



ACRES
DONEGAL
CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME

Donegal Local Action Plan INISHOWEN

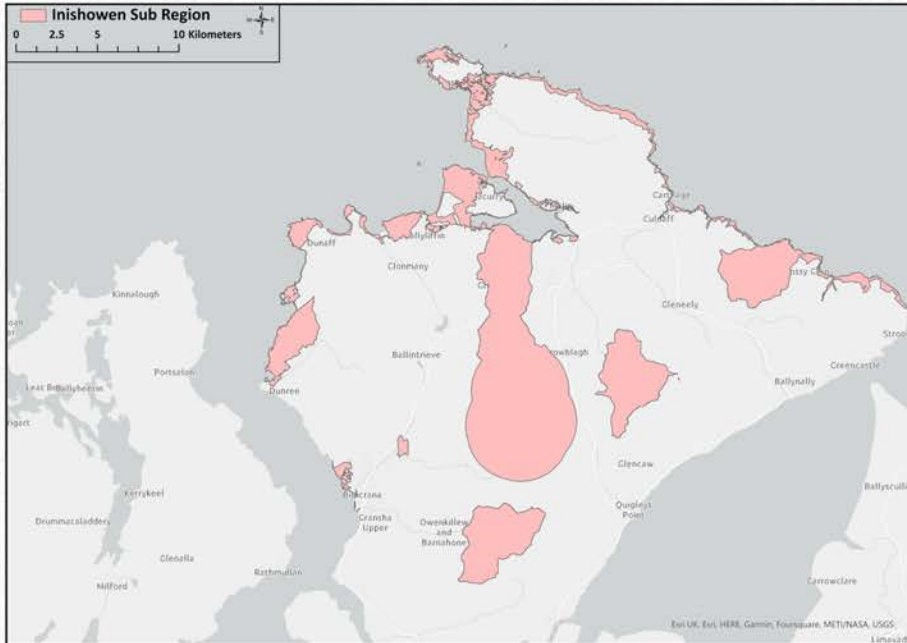


An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



Co-funded by
the European Union

2024



INISHOWEN SUB-REGION

Agriculture is the dominant land use on the Inishowen peninsula with sheep and beef being the most common farming enterprises. There is also a significant area of commonage and a high proportion of the area is dominated by High Nature Value farmland (HNV) including peatlands, pastures, species rich grasslands, wet & dry heathlands. It also has many listed historic sites dating back to early settlements. The Co-operation area covers 14,997 ha or approximately 16.5% of the Inishowen Municipal District area.

NATURA SITES & HIGH STATUS WATERBODIES

The Inishowen sub-region is rich in biodiversity with a mosaic of habitats including areas of coastal dunes, peat bog and heathland. The CP area has 3 designated Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) - the extensive North Inishowen Coast SAC, Magheradrumman SAC and the Lough Swilly SAC. It also has important Special Protected Areas (SPAs) such as the Malin Head SPA, specifically selected for corncrake and the Trawbreaga Bay SPA which is key for several species such as barnacle geese, brent geese and breeding waders. The peninsula includes two Water Framework Directive (WFD) catchments, Donagh-Moville and Lough Swilly and overlaps with 27 river sub-basins.

Natura Sites

North Inishowen Coast SAC
Magheradrumman Bog SAC
Inishtrahull SAC
Lough Swilly SAC
Inishtrahull SPA
Lough Swilly SPA
Trawbreaga Bay SPA
Malin Head SPA

International Sites

Trawbreaga Bay Ramsar site

Nationally Designated sites

Umrycam Bog NHA
Illies Hill Bog NHA
Slieve Snaght Bogs NHA
Camowen River Bog NHA

High Status Waterbodies in Inishowen CP area



- Straid River
- Lough Nastacken Stream, Tremone
- Glennagannon River, Carndonagh
- Mill River, Tullydish

There are 4 high status river bodies in the CP area of Inishowen. These are rivers which are in good health or rivers that were at good status in the past but have declined in recent years. In such cases the aim is to restore the rivers to good health through the use of appropriate farmer-led actions.

Inishowen has a wide variety of native species in need of protection. These include: corncrake, curlew, chough, breeding waders (snipe and lapwing), hen harrier, geese & swans (barnacle & brent geese), narrow-mouthed whorl snail, lamprey, Arctic char, Atlantic salmon and European eel. Protection of these species is a priority under the new ACRES programme which aims to facilitate farmers in choosing farming practices that are not damaging to the surrounding environments and habitat.



PRESSURES & IMPACTS

Many of Inishowen's protected areas are under pressure. This is caused by a variety of factors including human activity, pollution, scrub encroachment, overgrazing and undergrazing and the spread of invasive species through dumping of rubble and green waste.

Industrial turf cutting is a key concern in Inishowen particularly with the use of 'sausage machines'. This activity reduces the ability of peatlands to hold water and recharge rivers. It also causes sediment to be washed into streams affecting aquatic species and reduces water quality, including drinking water sources.

Agriculture has been identified as a pressure for rivers in the region. High levels of phosphorous, ammonia and pesticides are indicated as cause for concern. Other key pressures are water abstraction, extractive industries and domestic waste water treatment.



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 increase resilience to the effects of climate change.

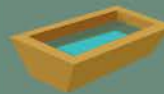
Non-Productive Investments (NPIs) and Landscape Actions (LAs) are measures that farmers can apply for through their farm advisor and through the Donegal Co-operation team. An important element of the Donegal Local Action Plan is that we will target these actions - 'right measure, right place' - to achieve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

NPIs and LAs are targeted to certain areas and species. The Donegal ACRES team has made recommendations on what areas to focus on in this sub-region. This includes improving habitats like coastal cliffs for cough and improving peatland for protecting water quality and storing carbon.

The CP team will work with farmers to choose actions to 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 Inishowen 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) for corncrake in the Malin Head SPA and increase use of wildlife friendly mowing.
- Reduce chemical input into waterbodies - specialised training through a Landscape Action on the use of chemicals and pesticides near water, explanation of the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.
- Address causes of run off and nutrient input into waterbodies e.g., Lough Nastacken – NPIs and landscape actions to address, in particular, riparian buffers and drain management.
- Commonage plans – focus on specific landscape actions for peatland, commonage governance, formation of commonage groups and discussion on drainage.
- Improve riparian conditions and control invasive alien species (Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed) on the Straid River.
- Eradicate *Rhododendron ponticum* in commonage areas.
- Protection of Lough Inn – liaise with the Wild Atlantic Nature LIFE project to co-ordinate measures to improve habitat surrounding the lough and reach good conservation status.



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

Website: www.acresdonegal.ie

Email: info@acresdonegal.ie

Facebook: www.facebook.com/acresdonegal

Twitter/X: twitter.com/acresdonegal

We have offices in:

▶ Drumfries

▶ Carndonagh

▶ Letterkenny

▶ Leghowney, near Donegal town