



**THEME:**

Environment

**FUNDING (ERDF+MATCH):**

€9,210,813.93

**MATCH FUNDING:**

Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural  
Affairs; and the Department  
of Housing, Planning and  
Local Government

**LEAD PARTNER:**

Newry, Mourne & Down  
District Council

**PROJECT PARTNERS:**

East Border Region Ltd;  
Armagh City, Banbridge  
and Craigavon Borough  
Council; Agri-Food and  
Biosciences Institute;  
Ulster University; Ulster  
Wildlife; Monaghan County  
Council; Institute of Tech-  
nology Sligo; Golden Eagle  
Trust; Argyll and the Isles  
Coast and Countryside  
Trust; and Scottish Natural  
Heritage.

Start Date: 01/01/2017

End Date: 31/12/2022

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## SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

### Project Case Study: Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) - Reaching a Carbon Balance

One of the most significant pieces of work carried out by CANN partners, Ulster Wildlife, has been the erosion gully and peat hagg restoration of degraded blanket bog on Cuilcagh Mountain. To do this work the project needed to use helicopters to bring in heavy materials like the Coir Rolls and fencing to temporarily exclude stock. (The Coir Rolls are used to block the gullies, slowing the flow of water and preventing the precious peat from washing away).

Before using such carbon-intensive transport as a helicopter and shipping material like coir, the project carried out detailed research, to make sure it was making the right choices. Coir fibre is the outer husk of the coconut and is a by-product of the coconut industry, not a purpose-harvested product. Coir rolls are placed across the bare peat of eroding gullies to intercept the erosive flowing water that is washing peat off the mountain. The coir traps the peat sediment but allows water to seep through slowly enough to re-wet the area, creating the conditions needed to allow natural bog plant and particularly peat-forming species like sphagnum mosses to re-establish. These are some of the reasons why coir rolls were recommended as part of the hydrological analysis from the project's consultants.

However, in order to improve on the standard practice, the project obtained permission to trial a light-weight, novel sediment trap technique. (It is hoped that solutions like these could potentially replace coir rolls in the future and reduce the associated carbon costs of international shipping and helicopter transport). The project has used sheep's wool and peat itself on other areas on Cuilcagh and are monitoring these results. It is also exploring other potential alternatives, such as locally sourced heather bales and wool, to examine their effectiveness and feasibility for this type of restoration.

When trialing such alternatives however, the project is mindful that Cuilcagh is an internationally important, protected site and there needs to be a balance between using such novel techniques (holding a possibility of failure) and the immediate need for effective and fast gully blocking using established techniques to halt the destruction of this beautiful landscape.

Ulster Wildlife has recently secured funding to do a carbon audit of their operations and will be including an audit of this gully restoration project on Cuilcagh. It hopes and expects that similar results to the Moors for the Future audit will demonstrate the effectiveness of its valuable work on Cuilcagh.

