

# AIDAN O'CONNOR & MARTHA FARRELL

## MAHAREES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, MAHAREES, KERRY

STAND



### THE STORY

Meet Aidan and Martha, two members of a volunteer group that enhances, protects and preserves the unique Maharees sand dunes. For the last six years the Maharees Conservation Group has been researching nature-based solutions for dune management and raising awareness of the huge challenges coastal communities face along the West Coast.

**"Sand dunes are our only personal defence system protecting us from the rising sea level."**

Sand dunes are susceptible to natural erosion but this has been exacerbated by human activity on the dunes, killing the vulnerable Marram grasses that bind them together.

These handsome dune systems provide a home for flora and fauna, and act as a critical safety blanket that wraps around the coast, protecting the community from flooding.

The group is a collaboration of 60-plus people who are determined to restore the dunes and protect their community. They replant and replenish the coastal grasses, with Aidan leading the charge by erecting fences that keep traffic off the dunes. Another important aim is to generate a greater understanding amongst the public that sand dunes are fragile and easily damaged.

**"Human behaviour can hinder or help our actions in protecting the system."**

The group has reverted a carpark back into a thriving

sand dune—rich in biodiversity, thick with Marram grasses and now fit to fight off flooding.

### THE WHY

"This group has changed my life. I didn't think I could make a difference, but I can see that I am. I didn't like living here before because I thought I couldn't do anything about it, but that all changed when I joined the group."

### THE CHALLENGE

"Before going on holiday, do a little bit of research on the area you are going to. Stick to the path, leave no trace, and still enjoy it."

### THE HOPE

"Being part of a diverse group of people with very different outlooks who have achieved something phenomenal together has given me hope."

### THE RECOMMENDATION

ARTICLE - The Guardian: 'Air is cleaner than before the Industrial Revolution' - a best case scenario for the climate in 2050.

**To find out more visit [mahareesconservation.com](http://mahareesconservation.com) or follow the group on Facebook - @Maharees Heritage and Conservation Group.**

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**A small group of people really can make a difference.**

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