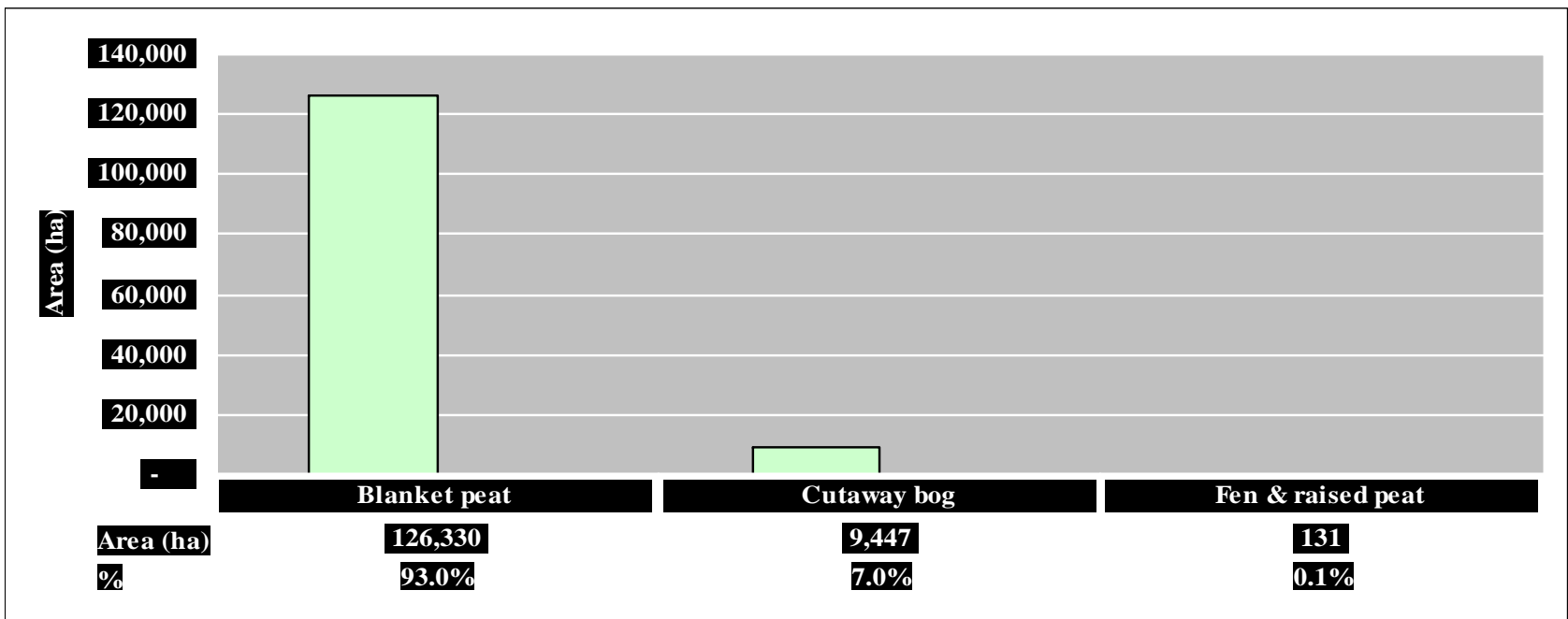
Coillte's Western Forests

Coillte estate

Total area = 240,846 ha



Breakdown of Peatland Type in Western Forests



Coillte's Forests on Blanket Bog

- Coillte owns and manages 136,576ha of peatland forests on the western seaboard.
- 126,330ha of these forests is on blanket bog.
- Planted mainly with Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine.
- Dependent on Multiple Nutrient Inputs

Today

- Major change in attitude towards future management.
- Blanket bogs no longer seen as wasteland.
- Bogs are now recognised as being complex wetland ecosystems and are among the richest in Europe in terms of their plant and animal life.
- Ecological and landscape value outweigh their economic importance.
- Management objectives for Coillte's peatland forests now recognises the ecological and landscape values.

Today

- Management of forests on western peatland must have a
 - (1) Multiple objective approach
 - (2) Stakeholder and Shareholder involvement
 - (3) Recognised methodology

Management Options Available

- Bog Restoration
- Natural Regeneration
- Water Protection
- Long Term Retention
- Low Impact Planting
- Other

Restoration of Active Blanket Bog

- Objective Restoration of 1212 hectares of active blanket bog.
- Total cost €4.2 million.
- 75% funded under EU LIFE Nature Programme.
- Project duration 2002-2006 extended to end of 2007.
- 20 project sites.
- All major stakeholders were represented either on the project management group or the project advisory panel.

Restoration of Active Blanket Bog

- Original project was to restore 1212 hectares of bog.
- Changes in operational techniques has resulted in a further 776 hectares being restored within budget.
- Changes mainly due to efficiencies in drain blocking techniques and felling to waste on very sensitive sites.

Restoration of Active Blanket Bog

- Series of field operations
 - Tree removal.
 - Drain blocking.
 - Fencing.
 - Removal of natural regeneration.
 - Development of demonstration sites

Outcome

- Restoration of 1988 hectares of active blanket bog.
- An opportunity to show an alternative to the management of blanket bog.
- Establishment of a national and international network to exchange information on bog management.

Finally

- Coillte are currently evaluating all the different options with regard to the sustainable management of its peatland.
- Discussions with the Forest Service re. development and regulatory approval for these options.
- Consultation with stakeholders.



Bringing the bogs back to **LIFE**

funded by LIFE Nature and Coillte

"RESTORING ACTIVE BLANKET BOG IN IRELAND"

End-of-Project Conference: 4-5 October 2007

Westport, County Mayo, Ireland



coillte

