

Press Release

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EUROPEAN UNION TO HELP ENVIRONMENTAL RECOVERY WITH MULTI-MILLION CROSS-BORDER INVESTMENT

The SEUPB has offered €4.6 million worth of funding, under the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, to a new and innovative environmental project that will help to recover natural habitats and protect vulnerable species, on a cross-border basis.

The project is called 'Co-operation across Borders for Biodiversity' (CABB) and will be managed by nature conservation charity RSPB Northern Ireland. It will bring together a number of specialist environmental groups, agencies and charities from Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and western Scotland to address common concerns about our natural world.

Working together they will identify and tackle threats posed to important habitats and endangered wildlife found across the three locations. It will also develop a total of eight conservation action plans, detailing hands-on measures like blocking drains on some of the last remaining areas of blanket bog on the Garron Plateau and in the Ox Mountains to restore quality habitat.

The project will also provide advice to landowners on how to manage land for the marsh fritillary butterfly at Montiagh Moss ASSI / Special Area of Conservation, cutting rush in lowland meadows to provide areas for remaining waders to breed and thrive and consolidating a sea wall at Loch Gruinart SSSI to secure lowland wet grassland designated for wintering geese and that supports corncrake and large populations of breeding waders.

These actions will help protect species like hen harrier, golden plovers, curlews and marsh fritillary butterflies. The project will help to conserve rich habitats like blanket bog and fen wetland which are at a number of different areas including the Antrim Hills, the Pettigo area of Ireland and the Muirkirk uplands of Scotland.

Welcoming the funding, Gina McIntyre CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), which manages the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, said: **"This project represents a unique consortium of charities, specialist non-governmental organisations, statutory**



agencies and volunteers who by working in partnership will help to overcome issues of real environmental concern.

“This partnership-based approach reflects the central ethos of the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme, which has been specifically designed to support cross-border based initiatives that will build a more sustainable region now and for future generations,” she continued.

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, Community and Local Government in Ireland, RSPB Scotland and Mines Restoration Ltd.

David Small, Head of the Environmental, Marine and Fisheries Group at the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, said: **“I welcome this multi-million investment via the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme which will facilitate important cross-border collaboration to recover important natural habits and to protect the most vulnerable species in border areas. I particularly welcome the project’s specific work to help conserve the rich habitats of the Antrim Hills.”**

Welcoming the project Simon Coveney TD Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, said: **“Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity on a cross-border basis is an important objective for us all, and the conservation action plans to be developed will safeguard our shared natural heritage for future generations to enjoy and value.”**

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Notes to Editor:

Co-operation across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB) project

- The project represents a partnership, led by RSPB Northern Ireland, including BirdWatch Ireland, RSPB Scotland, NI Water, Butterfly Conservation and Moors for the Future.



- Conservation action will be carried out for the hen harrier, marsh fritillary butterfly, breeding wader species, golden plover and will contribute towards an increase in the extent and range of these species.
- The project will target priority sites across the three countries, including a cross-border site at Pettigo Plateau and the following:
 - Northern Ireland: Garron Plateau, Montiaghs Moss, Pettigo Plateau and Lough Erne.
 - Republic of Ireland: Croaghonagh Bog, Lough Nillan Bog, Meentygrannagh Bog, Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau, breeding wader sites in Donegal and Ox Mountains in Sligo.
 - Scotland: Argyll Island of Islay, Dumfries and Galloway, Ayrshire (including the Muirkirk uplands).

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