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Creed presents EU Life Award to Burren farmers

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, has presented the Burren farming community with a special EU Life award to mark the role they have played in protecting and enhancing the unique landscape in which they live and farm. The presentation was made at a community event on Thursday evening (13th) in Kilfenora.

The Green Award is a special award organised by the European Union, which is celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the LIFE Programme this year. Since its inception in May 1992, the LIFE Programme has supported over 4,300 projects and to mark the anniversary, a competition was organised to choose the very best projects of the last 25 years. Ireland's Burren Life Programme emerged as joint winner in the nature and biodiversity category.

Speaking at the presentation, Minister Creed said: *"It is a huge achievement for an Irish project to win one of these prestigious awards, and to have been selected as the outstanding project in its category over the last 25 years is a tribute to the commitment of all of those involved."*

The Burren Programme is now an established agri-environment scheme under the Irish Rural Development Programme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and by the European Union. The number of participating farmers is scheduled to triple over the lifetime of the new Programme.

The Minister noted that this was a partnership involving many different entities, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc, the Heritage Council and his own Department, but he paid special tribute to the Burren Project Team led by Dr Brendan Dunford and the Burren farming community.

The Minister continued *“This award acknowledges two significant achievements, including the positive impact which Ireland’s Rural Development Programme, funded and managed by my Department, can make to local farming communities through innovative schemes such as this. Secondly the award is rightly a source of huge pride to the farming community here in the Burren, and the team who have supported and worked with it over the last 15 years. They have created something very special, something which has caused the rest of Europe to sit up and take notice and is consistently pointed out as a model for other communities and indeed Countries to follow.”*

Minister Creed also announced the dates for the next Burren Winterage School, organised by BurrenBeo Trust and funded by his Department. This will take place from 26th to 28th October in Ballyvaughan and the theme this year will be *“Community-inspired innovation for sustainable farming systems”*.



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