

Press Release

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EU INVESTS €4.9 MILLION TO IMPROVE DRINKING WATER FROM 'SOURCE TO TAP'

The SEUPB has announced a funding offer worth €4.9m, under the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, for a highly innovative new project called 'Source to Tap' which will improve drinking water quality, on both sides of the border.

'Source to Tap' will be delivered by a cross-border partnership involving Northern Ireland Water, Irish Water, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Ulster University, East Border Region (EBR) and The Rivers Trust.

Upon completion, the project will protect the region's sources of freshwater found in the Derg and Erne catchments and in doing so will help ensure compliance with the EU's Drinking Water Directive.

Working with farmers and other land managers 'Source to Tap' will help reduce pesticide and soil run-off which can find its way into the watercourse. It will also pilot measures with forestry operators to reduce water pollution caused by forestry felling and replanting operations, which can lead to increased levels of silt and impurities in water.

The project also aims to restore 135 hectares of land adjacent to watercourses back to natural peat habitat which will naturally filter the water and reduce the amount of silt entering watercourses. Collectively the project will identify sustainable catchment management solutions that can be shared across Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

Welcoming the funding, Gina McIntyre CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), which manages the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, said: **"Both Ireland and Northern Ireland share a large number of freshwater river basins which provide quality drinking water for an ever-growing population. It is therefore of mutual benefit to ensure that this precious resource is protected now and for future generations.**

"This project will safeguard our drinking water through a series of new and creative practices, developed on a cross-border basis. This collaborative-based approach lies

at the very heart of what the EU's INTERREG VA Programme has been designed to achieve," she continued.

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

David Small, Head of the Environmental, Marine and Fisheries Group at the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, said: **"I welcome the funding of £4.9 million through the EU's INTERREG VA Programme for this innovative new project to improve the quality of drinking water from the Derg and Erne catchment areas. It is important for farmers, forestry operators and other land managers on both sides of the border to play a leading role in helping to protect and sustain our precious fresh water sources for present and future generations."**

The project will also help to raise awareness of the importance of protecting freshwater resources through the employment of Catchment Officers who will work alongside local communities and empower them to identify issues threatening water quality.

Mr. Simon Coveney, TD, Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, in welcoming the project, stated that: **"Its principal value lies in safeguarding drinking water supplies in a holistic, integrated and collaborative fashion, reflecting the diverse pressures on our water bodies and the need to husband our natural water resources in a forward-thinking and productive manner"**.

- ENDS.

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

Notes to Editor:

'Source to Tap' project background

- The project will be delivered by a cross-border partnership made up of Northern Ireland Water, Irish Water, Agri-Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Ulster University, the Rivers Trust and East Border Region Ltd.
- The sustainable catchment area management plans created by the project will highlight the most cost effective measures that can be used to reduce pollution at source, thereby minimising the need for expensive capital investment to remove pollutants and improve raw water quality at Water Treatment Works (WTWs).



SEUPB

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance 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 co-operation, 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.
- 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