



## Press Release

11 December 2017

### **CABB hailed as a transformative conservation project linking NI, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland**

**A new five-year European-funded conservation project that spans Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland will improve habitats for birds, butterflies and other species, restore blanket bog and help produce drinking water at a lower cost.**

The Co-operation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB) project, supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), was launched today.

CABB is a €4.9m (£4.3m) project being delivered through a partnership between RSPB NI (the lead partner), RSPB Scotland, BirdWatch Ireland, Butterfly Conservation, Northern Ireland Water and Moors for the Future. The project will see 2,228 hectares of blanket bog being restored across the three countries. The launch today took place close to the Garron Plateau Special Area of Conservation (SAC), as Garron is one of the sites where work on the project will begin next month.

Garron is one of the best examples of blanket bog anywhere on the island of Ireland. A well-managed and functioning blanket bog on the site will help species including hen harriers, curlews and cuckoos to survive in future, along with plants including marsh saxifrage and Irish lady's-tresses orchids. Garron is the only known site for the marsh saxifrage in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Water owns and manages the site where contractors will get to work at the beginning of January to block drains that will, alongside appropriate grazing levels, restore and sustainably manage blanket bog habitat.

RSPB NI is writing Conservation Action Plans for the Garron Plateau SAC, Montiaghs Moss SAC in County Antrim and Pettigo Plateau SAC in County Fermanagh, while Butterfly Conservation is working with landowners and volunteers at a number of sites to improve the conditions for the marsh fritillary butterfly.



Welcoming the official launch of the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the SEUPB said: **“This innovative cross-border project will make a significant contribution to the protection of the precious natural habitats of vulnerable wildlife found across Northern Ireland, the border region of Ireland and Western Scotland. In doing so it will help to deliver the environmental protection objectives of the INTERREG VA Programme and also make a real contribution towards the EU’s Birds and Habitats Directives.”**

The project aims to improve breeding habitat for curlews, lapwings, redshanks and snipe in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and also to improve habitat for hen harriers. Another aim is to raise awareness in the communities involved of the environmental, cultural and historical importance of these wetland habitats.

Speaking at the launch, Joanne Sherwood, Director RSPB NI, said: **“We are delighted to be leading the CABB project and we are particularly thankful for SEUPB’s support. This is key European funding for what is a vital conservation project. CABB is the largest project that RSPB NI has been involved in to date and I have no doubt that, along with our partners, we will improve habitats and deliver great things for bogs, butterflies and birds across Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.”**

Roy Taylor, Northern Ireland Water Catchment Manager, added: **“NI Water aims to provide clean, safe water to drink, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural environment through sustainable catchment based solutions. The CABB project gives us the opportunity to work with partners to restore the entire Garron Plateau blanket bog, which is one of the most extensive areas of upland peat in Northern Ireland, thus enhancing habitats for rare wildlife such as then harriers, golden plovers, snipe, red grouse and common lizards. It also has the benefit that the quality and reliability of water received at our treatment works will be improved in a sustainable way which enhances the natural environment and produces quality drinking water at a lower cost.”**

Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in Ireland, Mines Restoration Limited and RSPB Scotland.

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**For more information please contact John McCandless, Communications Manager with the SEUPB on Mob. 07834 778018 or via e-mail: [john.mccandless@seupb.eu](mailto:john.mccandless@seupb.eu)**

## Notes to Editors:

### CABB Project

- CABB is a €4.9m (£4.3m) project being delivered in Northern Ireland, South West Scotland and Ireland. By the end of 2021, it will have prepared 8 Conservation Action Plans (CAP) for important Natura 2000 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) sites and delivered works to improve the condition of over 2228 hectares of blanket bog.
- Match funding comes from the governments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Mines Restoration Limited and RSPB Scotland.
- RSPB Scotland is delivering works at two sites. At Gruinart on Islay, works to consolidate the sea wall are in the planning stages. These works will protect the important habitat beyond for breeding waders and wintering wildfowl. In Dumfries & Galloway, a Conservation Action Plan is being prepared for the Muirkirk & North Lowther Uplands SPA and works are being delivered to improve the condition of the blanket bog.
- BirdWatch Ireland (BWI) is working at a number of locations in Donegal and Sligo with a view to improving habitat for selected species. By the end of CABB, BirdWatch Ireland will have written three Conservation Action Plans, 1 each for Meentygranagh, Croaghonagh and Dunragh/Pettigo Natura 2000 sites, erected fencing at Pettigo to facilitate grazing, blocked drains on the Ox Mountains to improve the blanket bog condition and improved machair habitat for lapwing.
- Sustainable land management on blanket bogs helps to lock in the carbon and helps manage the threat from climate change. Using this process on bogs that provide the raw water that will become drinking water should help reduce the cost of treatment and thus the cost to the consumer. These added to the benefits for biodiversity are the results of a real and practical ecosystem services approach.

### SEUPB

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland.
- It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border cooperation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.



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- The INTERREG VA Programme has a value of €283 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu)