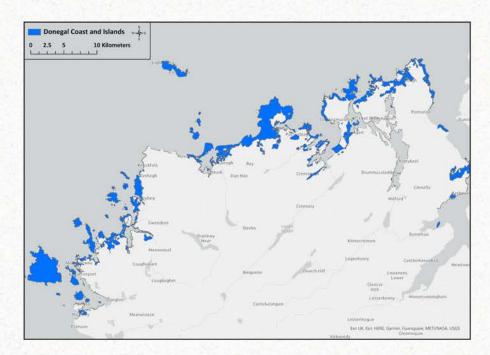






Donegal Local Action Plan

DONEGAL COAST & ISLANDS



DONEGAL COAST & ISLANDS SUB-REGION

The Donegal Coast & Islands subregion stretches from Lough Swilly to Árainn Mhór Island and takes in the majority of the Donegal islands. The sub-region covers an area of 11,505 ha includes coastal grasslands. and machair and vegetative cliffs. The dominant farming activity in the subregion is sheep grazing with some suckler farms. On the islands grazing entails mainly seasonal grazing. Rich grassland allows for good silage and hay making.

NATURA SITES & HIGH STATUS WATERBODIES

The Donegal Coast & Islands sub-region has a rich mosaic of habitats. It is considered an area of high importance as it contains five of Donegal's corncrake Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Other important areas are the Sheephaven Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC which provides protected areas for species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly, Ireland's only protected invertebrate. The sea cliffs of the region are designated SPAs for marine birds, with chough being of particular importance. Several sites are nationally important for breeding waders, particularly lapwings.



There are no high status water bodies in the Donegal Coast & Islands sub-region although there are 5 shellfish designated areas that are adjacent to the CP area.

There are 38 lakes in the sub-region, two of which are high quality.

Many of the Donegal Coast & Islands Natura sites (core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species) are achieving favourable conservation status to some degree. However, failings can be found in the majority of the SPAs targeting corncrakes. These sites have not reached the conservation objectives set by the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS). Also, several SACs have failed for coastal habitats. These are: 1) fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) at Lough Nagreany; 2) Gweedore Bay & Islands and 3) machairs at Horn Head and Rinclevan.

Donegal Coast & Islands has a high number of native species that need to be protected. These include: corncrake, chough, marsh fritillary, geese & swans (Greenland white-fronted goose, barnacle goose), slender naiad, Geyer's whorl snail, narrow-mouthed whorl snail and peregrine falcon. Protecting these species is a priority under the new ACRES programme.

Natura Sites

Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC Sessiagh Lough SAC Ballyness Bay SAC Tranarossan and Melmore Lough SAC Sheephaven SAC Horn Head and Rinclevan SAC Lough Nagreany Dunes SAC Ballyhoorisky Point to Fanad Head SAC Mulroy Bay SAC Tory Island Coast SAC Kindrum Lough SAC Lough Swilly SPA Inishbofin, Inishdooey and Inishbeg SPA Fanad Head SPA Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA

Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA
Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA
Illancrone and Inishkeeragh SPA
West Donegal Coast SPA
West Donegal Islands SPA
Rutland Island and Sound SAC



PRESSURES & IMPACTS

The key priority species for the Donegal Coast & Islands are chough, corncrake, breeding waders and marsh fritillary. Populations of these species are under pressure due to predation, habitat loss, improved grassland, changes in landuse management, drainage, overgrazing, peat extraction and habitat fragmentation.

The main pressures on rivers and estuaries in the region include nutrient pollution, domestic waste water treatment, organic pollution and agriculture.

As a result of monitoring by the EPA, six river catchments that are under pressure from agriculture will be targeted for improvement. These are Ballincrick and Ballynabrocky, Glenvar, Laddan, Big Burn, Rosapenna and Gleanna. Poor water quality and sedimentation are among the key impacts to the rivers.



TAKING ACTION

The ACRES programme, like previous agri-schemes, provides participating farmers with a chance to improve their farm infrastructure, access continued agricultural support payments and support rural sustainability. ACRES differs from previous schemes because it also supports farmers to take on actions to benefit wildlife, improve water quality and help resilience to the effects of climate change.

Non-Productive Investments (NPIs) and Landscape Actions (LAs) are measures that farmers can apply for through their farm advisor and through the Donegal Cooperation team. An important element of the Donegal Local Action Plan is that we will target these actions - 'right measure, right place' - to achieve our aims.

NPIs and LAs are targeted to certain areas and species. The Donegal ACRES team have made recommendations on areas to focus on (see last page). This includes improving habitats like coastal cliffs and machair. These are home to many important species such as chough, lapwing, marsh fritillary and a wide range of native plants.

The CP team will work with farmers to choose actions that will support the goals of the plan to create a healthy environment with a thriving farming community.



EXAMPLE NPI AND LA



NPI: Watering Systems
Install solar pumps, pasture
pumps, and water storage tanks
to help keep livestock out of
watercourses.



LA: Invasive Alien Species
Training on identification of
invasive species, understanding
their impact and how to control on
your land.



NPI: Tree Planting
Plant native trees for carbon
capture, to help soak up excess
nutrients, and provide nesting and
feeding areas for wildlife.



LA: Targeted Grazing
Change livestock density to
improve ground that has been
undergrazed or overgrazed, using
temporary or virtual fencing.



NPI: Fencing
Repair or install new fencing to
block access to watercourses,
protect trees and wildlife habitat
plots or crops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the Donegal Coast & Islands sub-region and activities will primarily be targeted at these specific sites or species. Further actions may be developed over the lifetime of the project.

- Targeted grazing and grassland management to suit species dependent on grassland habitat (corncrake, chough and breeding waders).
- Install temporary predator fences on valuable breeding wader sites along with wader scrapes and scrub management.
- Support geese and swans through targeted LAs.
- Increase areas of early and late cover (ELC) in the corncrake SPAs and use of wildlife friendly mowing.
- Nutrient pollution, agriculture and waste water treatment are the most significant pressures identified
 across the sub-region and these may be addressed by landscape actions such as specialised training
 to landowners on the use of chemicals and pesticides near water, and an explanation of the SourcePathway-Receptor model for understanding how pollution reaches rivers and lakes.
- Measures to support the protection of the native aquatic plant, the slender naiad, on the six lakes in which it occurs will be looked at closely as part of efforts to protect this species.



A full copy of the ACRES Donegal Local Action Plan 2023-2028 can be downloaded from our website.

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