

PRESS RELEASE

7th October 2015

EU TO INVEST €49M/£36M TO ENHANCE CROSS-BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & DEVELOPMENT

The EU's INTERREG VA Programme has announced the opening of a call for applications for approximately €49 (£36m) in funding which will support cross-border environment initiatives over the next seven years.

The INTERREG VA Programme has been specifically designed to address problems that arise from the existence of borders. Since the Programme areas of Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland share common natural habitats, species and marine resources, the funding being announced is aimed at facilitating common approaches to their management and the sharing of best practice.

To reflect the diversity of environmental issues being addressed, the cross-border funding call has been divided into three distinct objectives:

- *“Recovery of protected habitats and priority species”* which will result in an increase in the percentage of protected habitats in or approaching favourable condition – funding allocation €12.9m (£9.5m).
- *“Manage marine protected areas and species”* which will result in an increase in the cross-border monitoring and management of marine protected areas and species - funding allocation €12.9m (£9.5m).
- *“Improve freshwater quality in cross-border river basins”* which will result in an increased percentage of cross-border freshwater bodies in cross-border river basins with good or high quality water – funding allocation €23.5m (£17.3m).

The call will open on Wednesday 7th October and close on Friday 8th January 2016. In line with the new result orientation of all EU funding, potential project beneficiaries must be able to clearly demonstrate their ability to meet the results and outputs of the new Programme.

Match-funding for the call has been provided by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Regional Development in Northern Ireland, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in Ireland and the Scottish Executive.

Northern Ireland Environment Minister Mark H Durkan said: **“This funding is a major boost to help protect our environment. I encourage environmental groups to grasp the opportunity and engage in the Programme.**

“This offers a significant chance to recover habitats and species of concern, achieve a more integrated approach to marine management and improve water quality across the region. At a time when budgets are squeezed I urge relevant groups in the North to do everything possible to get a slice of this funding pot for collaborative environmental projects with the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.”

Highlighting the importance of cross-border co-operation, the Minister for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly T.D. said: **“This funding highlights the commitment to protecting and developing the environment throughout the Border areas. The co-operation of all parties concerned is of vital importance to this commitment, and I look forward to working to develop the initiatives involved in an integrated manner for the benefit of the environment and communities across the region.”**

The Programme will support projects based in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

Commenting on the environment call, Gina McIntyre Chief Executive (Designate) of the SEUPB, said: **“One of the key pillars of the new INTERREG VA Programme is the promotion of cross-border collaboration to address common issues relating to the protection of the environment.**

“The range and scale of initiatives being supported, under this funding call, will impact positively on the environment in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland, for many years to come.”

For more information on the funding call go to www.seupb.eu

- ENDS.



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Notes to Editor:

Special EU Programmes Body

- The SEUPB 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 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