

Pearl Mussel Project

Farmer Consultation Meetings Report



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1 Introduction

The Pearl Mussel Project (PMP) is a locally led European Innovation Partnership (EIP) pilot project that aims to establish a partnership between the project team, farmers, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and other stakeholders. Consultation is a key aspect of the project design that assists with stakeholder buy-in and ensures the expertise, advice and concerns of farmers in the target areas are incorporated into the Programme. This document presents the views of farmers as captured during a series of farmer consultation meetings across the eight project catchments in November and December 2018 as shown in Table 1. Total attendance across all eight meetings was 209 individuals.

The aim of the meetings was to inform farmers and local communities of the Project and to receive input on the design of the results-based agri-environment programme being developed by the Project Team (The Pearl Mussel Programme, hereafter referred to as 'the Programme'). The opinions and concerns voiced by farmers at these meetings, in addition to those of farm advisors and other stakeholders, were considered by the project team while preparing the final programme design.

Table 1: PMP consultation meeting details.

Catchment	Date	Meeting venue	Attendance
Owagappul	26/11/2018	The Caha Centre, Ardgroom, Co. Cork	31
Kerry Blackwater	27/11/2018	The Blackwater Tavern, Blackwater, Co. Kerry	38
Currane	28/11/2018	Dromid Day Centre, Waterville, Co. Kerry	21
Caragh	29/11/2018	Glencar Community Centre, Glencar, Co. Kerry	30
Dawros	03/12/2018	FORUM Connemara, Letterfrack, Co. Galway	10
Bundorragha	04/12/2018	Glen Keen Farm, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo	36
Owenriff	05/12/2018	The Boat Inn, Oughterard, Co. Galway	24
Glaskelán	06/12/2018	Colmcille Heritage Centre, Churchill, Co. Donegal	19

The consultation meetings were advertised locally through posters in public locations and notices in parish newsletters, as well as the project website and Facebook. An email and / or text message was sent to all contacts that had previously submitted contacts on the PMP mailing list. Details of the meetings were also advertised via a Press Release issued by the Project Team, articles featured in a number of newspapers (Irish Examiner, Donegal Democrat) and members of the Project Team conducted radio interviews on local radio stations (Radio Kerry, Highland Radio, Connemara Community Radio and Mid-West Radio).

Questionnaire approach

Following a brief introduction and welcome at the start of each meeting, everyone in attendance was asked to fill out a questionnaire anonymously (Appendix I). Each question and all possible answer options (where relevant) were read out, to ensure that all questions were clear.

All questionnaires were collected before the PMP Team gave a presentation on the background and general format that a results-based programme focusing on freshwater pearl mussel could take. During the presentation an attendance sheet was passed around the room and everyone in attendance had the opportunity to provide their contact details to the project.

Following the presentation there was an opportunity for the audience to ask questions or raise any issues or concerns. The Project Team also asked the audience a number of questions, often targeted at attempting to find a solution to certain issues, such as ideas for dealing with commonage, whether people would favour a higher number of participants and a lower payment or vice-versa, and if attendees would be interested in joining the Programme. All questions/issues and responses raised at each catchment meeting were recorded and are outlined in Section 3.

2 Questionnaire Data

2.1 Number of questionnaires collected from each catchment

The number of questionnaires returned from each catchment is shown in Figure 1. The majority of attendees at each of the catchment meetings completed a questionnaire and differences in number of questionnaires completed in each catchment is a direct reflection of the number in attendance at each meeting. The majority of attendees at each catchment meeting owned land or were farming in that catchment. It is important to note that many respondents did not answer all questions on the questionnaire.

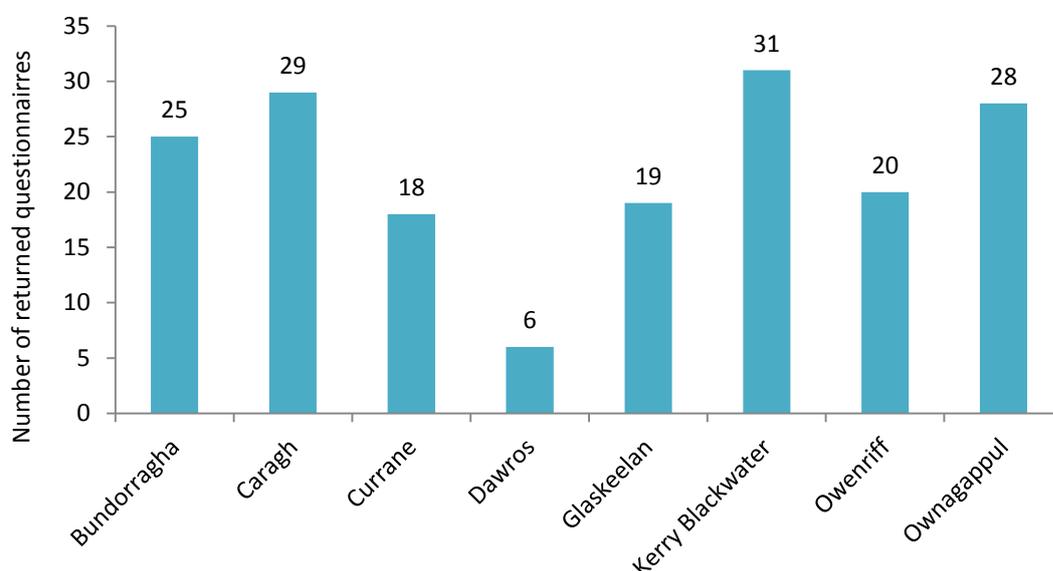


Figure 1: Number of completed questionnaires returned from each catchment.

2.2 Age

The majority of respondents were within the 45-54 and 55-74 age categories. Combined, these two age categories accounted for 71% of respondents, with 30% in the 45-54 age group and 41% in the 55-74 age group (Figure 2).

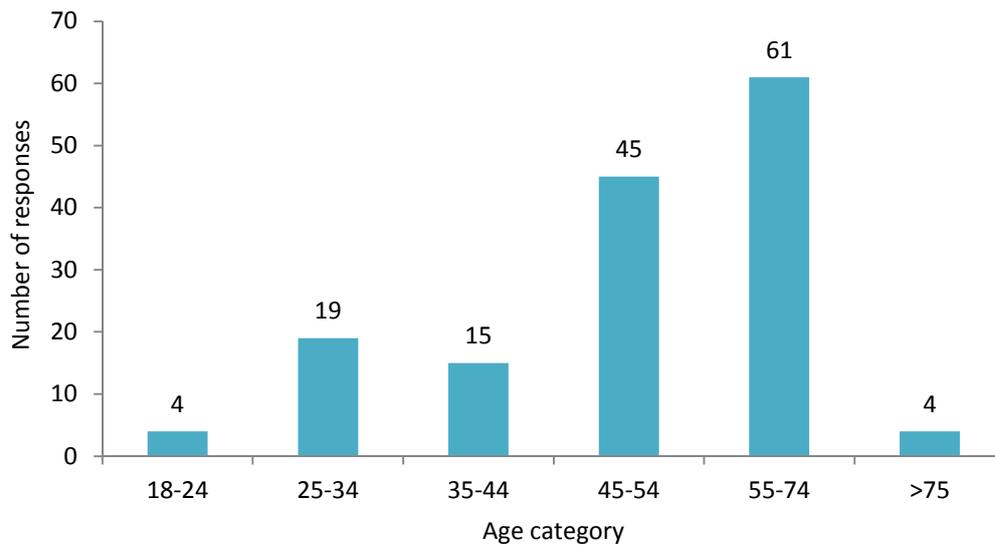


Figure 2: Age profile of those present at PMP farmer consultation meetings.

2.3 Property type

As shown in

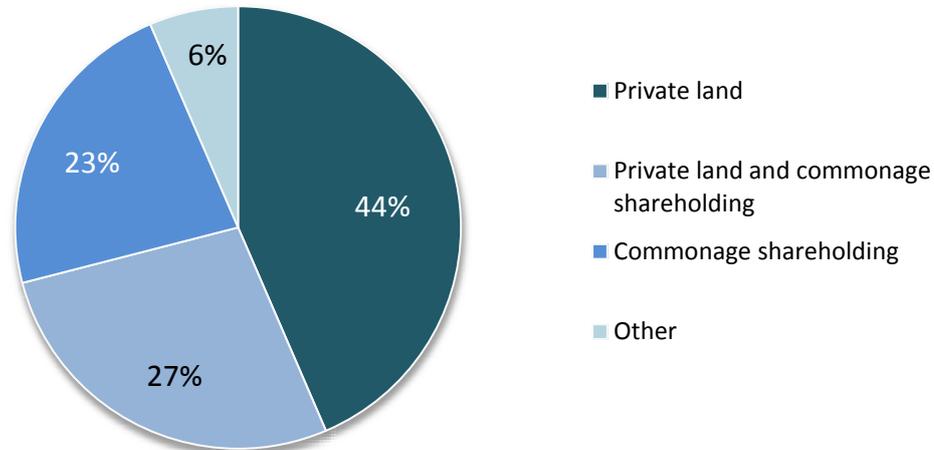


Figure 3, 44% of respondents (n = 27) indicated that they owned private land within one of the eight catchments. Very similar proportions of respondents indicated that they owned either private land plus a commonage shareholding (27%, n = 17) or a commonage shareholding and no private land (23%, n = 14) in the project catchments.

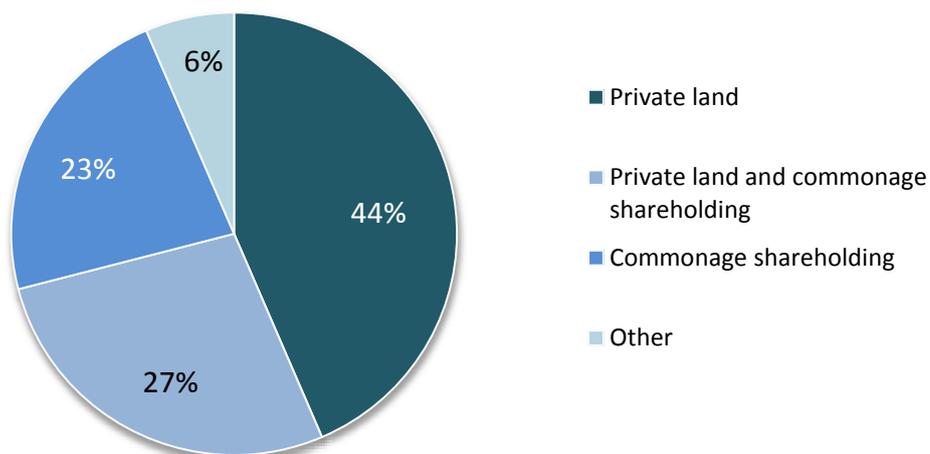


Figure 3: Property ownership across the eight PMP catchments

Looking at this information by catchment, it can be seen that the majority of respondents were private land owners in the Caragh, Currane, Kerry Blackwater and Owenriff catchments. In the remaining four catchments, the majority of respondents indicated that they were either private landowners with a commonage shareholding or commonage shareholders only. Bundorragha was the only catchment where the majority of respondents indicated that they were commonage shareholders with no private land within the catchment (Figure 4).

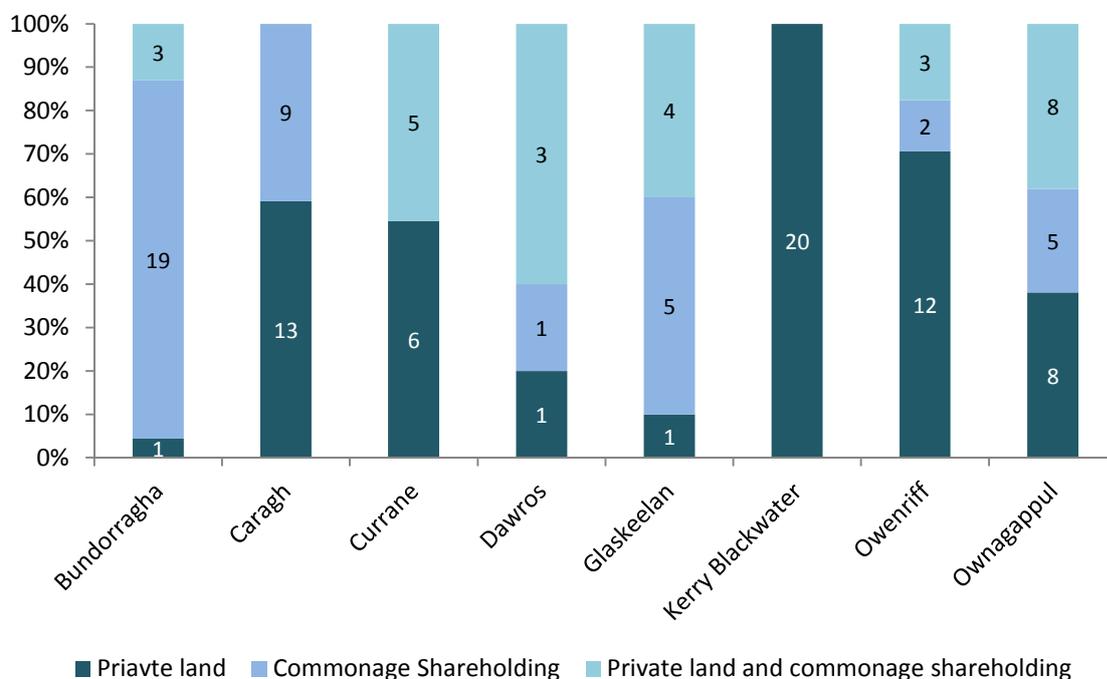


Figure 4: Property ownership within each of the eight PMP catchments.

2.4 Full-time and part-time farming

Across all eight meetings 46% (n=81) of attendees indicated that they are full-time farmers, while 43% (n=75) indicated that they were farming part-time (Figure 5).

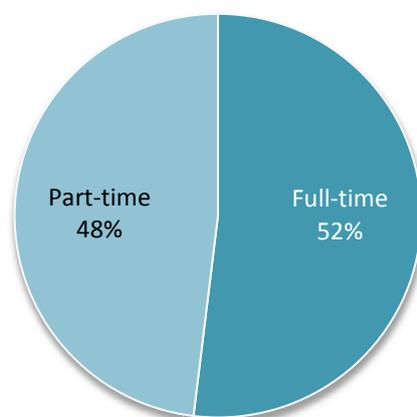


Figure 5: Number of part-time and full-time farmers.

Looking at each of the catchments separately, the same trend can be seen in most catchments, with very similar numbers farming part-time and full-time. However, in Currane, Owenriff and Ownagappul there appear to be a higher proportion of part-time farmers. In Bundorragha, it seems that a higher number of attendees were farming full-time, in comparison with other catchments (Figure 6).

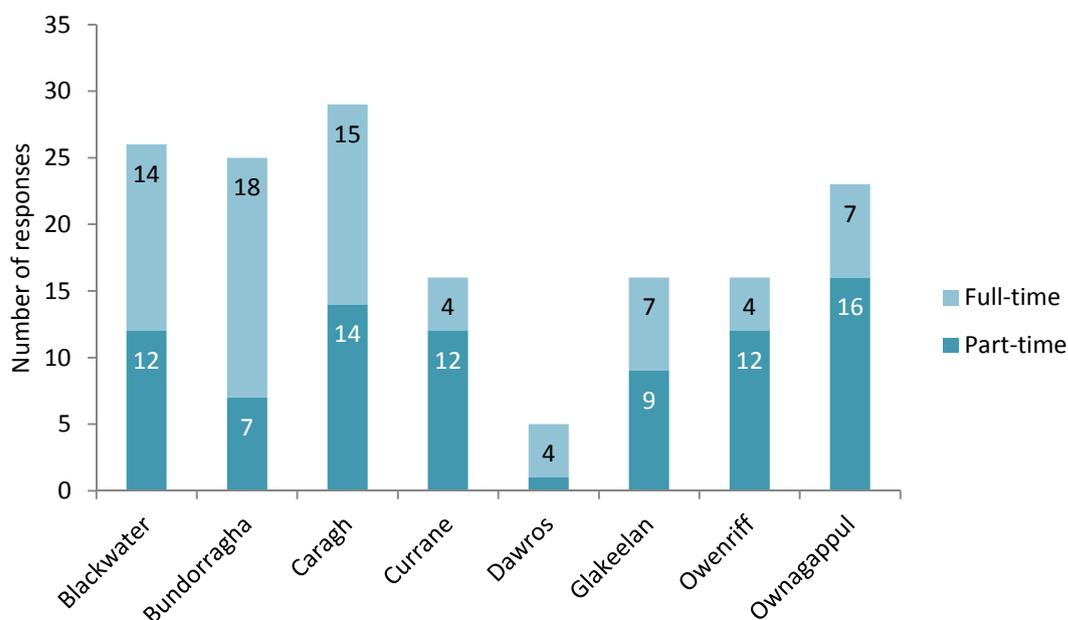


Figure 6: Number of part-time and full-time farmers in each catchment.

Looking at the age profile of part-time and full-time farmers, the majority of farmers in all age groups up to (and including) 45-54 are farming part-time. However, from 55 upwards the majority of farmers were farming full-time (Figure 7). The 18-24 age group was the only category where all farmers were farming part-time, however, it is important to note that the sample size for this age group is very small, at just four. Overall, these results indicate a clear trend towards part-time farming in the catchment areas.

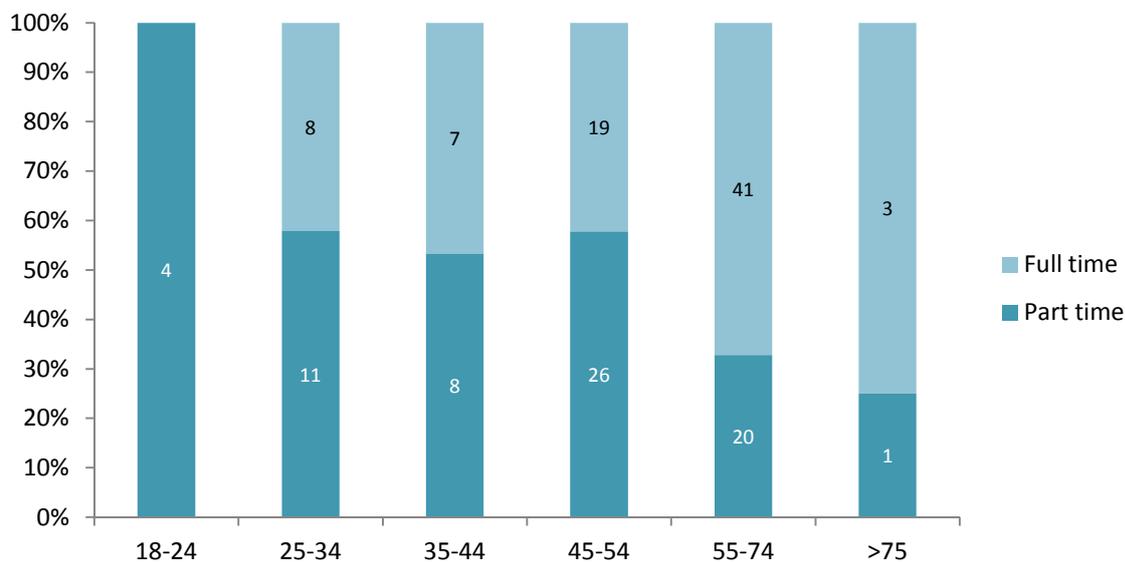


Figure 7: Number of part time and full time farmers in each age category.

2.5 Farm type

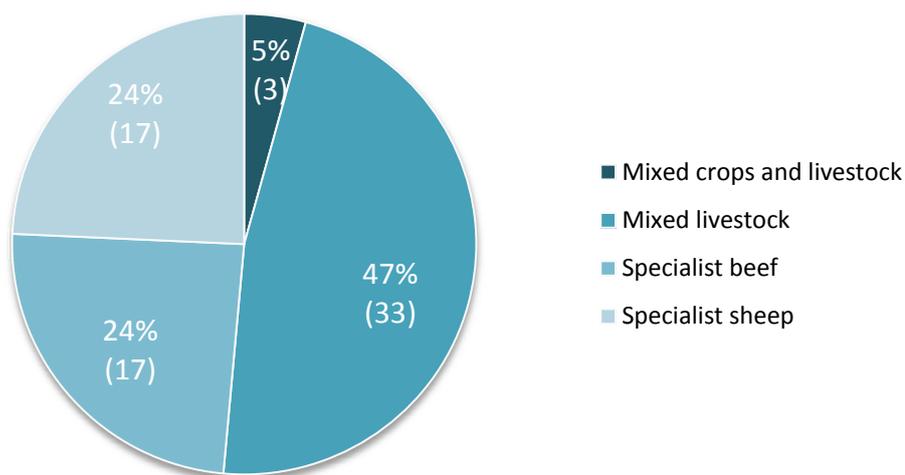


Figure 8: Farm enterprises across the eight PMP catchments.

The majority of farmers in the eight catchment areas have mixed livestock (42%). 23% of respondents indicated that they were specialist beef farmers, while 20% were specialist sheep

farmers (Figure 8). This trend can be seen across all eight catchments, where mixed livestock is the predominant farm enterprise, with the exception of Bundorragha, where the majority indicated they were specialist sheep farmers (Figure 9). It is important to note that some farmers may have multiple enterprises and recorded this in the questionnaire, however some of these enterprises may be outside of the target catchment.

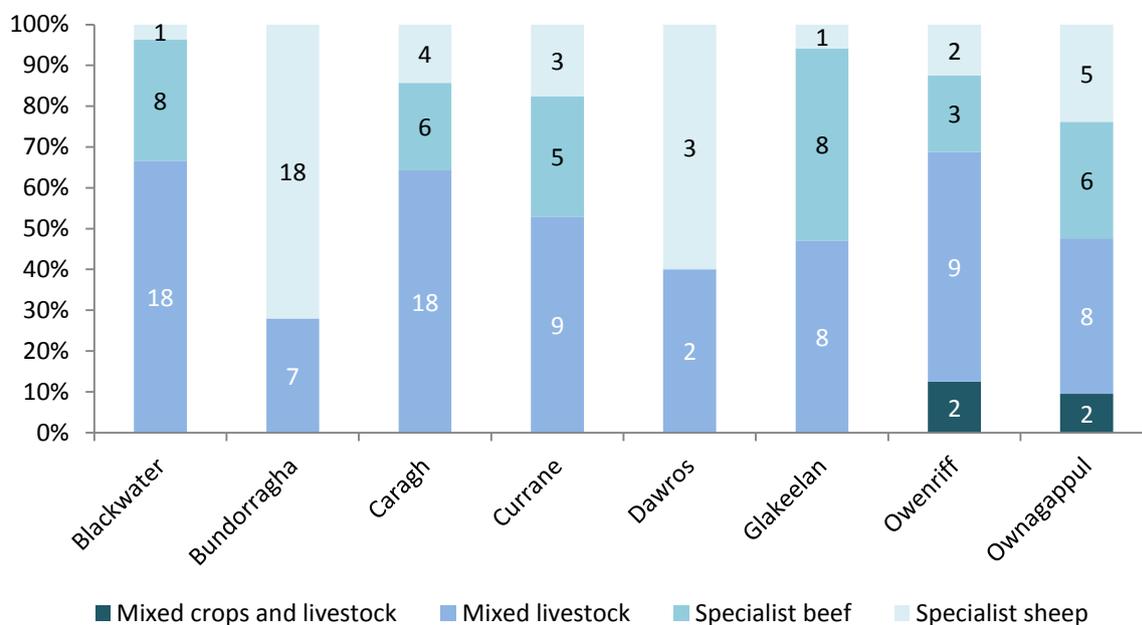


Figure 9: Farm enterprises in each of the eight PMP catchments.

2.6 Catchment areas

Attendees were asked to write down five words that they would most associate with their catchment today. A selection of words was provided on screen to assist respondents in thinking of words. This list is presented in Appendix II. A word cloud illustrating the words used to describe catchments currently is shown in Figure 10. Words that were used most commonly to describe the catchments are shown in large font, with words in smaller font were used less frequently to describe the catchments. As seen in Figure 10, the words nature (22), difficult (21), restrictions (20), part time (16), and clean water (16) were most commonly associated with the catchment areas at present.

Respondents were also asked to select five words that they would most likely associate with their catchment in 20 years time. As seen in Figure 11, the words most commonly associated with the catchment areas in twenty years were clean water (19), abandonment (16), restricted (10) and agri-environmental schemes (10).

Comparing the two word clouds, it can be seen that when asked to think about the catchment areas in the future many people think of abandonment, depopulation, part time farming, and catchment areas becoming wild and overgrown. It is clear from both word clouds that the catchment areas are seen as beautiful, natural places, with nature at the fore.

2.7 Knowledge and Perceptions of Freshwater Pearl Mussel

With regards knowledge of freshwater pearl mussel, a high number of respondents (45%, n=75) indicated that they have known about freshwater pearl mussel for most of their lives, with relatively few (5%, n=9) being unaware of them before the consultation meetings (Figure 12). In total, 55% of respondents have become aware of freshwater pearl mussel in the past five years, indicating that awareness is increasing in these catchment areas.

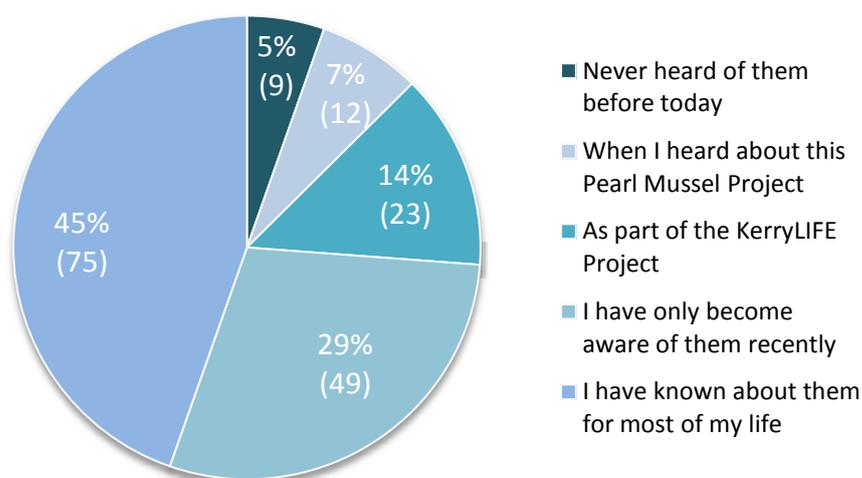


Figure 12: Prior knowledge of freshwater pearl mussel

The effect of the KerryLIFE Project can be seen in the Caragh and Kerry Blackwater catchments, with 26% of respondents in Kerry Blackwater and 36% of respondents in Caragh indicating that they became aware of freshwater pearl mussel through the Kerry Life Project. It was also notable that all in attendance at the consultation meetings in both the Caragh and Kerry Blackwater catchments had heard about freshwater pearl mussel prior to the consultation meeting (Figure 13).

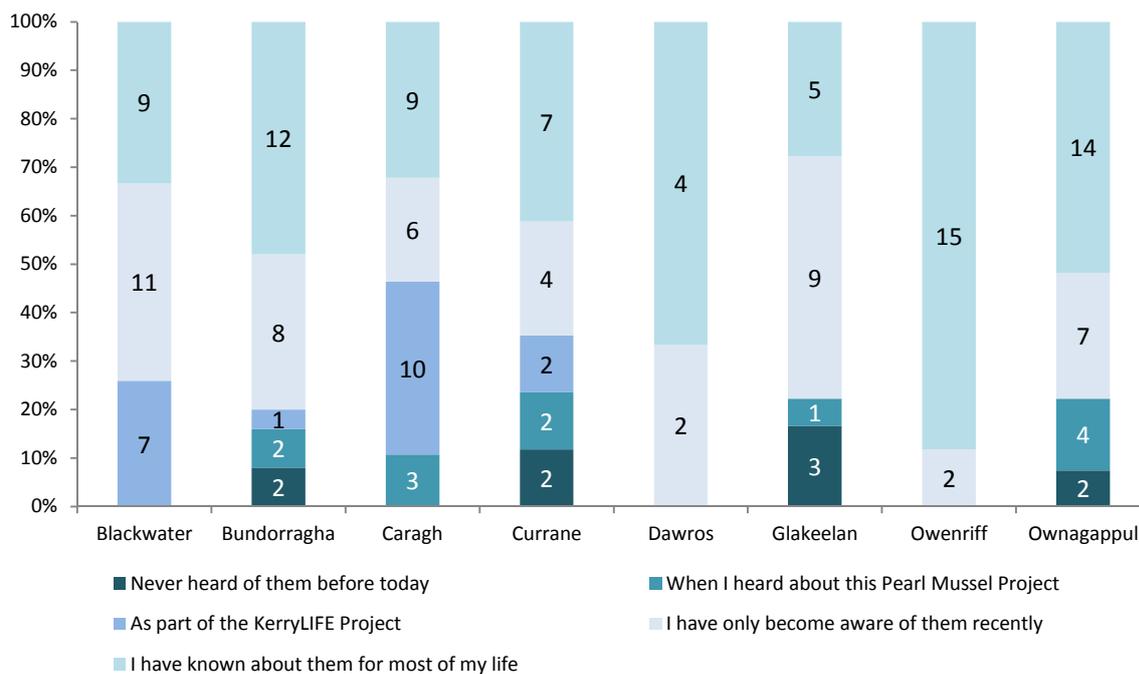


Figure 13: Prior knowledge of freshwater pearl mussel in each of the eight catchments.

To gauge perceptions or understanding of freshwater pearl mussel amongst attendees, they were asked which of the following they most closely associated with freshwater pearl mussel: clean water; restrictions; a healthy environment; a nuisance; endangered; or interesting.

It appears that the majority of respondents view freshwater pearl mussel favourably, with 45% associating them with clean water and 21% associating them with a healthy environment. In contrast, only 2% said that they would consider freshwater pearl mussel a nuisance (Figure 14).

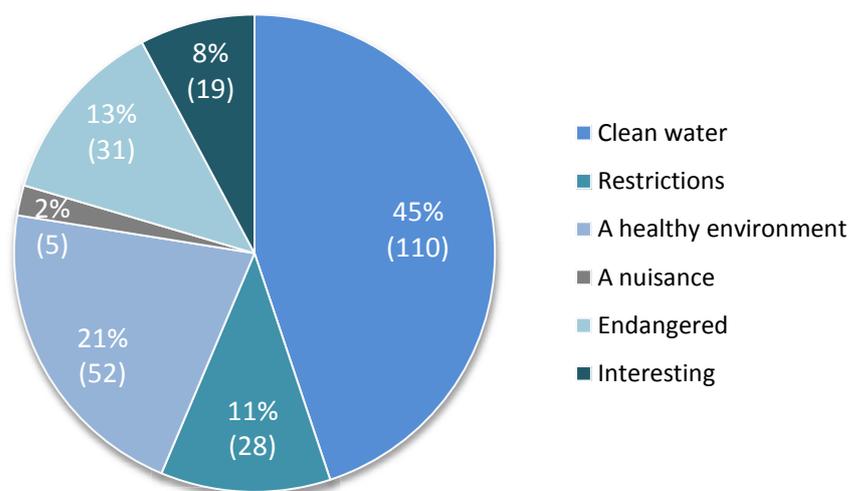


Figure 14: Freshwater pearl mussel associations.

2.8 Results-based programmes

The majority of respondents indicated that they were already aware of the Hen Harrier Programme (49%) or the Burren Programme (42%). Only 9% of those that responded had not heard of either of these results-based programmes (Figure 15).

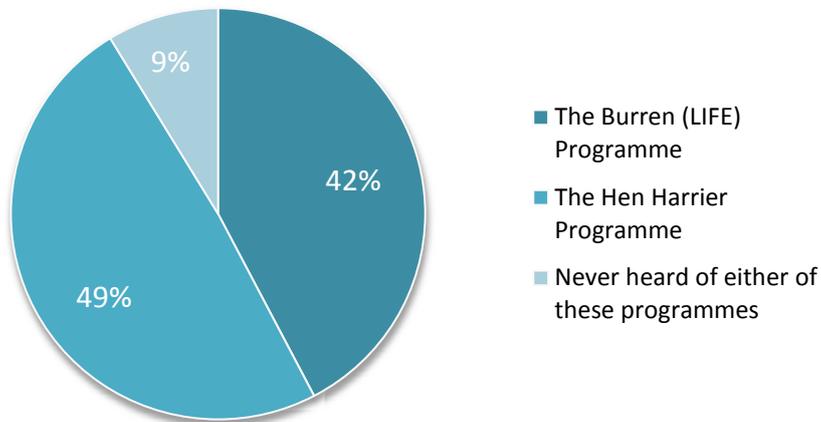


Figure 15: Knowledge of other results-based programmes.

The Programme will be results-based, with higher environmental results attaining higher payments. The vast majority of respondents (91%, n=143) indicated that they felt this was fair, with only 9% (n=14) indicating that they felt this was unfair.

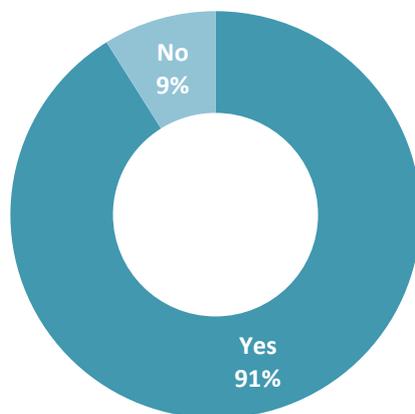


Figure 16: Response to whether a results-based programme is fair.

2.9 Farming and the environment

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with a number of statements regarding farming and the environment. Overall the responses to these questions indicated that the majority view wildlife and the environment as something of value and worthy of protection, however the majority also felt that farmers are not paid enough for the wildlife they support and protect (Figure 17).

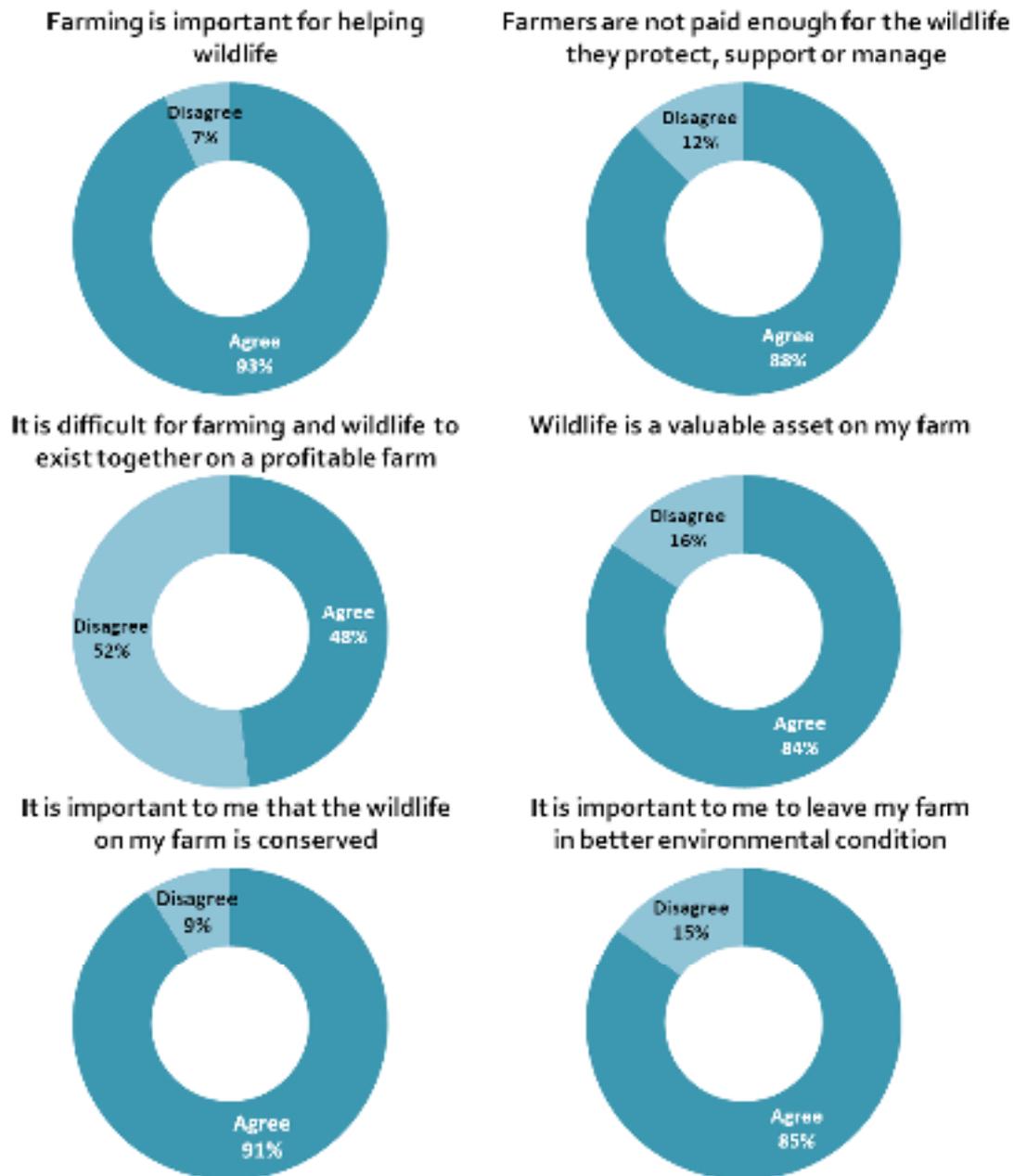


Figure 17: Responses to questions regarding farming and the environment.

2.10 PMP publicity

The majority of respondents indicated that they had heard about PMP through word of mouth or from a friend or neighbour (58%, n=95). Of the other publicity channels, consultation meeting posters (15%, n=24), local papers (13%, n=22), other (13%, n=21) and project website (12%, n=19) were the most commonly indicated sources.

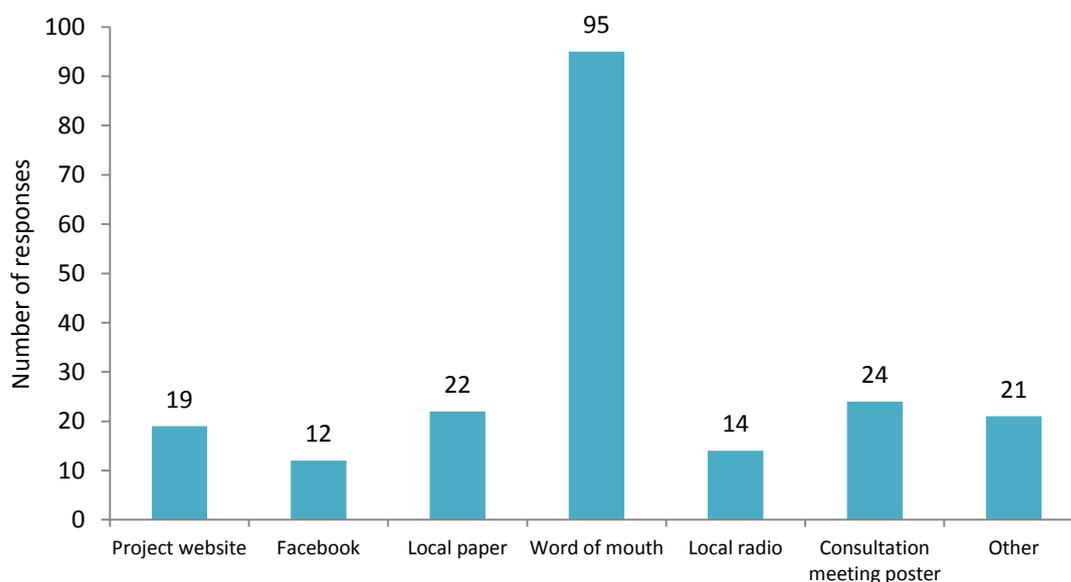


Figure 18: Media channels through which respondents heard about PMP.

3 Questions and Issues Arising

Following on from the presentation there was an opportunity for attendees to ask questions or raise any issues. The main questions and issues raised, along with the response provided by the Project Team, are shown in Table 2. The most frequently asked questions were in relation to budget and payments, eligibility and entry into the Programme, commonages, impacting activities, and potential farm measures.

In addition to these specific questions/issues there was also some general discussion around the results-based farm Programme.

Table 2: Questions and issues raised at PMP farmer consultation meetings.

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
Advisors	Do you need an agri-advisor to get into the Programme?	Yes. The farmer needs to nominate an approved Pearl Mussel Programme advisor to support them during the project. A list of approved advisors will be provided by the Project Team as soon as the farmer is accepted into the Programme. The list will also be available to view on the Pearl Mussel Project website.	Owenriff
Advisors	Who will pay the advisors?	The PMP will prepare the initial 5 year plan at no cost to the farmer. This 5 year plan will be provided to the farmer along with their contract offer. If the farmer decides to join the Programme, farmers will then need to nominate an advisor and cover this cost themselves. The cost of advisors is factored into the results payment.	Kerry Blackwater, Bundorragha
Advisors	How much will farm advisors need to be paid?	The fee to be paid to the farm advisor will be based on a private contract between the farmer and their advisor. It is therefore up to the farmer to agree a fee with their advisor. We have designed the Programme with the aim of keeping advisory input and associated cost as low as possible. When an advisor is working for a farmer across a range of schemes, the farmer should be able to negotiate a competitive price for the advisory service. We aim to train a number of advisors in each area so farmers will have the opportunity to get competitive rates. As advisors will need to score all land parcels and identify potential supporting actions, it is likely that larger farms will require a higher input of advisor time. An indication of advisor rate is available on the Teagasc web-site.	Caragh
Advisors	How will the scoring be fair as each advisor will score differently?	The scoring has been developed in such a way to make it easily transferrable and simple, with little room for individual or subjective interpretation. The project team have spent considerable effort developing the scoring system with input from expert advisors. The scoring has been tested and validated to ensure that it is both robust and objective. All advisors will undergo initial and ongoing training to ensure consistency.	Caragh
Budget	If our catchment is pristine then shouldn't we get more money than the other catchments?	Higher payments will be given for better quality habitats, so areas with the best quality habitats will be getting the highest payments irrespective of which catchment the lands occur within. It may well transpire that there are a higher proportion of higher quality habitats within certain catchments.	Bundorragha
Budget	Who is going to be keeping an eye on the Pearl Mussel Project team?	The Pearl Mussel Project Limited report directly to the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM). We are subject to financial audit by the DAFM.	Bundorragha

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
		<p>The Pearl Mussel Project is overseen by a project Steering Group comprising the following representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine • National Parks and Wildlife Service • Environmental Protection Agency • Forest Service • Pearl Mussel Expert • Agricultural Consultants Association • Agro-ecology Academic Expert • Local Authorities Waters and Communities Programme • KerryLIFE • Farmer representative (to be nominated once the Programme is up and running) <p>Due to its innovative nature, this Programme is of considerable interest to a wide range of groups with an interest in farming in High Nature Value areas, rural development, water quality, climate change and many other ecosystem services.</p>	
Budget	What % of the budget are PMP getting to administer the Programme?	The administration fee for the project was subject to competitive tender and has been agreed with the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. This fee equates to approximately 20% of the overall budget.	Glaskeelan
Budget	If more people enter the Programme will you be taking more money to administer the Programme?	As outlined above, the fee to administer the Programme was agreed with the DAFM following competitive tender. Administration costs increase with the number of participants and the contract fee reflects this.	Glaskeelan
Commonage	Is it only land within the catchment boundary that will be paid for?	Yes, only those lands within the defined catchment boundaries are eligible for payment.	Owngappul, Dawros
Commonage	What happens if some commonage shareholders are in the Programme and others are not?	The PMP score will be calculated for each eligible commonage. The corresponding payment will be divided by the total number of shares for the commonage and each commonage participant will be paid according to their number of shares.	Dawros, Bundorragha

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
		<p>Those that are not in the Programme will not receive a payment.</p> <p>We aim to recruit as many shareholders as possible in each of the priority commonages. We will actively encourage collective management. The actions of non-participant shareholders could have an effect on the quality of the habitat and therefore affect the result-based payment being calculated for the commonage.</p>	
Commonage	What kind of actions will be considered for commonages?	Depending on factors including agreement of shareholders, permission under the legislation governing Special Areas of Conservation and Planning regulations, the Project team will consider any actions that are likely to give rise to an environmental benefit in line with the project aims subject to value for money and the necessary consents being granted.	Dawros
Commonage	Will commonage be dealt with as one block?	Each commonage parcel (as per the DAFM LPIS system) will be treated as an individual unit for the purposes of the Pearl Mussel Programme. The result-based payment will be calculated for the individual parcel and will be subject to a 'whole parcel assessment'. The payment accruing from the commonage will be divided amongst commonage participants proportional to their shareholding.	Bundorragha, Glaskeelan
Commonage	How will you deal with commonages with high numbers of shareholders?	As outlined above we aim for maximum participation amongst commonage shareholders for each of the priority commonages. A single advisor will score and advise on each commonage parcel. We intend to hold group meetings for commonages with large numbers of shareholders to outline the Programme and to agree appropriate actions.	Glaskeelan
Commonage	Will all active commonage shareholders be included?	All active commonage shareholders will be eligible to apply to join the Programme and we hope to maximise participation amongst commonage shareholders.	Glaskeelan
Eligibility	Are there any issues for farmers under eligibility for BPS if they farm in a pearl mussel friendly way?	Farmers need to keep within the eligibility rules and it is not foreseen that conflicts will arise as a result of managing lands for a high PMP score will affect eligibility for BPS.	Dawros
Forestry	There is forestry cutting currently happening behind my farm. It is likely that this will be replanted and all of this will result in impacts in the	The Pearl Mussel Programme is focused on agriculture and has no role in forestry activities. The Forest Service of the DAFM provides grant schemes and other supports to the forest sector. The Forest Service also has key responsibilities under other environmental legislation, including European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I.477 / 2011), which imposes an obligation on the Forest	Kerry Blackwater

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
	watercourses.	Service to be responsible for relevant aspects of the Birds and Habitats Directives. The Forest Service is represented on the Project Steering Group.	
Forestry	Are Coillte involved?	No. We are focusing on lands that are actively being farmed.	Caragh
FPM	Do the mussels stay buried in the river bed until they become mature?	The mussels stay buried in the river bed for approximately 5 years until they have reached a large enough size to withstand the water flow in the river. They then live on the bed of the river and can survive here for up to 140 years.	Kerry Blackwater
FPM	Is 5 years enough to know that freshwater pearl mussel populations are improving?	No. The species is a long lived species and any response of the population as a result of the Pearl Mussel Programme is unlikely to be evident for a period significantly longer than five years. The short-term effectiveness of the Programme will need to be measured by looking at other indicators of water quality at the farm and sub-catchment level. Other catchment-wide activities will also continue to have an effect on water quality and freshwater pearl mussel and therefore it is important that any monitoring takes account of these activities by trying to isolate the effects of the Programme. Other environmental benefits (such as terrestrial biodiversity) will also be actively monitored during the duration of the Programme and will be monitoring through the changes in farmland score.	Currane
FPM	What effect does the salmon population have on pearl mussel?	Salmon (and trout) are an essential part of the lifecycle of freshwater pearl mussel but research shows that the decline in salmonids (salmon and trout) would need to be very drastic for there to be a significant impact on freshwater pearl mussel. The decline in freshwater pearl mussel in Ireland has not been attributed to reduced salmonid populations. It is likely that the reasons for the decline in freshwater pearl mussel also contribute to the decline in salmon and trout populations.	Caragh
FPM	Is water quality the most important thing for pearl mussel?	Yes, freshwater pearl mussels need extremely good water quality in order to survive. However, water quality is directly impacted by the quality and condition of the adjoining lands. Water flow is also known to have a major effect on freshwater pearl mussel survival and changes in flow can have a direct effect on water quality.	Dawros
GLAS	If you're already in GLAS, will you be able to enter the Programme?	Yes. The Programme will provide an additional environmental support on top of GLAS. There is a reduced payment in the Programme for parcels that are in Low Input Permanent Pasture (40% reduction in the PMP payment) and Traditional Hay Meadows (25% reduction in PMP payment) due to an overlap in the environmental deliverables. The GLAS payment will not be influenced by the PMP payment.	Kerry Blackwater, Bundorragha

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
GLAS	Is there an overlap with Commonage Management Plan?	There is no overlap and there will be no reduction in payments. However, in relation to supporting actions the Commonage Management Plan (CMP) will need to be checked to ensure no double funding for particular actions.	Bundorragha
GLAS	Is it like the GLAS scheme, when you sign up you are in for 5 years?	No. The participant can withdraw from the Programme after one months notice in writing to the Project Manager. No further payment claims will be accepted after such notice is received. There will be no clawback of moneys paid to date in the case of withdrawal from the Programme.	Bundorragha
Impacting activities	Those who have been farming intensively will be getting low payments. Shouldn't they be getting higher payments so that they are more likely to come in?	The Programme adopts the results-based approach whereby payment is made for the delivery of environmental benefits. Those that provide the best environmental products will receive a higher payment. Past management can therefore be reflected in the payment. Intensively managed farmland with low quality habitats may receive a low or no payment from the Programme. However, there is a supporting action payment stream which is available to all participants. The supporting action payment is not related to the current habitat quality but following implementation should give rise to improved habitat quality, which will be reflected in future results-based payment. We aim to make the Programme attractive for both the more intensive and the less intensive farmer. It is about striking a balance, but ultimately the payment will be related to the quality of the environmental product being delivered.	Kerry Blackwater
Impacting activities	If intensive farmers are brought into the Programme, what is the point? [<i>i.e.</i> will this not reward damage to the pearl mussel?]	It is a business decision for the farmer: is it more profitable to farm an area intensively, or to get paid for environmental services from that land? The Programme provides an alternative market whereby farmers are paid for the production of environmental benefits. This is likely to be attractive to farmers of lands that are currently non-profitable in the food production economy. As outlined above we aim to make the Programme attractive for both the more intensive and the less intensive farmer.	Kerry Blackwater
Impacting activities	What will happen regarding sheep dip?	Traditionally sheep dip stations have often been built adjacent to rivers and the effluent then disposed of locally (often into the river). The chemicals used in sheep dipping are harmful to the aquatic environment, wildlife, and human health if used incorrectly. Risks to water quality can arise due to a number of factors including structural defects of tanks, location of tanks in relation to nearby watercourse, and the means of disposing spent dip. Where dipping tanks are in use and do not meet	Kerry Blackwater, Bundorragha

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
		Cross-Compliance regulations (either due to nature of the unit, inadequate spread land, etc.), this will be captured on the whole farm assessment. In the case where high risks to water quality are identified then farmers will have the option to avail of a mobile dipping service as a supporting action for the first two years of the Programme which eliminates risks to water quality within PMP catchments.	
Impacting activities	What about rush spraying which often takes place close to the river? There are rushes everywhere, they need to be controlled.	Due to the sensitivity of many aquatic species to the presence of pesticides and in order to maintain species diverse grasslands, pesticides are not permitted, except for spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds and rushes. Where present, rushes can be controlled either mechanically, by weed wiping and/or by spot spraying.	Kerry Blackwater, Currane
Impacting activities	Do deer numbers cause detrimental effects to river?	Damage from deer is not expected to be significant as they pass through, rather than loiter in the river as cattle are prone to do.	Currane
Impacting activities	Is Rhododendron part of the problem?	Yes, particularly in catchments where it has become very invasive. At the catchment level it can have an effect on evapotranspiration and water flow. It reduces the value of habitats along the river and can interfere with supply of food to mussels. Removal of rhododendron will be included as a supporting action.	Currane, Dawros, Bundorragha
Impacting activities	If some farmers are doing everything right and others causing environmental damage, it's going to affect the results of the project?	Environmental damage within the catchment will have a negative impact on freshwater pearl mussel. However, the more farmers are performing well in the Programme, the more likely improvements will be observed. This will in turn move a spot-light on other activities that may impact freshwater pearl mussels.	Currane
Impacting activities	Years ago there used to be lots of livestock in the river and they would be standing there all day. Why are farmers being blamed for the decline of pearl mussel now?	Pearl mussel face lots of pressures so we do not think that the population decline has one causative factor – it is likely to be a combination of several contributing factors, e.g. climate change, forestry, agriculture, domestic sources, etc. This Programme can only address agriculture and we are hopeful that these will lead to positive results for pearl mussel. We also hope to increase awareness of the issue amongst the wider public and other catchment users.	Caragh
Impacting activities	Why are drains on farms an issue?	Hydrological pathways are very important to pearl mussel, and they are significantly affected by flow- so that in the summer with field drains, the flow from the land is too low (all the water is drained off quickly) and in winter high flows are excessively high because this land doesn't have the ability to hold as much water as it would if it was undrained. Freshwater pearl mussels are sensitive to both these extremes.	Caragh

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
Impacting activities	Would you be allowed to spray Rhododendron?	We recommend hand clearance and point application of glyphosate to stumps. Spraying is not recommended, particularly nearby watercourses. The Programme will develop specific guidelines on the treatment and eradication of Rhododendron. Good practice for its removal varies depending on a number of factors including maturity of the plants.	Dawros
KerryLIFE project	Are participants of the KerryLIFE project going to be accepted to the Pearl Mussel Programme?	Yes, it is hoped that KerryLIFE will be offered a place to transition from KerryLIFE to PMP in 2019 before the KerryLife contract finishes. The KerryLife participants will be scored in year 1 but not receive a results-based payment in 2019 from the Pearl Mussel Programme. We are working with the KerryLife team to ensure a smooth transition. It will be important for us to communicate clearly with the farmers to ensure they have a complete understanding of how the Pearl Mussel Programme differs from KerryLife. The approach of the Programme is more focused on a results-based approach rather than measures based approach used in the Kerry Life research programme.	Caragh
KerryLIFE project	If a farm has been scored in year one, having already been through KerryLife, would they then have an advantage?	Yes. It is hoped that KerryLife farmers will score well in year 1 of the Programme as the score will reflect past management. Issues such as livestock access to water courses, sedimentation, and excess nutrient will be captured in the Pearl Mussel Programme assessment and if these issues have been addressed on your farm your score will reflect this.	Caragh
Other agri-environmental programmes	Was the Burren Programme initially a pilot programme?	Yes, initially LIFE funding of 5 years, and over 15-20 years has grown and continues to be supported. They are in the position that they have had 15 years to build up to where they are now, while the PMP has one year to design and develop the Programme and recruit farmers. The advice we have received from the Burren is to grow slowly and do it right. Our Programme is a Pilot Project and therefore we can adapt our approach during the duration of the Programme. We will welcome feedback from participants on how improvements / refinements can be made.	Kerry Blackwater
Other agri-environmental programmes	If farmers are in this programme, will they lose out on other schemes coming down the road with CAP 2020?	No, it should work that other programmes should be an add-on to the Programme, in the same way this Programme is over and above GLAS, BPS and ANC. In any case, should any concerns arise, farmers are free to withdraw from this programme once they provide one months' notice to the project team.	Bundorragha

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
Payments	Some smaller farmers would have picked LIPP and fencing of watercourses in GLAS as they have higher payments than Natura. These smaller farmers will then be getting a reduced PMP payment. It's important that these small farmers are accounted for in the Programme.	The Programme have set a higher payment band for the first 15ha of land in the hope that this will account for farmer with smaller land holdings.	Kerry Blackwater
Payments	Does everyone get paid the same regardless of area?	No. While the payments are results-based, it is also indirectly related to area. The score achieved on a plot will be paid according to a rate per hectare, depending on quality of the habitat. Payment bands will apply whereby the rates will decline as the area increases across bands.	Currane
Payments	Do you get paid more if you have a larger farm?	Not necessarily. Payment will be made based on per hectare rates assigned to different scores. A large farm could be getting a low payment if the habitats are of poor quality whereas a smaller farm may receive a higher payment if their habitats achieve a high score. Two farms of different size achieving the same score, will be not receive the same payment, in this case the larger farm would receive a larger payment. This higher payment is considered fair as the larger farm is contributing more to the aims of the Programme.	Glaskeelan
Turf cutting	Will turf cutting be allowed?	PMP will not pay on areas where peat cutting is being carried out. Peat extraction within a plot will have a negative effect on the score. This is due to the negative environmental effects of peat cutting.	Dawros
Turf cutting	How will you deal with someone who has external turbarry rights who is cutting on participating commonage?	In this case the participant will need to demonstrate to the Project Team that the turbarry is being undertaken by a third party and that they have legal rights to do so. As this would be outside of the participants' control, this may exclude the peat cutting area from the payment but the effects of it on the wider plot will not give rise to a lower score.	Glaskeelan
Turf cutting	Is peat cutting next to the river the river the biggest issue?	Peat cutting can constitute a major pressure to freshwater pearl mussel due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to flow 	Glaskeelan

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can give rise to sedimentation of river • Drainage effects on habitats that provide water and food for mussels to the river. <p>These effects are likely to be stronger when occurring in proximity to the river, however it may also have a significant effect where turbary areas removed from the river are linked via drainage ditches etc.</p>	
PMP	What level of involvement do the department (DAFM) have?	The Programme is funded by the Department and they will be carrying out audits to ensure appropriate procedures are in place and that the payments are correct. The project team has largely been working on developing the Programme independent of the Department with significant input from external experts, although in regular consultation with the Department. The Department have an active involvement on our Project Steering Group.	Owngappul
PMP	Is this programme a pilot project or more permanent?	The Programme is a Pilot project of five year duration, running until December 2023. Depending on its success it is possible that after five years it could be continued or rolled out further. The Programme is a Pilot to see how well a programme like this can work on a catchment scale. It may also be used to inform the future schemes to be developed under the next RDP when there is likely to be a greater focus on delivering environmental targets.	Kerry Blackwater, Owngappul
PMP	Will PMP be inspecting the river banks to see where there are issues with water entering the river?	As part of the Programme, each farm will be assessed annually and this will include an assessment of river banks and any issues arising from farming along watercourses. Any significant concerns identified will reduce the score and associated payment to be issued to the farmer.	Dawros
PMP	How will flowers and grasses help pearl mussel?	The quality of the habitat in areas that drain into the rivers influences water quality, with better quality habitat promoting good water quality. The number and type of flowers and grasses present can be used as a measure of the habitat quality.	Dawros
PMP	Is PMP interested in water quality?	Yes, but we will be measuring the quality of the land habitats that drain to the rivers as a surrogate for water quality. In addition we will be assessing the interface between the land and the watercourses as part of our farm assessments. We are likely to do some monitoring of water quality during the Programme to enable us to report on the effectiveness of measures or the Programme in general.	Gliskeelan

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
PMP	When you say high quality bog what do you mean?	High quality bog habitat equates to areas of bog that remain intact (haven't been cut or drained in the past), are generally hydrologically intact, and support natural vegetation typical of undisturbed bog conditions.	Glaskkeelan
PMP measures	Will a farmer have to do different things every year?	In this catchment (Ownagappul) it is likely that most land will be getting a result payment from the start. There will be money available through supporting actions to carry out measures to improve the result. An annual allowance will be available to the farmer to undertake these supporting actions. It is up to the farmer and their advisor to choose appropriate actions each year. It is foreseen that in most instances the majority of the payment will be the results payment.	Ownagappul
PMP measures	Would all watercourses have to be fenced off from bovines?	Generally yes, but not necessarily. If there are no signs of damage/impacts of livestock on the watercourse, then fencing is not needed. In some cases an electric fence in certain areas may suffice, once the electric fence is checked regularly to ensure correct operation. Often there are certain crossing points or pinch points used by livestock to cross a watercourse. In that situation the aim would be to try and get the livestock to cross somewhere where you have a bridging structure and fence off any damaged area to let it recover. If there are no signs of damage, your payment will not be effected. Payments will be for habitat quality, not the presence of fencing.	Ownagappul
PMP measures	Are silt traps an option instead of drain blocking?	They do slow the flow to some extent but are only good for use as a temporary measure. We may include measures such as silt traps during site works associated with installing certain supporting actions to reduce possible risk of sediment losses.	Currane
PMP measures	Will PMP pay some of the cost towards supporting actions?	Yes, the Programme will be providing supporting actions payments that will cover a proportion of the cost of the actions. In some instances where there is no agricultural benefit accruing from the action the Programme may fund to value of 100% whereas in other cases where the farmer gets an agricultural benefit then a lower proportion of the cost will be incurred by the Programme.	Dawros
PMP measures / Commonages	How will supporting actions be managed where not all commonage shareholders are in PMP?	We will encourage collective cooperation between commonage participants in deciding on supporting actions. Actions will only be possible where there is no objection from other shareholders in that commonage. It will be in the interest of all participants that supporting actions are undertaken and implemented successfully because any increase in habitat quality will be reflected in the payment to all participants.	
PMP measures	How does bracken come into	Encroachment of bracken may result in a reduction of your field score in some	Bundorragha

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
	this and how should it be controlled?	circumstances. We will issue guidance on the appropriate control of Bracken.	
PMP measures	How will issues like overstocking and siltation be addressed on commonages?	Any adverse effects due to overstocking will be reflected in the score and associated payment. In the case where habitat is damaged due to overstocking (or other issues) then the payment will be reduced. The incentive to reduce stock numbers would be the prospect of higher payments in the following years. Very often the solution may come down to stock management to graze the commonage more evenly. We will support a range of supporting actions that could help reduce sediment losses from commonages and improve stock management.	Owenriff
PMP measures	If vegetation along a river/stream bank is allowed to grow, would that improve water quality?	Yes, In general it would act as a buffer intercepting nutrients and sediment before they enter the river. However, this depends on the potential sources of nutrients/sediments.	Glaskelán
Programme entry	Will large farms be prioritised for entry into the Programme?	No. PMP is aware that one small farmer could be as important to the objective of the Programme as a large farmer. The Programme will have payment bands, with higher rates paid for the first 15ha of land to accommodate small farmers and make the Programme attractive and worthwhile to them. The selection criteria for successful applicants will be based on proximity and connectivity to pearl mussel rivers rather than area.	Kerry Blackwater
Programme entry	How many farmers will be taken into the Programme?	PMP intends to accommodate in excess of 425 farmers overall. Expressions of interest will be taken from mid-February through 30 th April 2019 on a rolling basis and the number of participants will be spread evenly between the catchments. If one catchment is undersubscribed, the additional places may be transferred to a catchment which is oversubscribed. There is likely to be a phased entry over a minimum of two years. The number of participants will be dictated by the number of applicants and the overall Programme budget.	Kerry Blackwater, Caragh
Programme entry	How will only having some farmers in the Programme help to achieve your environmental results?	The total number of farmers that will be taken into the Programme will depend on both the interest in joining the Programme amongst eligible farmers and the available budget. Based on the payments available to farmers we expect to incorporate the majority (>50%) of farmland in the eight catchments into the Programme. This is a Pilot Programme and subject to it being tested and its level of success. It is possible that it then it may be continued and rolled out further in the future. It is however a	Kerry Blackwater, Owenriff

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
		voluntary Programme and we need to design it in such a way that it is attractive for farmers in the relevant areas. There is always likely to be a number of farmers not interested in participating in a Programme such as this.	
Programme entry	Does the Programme include rented land?	Yes. The only requirement is that it has been declared on the applicants 2018 BPS application. Additional rented or leased lands not declared in 2018 will not be paid on.	Ownagappul
Programme entry	Are there farms that we are going to accept into the Programme preferentially?	Yes, in order for the process to be as fair as possible, a grading system has been developed, based on proximity and connectivity to freshwater pearl mussel rivers. Details of this ranking process are published in the Programme Terms and Conditions. Similar priority ranking is applied to commonages to identify those being selected for the Programme.	Currane, Glaskeelan
Programme entry	Is entry into the Programme going to be on a first come first served basis?	Applicants will be accepted on a rolling basis each month from mid-February through 30 th April 2019. Unsuccessful applicants in one month will be assessed again in the next month. Applicants made during the first month therefore stand the best chance of being accepted into the Programme. Expressions of interest can continue to be submitted in after May 2019 although the second batch of participants will not be selected until early 2020 when we expect to be able to recruit further participants.	Caragh
Programme entry	If farmers only have commonage within the catchment and lowland outside the catchment, will their lowland be affected?	Any lands outside of the catchment will not be included in the Programme. In the case of a parcel straddling the boundary then only that portion occurring within the catchment will be considered for payment. Lands in the ownership of participants that occur outside of the catchment will not be included.	Bundorragha
Programme entry	Is only land running alongside a river eligible?	No. Any land within the catchment boundary is eligible for the Programme. However, priority will be given to those in proximity and connected to main watercourses. A map showing the catchment boundaries and mapped watercourses can be viewed on the project website (http://pmproject.ie/eligible-areas.html).	Glaskeelan
Programme entry	If you only have commonage land within the catchment are you eligible?	Yes. Should you have a shareholding in one of the priority commonages then you would be eligible to join the Programme in 2019. Only the commonage lands within the catchment will be eligible for entry to the Programme. In the case where a farmer with private lands within the catchment joins on the basis of having a shareholding in a priority commonage then the private farmland must also come into the Programme.	Glaskeelan

Category	Question	Response and how concerns addressed in final Programme	Catchment
Scoring	When will the scoring be done?	Scoring of land will have to be done during the summer or early autumn as this is the optimal time for surveying the habitats relevant to the Programme. Many of the indicator plants which are used in the scoring assessment are not identifiable outside of this season.	Ownagappul
Scoring	Who will do the scoring?	PMP Farm Advisors will do the scoring. It is hoped that over time farmers would gain a good enough understanding of the scoring system to know what score their land should be getting. Participating farmers are obliged to attend training courses during each year of the Programme. Scoring of habitats will be covered during these training events.	Bundorragha, Owenriff
Scoring	If a score is not improving for a couple of consecutive years but the farmer is doing everything right, what happens?	Certain lands that have been subject to intensive management may take a couple of years to revert to semi-natural conditions whereby they would be entitled to a results-based payment. It is also possible that with some land, it will not be possible to improve the score over a certain level due to natural constraints, such as being naturally species-poor or previously having been cut for turf.	Bundorragha

4 Addressing key concerns raised in Programme design

The questions and concerns raised by farmers during the consultation meetings informed the final programme design. The following sections provide a brief overview of the main issues and how they have been addressed. Not all concerns or issues have been incorporated into the programme design and in these cases, a reason for this has been given.

4.1 Programme entry

A number of questions relating to programme entry arose during the consultation meetings. General questions such as "who is eligible to join?", "how many farmers will be taken into the Programme?", and "are farmers prioritised to get into the Programme?" were asked. All farmers that own land within the catchment boundaries are eligible to apply to the Programme. A number of farmers in one catchment felt that all eligible farmers should be included in the Programme, regardless of the effect on payments. However, the overall feeling from the other catchments was that this was not a priority for the majority of farmers. Ultimately the project is limited by the budget, with a set figure of ca €8 million available for farmer payments. The higher the number of participants the lower the payments will be for individual farmers. The PMP team feel that it is important to strike a balance between accommodating as many farmers as possible while also ensuring that the payments are worthwhile for participants. As expression of interest forms are received, the applications will be prioritised and highest priority applicants will be accepted onto the Programme. Those who are not accepted will roll over to the next month. As each farmer is accepted their likely cost to the Programme will be calculated. Once the total budget has been allocated, no more participants will be accepted. Eligible farmers are encouraged to submit their expression of interest forms as early as possible, to increase their chance of acceptance.

4.2 Payments

A number of questions relating to payments, in particular payments for smaller farms arose during the meetings. Payments made by EIP projects cannot be area based, and therefore, payments will be based on results achieved for an environmental target (habitat quality). When calculating payments, the habitat quality score will be multiplied by a payment rate which is based on four area bands. The highest payment rates are given for the lowest area band (0-15ha), ensuring that even if a farm is small in size, they will be paid at the highest rate. Furthermore smaller farms will be supported by a supplementary payment to address disproportionately large advisor fees (see below).

4.3 Accommodating intensive farmers

Conflicting views regarding the inclusion of intensive farmers were voiced during the consultation meetings. On one hand it was felt that intensive farmers should not be receiving payments, as they are not managing their land in a way that promotes biodiversity and water quality. On the other hand, it was felt that if the intensive farmer is not being incentivised to join the Programme, the Programme would not meet its overall aims. The Programme has been designed in such a way that farmers can receive two separate payment streams. The first is the results-based payment. This is payment for habitat quality and the overall contribution of the farm to water course condition. Intensive farmers will not receive a high results-based payment in the initial years of the project, however they will be entitled to supporting actions payments. The supporting actions are measures that can be put in place on farms to improve environmental quality and increase their results-based payment in subsequent years. This means that the Programme does not reward intensive farmers for habitat quality initially, however it does provide them with the support to improve habitat quality and be rewarded for it in the latter years of the Programme.

4.4 Farm advisors

A number of queries arose relating to farm advisors. All participating farmers must appoint a PMP approved farm advisor. A list of approved advisors will be made available to farmers when they are offered a Programme contract. In many cases, the farmers existing advisor may be on the approved list and can support the farmer in this Programme. Advisors must be paid by the farmer (with the exception of commonage), however the payment of advisors has been factored into the farmer payments. Where a farmer has the same advisor for multiple programmes, they may be able to offer a combined rate to the farmer. Concerns about the costs associated with appointing an advisor were raised. We have aimed to reduce the likely costs of advisory fees by incorporating the following into the Programme;

- The Project Team will undertake a significant amount of the administrative tasks including; preparation of the initial farm plan for the farmer, and calculation of payments.
- Catchment officers have been appointed in the two regions to provide advisory support to farmers and advisors;
- The transmission of information from the advisors to the Project Team will be in digital format using online tools which should increase efficiency and reduce the time required by advisors to work on the Programme;
- The Project team will manage and fund the initial drainage surveys of each farm. This will reduce the amount of effort advisors would have needed to carry out baseline assessments of farms;
- There are likely to be disproportionately large advisor fees for small farms or commonage only farmers which have the potential to only receive small payments from the Programme. To address this a supplementary administration payment will be made to all participants that receive less than €1,100 in payments from the Programme. After the first year participating in the Programme the payment will only be made to those farmers receiving a good whole farm assessment; and
- The Project Team will provide additional advisory support to commonages, particularly smaller commonages and those with large numbers of participating shareholders.

4.5 Commonage

The way in which commonage lands will be dealt with was queried at a number of consultation meetings. Where a farmer has private land and a commonage shareholding, these will be treated separately. Each commonage (LPIS) parcel is treated individually. The PMP team have reviewed all eligible commonage parcels, and have created a priority list of parcels for entry into the Programme in 2019. Priority was given to commonage parcels in proximity to, or directly connected to, freshwater pearl mussel rivers. Within these rankings, higher priority was given to parcels with a large amount of watercourses relative to land area. Shareholders from these priority commonage parcels are invited to apply to the Programme in 2019. A single farm advisor will be appointed to each priority commonage parcel. The PMP team will work closely with the commonage advisor and the shareholders to try and get as high a take-up as possible among all shareholders in priority commonages. Each participating shareholder will receive their allocated share of the total payment for that commonage parcel. Any shareholders who are not participating in the Programme will not receive a payment. Supporting actions will not be compulsory on commonage lands, but will be encouraged where appropriate. Where a group want to come together to implement measures on a commonage parcel they will be supported by the PMP team provided the measures are likely to deliver an environmental benefit.

5 Conclusions

The questions and issues which arose during the consultation process were extremely valuable and have informed the final Programme design. The meetings provided the PMP team with an opportunity to introduce themselves to farmers in the catchment areas and to gain a better understanding of the farming type, demographics of eligible farmers, their perceptions of the catchment areas, and farming and the environment. The majority of farmers seemed to be in favour of a results-based programme and also view wildlife as something worth protecting. However, the majority of farmers also felt that they are not paid enough for environmental protection. It is hoped that by the end of the Programme, this may have changed as the Programme aims to put a value on the environmental product produced by farmers. The Programme will reward farmers for high quality habitats, and will also support farmers with lower quality habitats to improve over time. Key issues that arose during the consultation process that have been incorporated into the Programme design are; accommodation of smaller farms, accommodation of intensive farmers, appointment of advisors, and an appropriate means of accommodating commonage participants.

The Programme is a pilot project. Therefore, if it becomes apparent that certain elements of the Programme are not working for farmers, the project team has scope to alter them. If this situation arises, the project team will again take the views and opinions of farmers into account when making any alterations to the Programme.

Finally, we sincerely thank all attendees for their help and assistance during the consultation phase of this programme, and for providing an invaluable insight into the key issues of these eight catchments.

Appendix I



**PEARL
MUSSEL
PROJECT**

Consultation Meeting Questionnaire

Pearl Mussel Project
Bell Height | Kenmare | Co Kerry
Laghloom | Westport | Co Mayo

1. Which catchment do you own land/farm within (Please tick the appropriate one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Bundorragha, Co. Mayo	<input type="checkbox"/> Glaskeelan, Co. Donegal
<input type="checkbox"/> Caragh, Co. Kerry	<input type="checkbox"/> Blackwater, Co. Kerry
<input type="checkbox"/> Currane, Co. Kerry	<input type="checkbox"/> Owenriff, Co. Galway
<input type="checkbox"/> Dawros, Co. Galway	<input type="checkbox"/> Ownagappul, Co. Cork

2. Please describe where your property occurs (Tick one)

Private land within a Pearl Mussel Project catchment

Private and commonage lands within catchment

Commonage shareholder within catchment

Other

3. Do you farm full time or part time? (Tick one)

Full time Not farming

Part time

4. Please indicate your age (Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-74
<input type="checkbox"/> 25-34	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 75
<input type="checkbox"/> 35-54	

5. Describe your farm type (Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist Beef	<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed Livestock
<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist Dairy	<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed crops and livestock
<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist Sheep	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

6. Give up to five words you would most associate with farming in your catchment

7. Give up to five words that come to mind when you think about your catchment in 20 years time

8. How long have you known about Freshwater Pearl Mussels? (Tick one)

Never heard of them before today

When I heard about this Pearl Mussel Project

As part of the KerryLIFE project

I have only become aware of them recently (last five years)

I have known about them for most of my life.

9. Which of the following do you most associate with Freshwater Pearl Mussel? (Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Clean water	<input type="checkbox"/> A nuisance
<input type="checkbox"/> Restrictions	<input type="checkbox"/> Endangered
<input type="checkbox"/> A healthy environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting

10. Are you aware of the following results based programmes? (Tick relevant box(es))

The Burren (LIFE) Programme

The Hen Harrier Programme

Never heard of either of these programmes

11. This programme will be results-based. The better the environmental result the higher the payment. Is this fair? (Tick one)

Yes No

12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements (Circle agree or disagree after each statement)

- Farming is important for helping wildlife
AGREE / DISAGREE
- Farmers are not paid enough for the wildlife they protect, support or manage
AGREE / DISAGREE
- It is difficult for farming and wildlife to exist together if you want to run a profitable farm
AGREE / DISAGREE
- Wildlife is a valuable asset on my farm
AGREE / DISAGREE
- It is important to me that the wildlife on my farm is conserved
AGREE / DISAGREE
- It is important to me to leave my farm in better environmental condition than when I first started farming it
AGREE / DISAGREE

13. Please indicate where you heard about the Pearl Mussel Project (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Project website	<input type="checkbox"/> Local radio
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation meeting poster
<input type="checkbox"/> Local paper	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth or Friend / neighbour	

Appendix II

Examples of words for responses to questions 6 & 7

- Flexible
- Family business
- Upland
- Marginal
- Fulfilling
- Designated land
- Nature
- Difficult
- Progressive
- Abandonment
- Clean water
- Succession
- Profitable
- Part time
- Community
- Agri-environmental schemes
- Restrictions
- Well rewarded