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National Rural Network

# NRN NEWS

connecting communities, growing our future

## SPOTLIGHT

Dr Maura Farrell, NUI Galway and lead researcher for the National Rural Network (NRN), introduced the network to those attending the 5th European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services Meeting and 55th IALB Conference in University Limerick in June. Maura (first from left) is pictured with Mary Ryan (Teagasc) and Dóirín Graham (Clare Local Development Company).



## The Rural Development Programme (RDP)

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Ireland was formally adopted by the European Commission in May 2015 and will make available € 3.92 billion of EU and Irish funding for a 7-year period.

A key focus of the Irish RDP is restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. Three quarters of the RDP funds are allocated to this priority, targeting over 1 million hectares of agricultural area. For each of the three focus areas, around 20% of agricultural land will be put under contract, contributing to increased biodiversity, better water management and preventing soil erosion. LEADER support is also expected to create over 3 000 jobs in rural areas.

Full details: [www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie)

## A message from Michael Creed TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine



Michael Creed TD

As Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, I am delighted to announce that Irish Rural Link in partnership with The Wheel, NUI Galway and Philip Farrelly and Co. has been chosen to manage Ireland's National Rural Network (NRN).

This Consortium has been working closely with the Department to create a dynamic and expansive Action Plan that covers a wide range of measures under Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP). The suite of measures delivered under the Rural Development Programme is far-reaching and of the utmost importance to the delivery of a sustainable and competitive agri-food sector throughout the EU.

The RDP also encompasses the economic and social development of rural areas through LEADER.

The running of the NRN is funded via Ireland's 2014-2020 RDP and it will aim to:

- Increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development,
- Improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes,
- Foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.

I look forward to engaging with the NRN on an on-going basis and wish the consortium every success as it aims to enhance the delivery of Ireland's 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme.  
- **Michael Creed, TD**



## LIFE Programme - Do you have an idea?

The LIFE programme is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed 4,306 projects. For the 2014-2020 funding period, LIFE will contribute approximately €3.4 billion to the protection of the environment and climate. Successful Irish projects include Wiser LIFE, Burren LIFE and Kerry LIFE. A database of successful projects under LIFE is available on the European Commission's LIFE website.

### Do you have a LIFE Project IDEA?

The EU Commission recently published its 2016 CALL for proposals for LIFE Action Grants for its 2 sub-programmes: Environment and Climate Action. You may have ideas for LIFE projects relating to:

- Climate Change Action (Mitigation, Adaptation and Climate Governance & Information)
- Environment & Resource Efficiency
- Nature & Biodiversity
- Environmental Governance & Information.

If so, check out the following website for additional details and information:

[www.environ.ie/environment/life-programme/life-programme-latest-news](http://www.environ.ie/environment/life-programme/life-programme-latest-news)

## ENVIRONMENT

# KERRYLIFE: saving the freshwater pearl mussel

**The general objective of the LIFE Programme is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy and legislation by co-financing pilot or demonstration projects with European added value. KerryLIFE is an excellent Irish example of a LIFE project under LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity.**

KerryLIFE is a partnership project between the Department of Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Forest Service, South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd, Coillte, Teagasc and Pobal. The project is a demonstration project located on the Iveragh Peninsula, County Kerry in southwest Ireland and comprises two large rivers catchments, the Blackwater and the Caragh.

These South Kerry catchments are important for a number of habitats and species, including the endangered freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*). The conservation status of this species has, over the years, declined due to land mismanagement, with diffuse sediment and nutrient losses being the main causes. As a result, there is an urgent need to reverse this decline and improve the conservation condition of freshwater pearl mussels in these rivers. Working closely with key stakeholders, KerryLIFE seeks to develop and demonstrate sustainable land use management techniques and practices for local farmers and forest-owners in freshwater pearl mussel catchments. Engaging with stakeholders, the KerryLIFE project team allow local knowledge and experience to be harnessed and merged with the scientific expertise of the various project

The conservation status of the freshwater pearl mussel has declined due to land mismanagement



2015/07/01



partners to overcome some of the challenges faced by farmers and forest-owners in freshwater pearl mussel catchments.

The KerryLIFE project (2014 to 2019) has a key aim of restoring the two internationally important freshwater pearl mussel populations. In co-operation with local farmers and forest owners, a wide range of measures will enable farming and forestry to be practised, while sustaining both the pearl mussel population and the livelihood of farm and forest enterprises.

In achieving its key aims, the KerryLIFE project will demonstrate effective conservation measures that will restore the freshwater pearl mussel to favourable conservation condition in the Caragh and Blackwater catchments.

Additionally, it will exhibit sustainable management techniques for farming and forestry in freshwater pearl mussel catchments and enhance awareness and understanding of the freshwater pearl mussel amongst local stakeholders. In achieving its aims, it will also provide guidance for farming and forestry practices that support the conservation of freshwater pearl mussels.

The overall aim of the KerryLIFE project is to deliver an improvement across 20% (or c. 10 km) of the freshwater pearl mussel habitat in the Caragh and Blackwater river systems. The project also aims to deliver an improvement in juvenile recruitment across 5% (or c. 2.5 km) of the occupied freshwater pearl mussel habitats in the catchments. For further information on the KerryLIFE project visit the website: [www.kerrylife.ie](http://www.kerrylife.ie)

Almost 14,000 ha. of wild bird cover will be sown under the GLAS scheme



## GLAS SCHEME

# Providing cover for wild birds

**Under the GLAS scheme (Tranche 1 & 2), farmers have undertaken to sow a staggering 13,779 ha of wild bird cover. The payment rate for sowing wild bird cover is €900/ha per year. The maximum area for payment is 3 ha.**

Wild bird cover is a spring crop which provides a valuable food source to birds and other fauna throughout the winter period. The crop is not harvested. Farmers can sow a one year mix or a two year mix. The one year mix must contain a cereal such as oats, triticale, wheat or barley and it must be mixed with oilseed rape, linseed or mustard. It must be re-sown annually. The two year mix must contain kale and a cereal such as oats, triticale, wheat or barley. Half the plot must be sown with cereal and half with kale. The cereal area has to be re-sown every year.

### Benefits of wild bird cover

Apart from providing a food source for birds, it has the added advantage

of providing winter cover on land which reduces soil erosion and leaching. Wild bird cover does not require large quantities of fertiliser. The vibrant colours in mustard, oilseed rape and kale attract many insects including bees which pollinate other agricultural crops.

### About GLAS (Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme)

The scheme has funding of approximately €1.4 billion over the course of the RDP. This will provide funding for 50,000 farmers to join the scheme. Approximately 38,437 farmers have been accepted into the GLAS scheme in Tranche 1 and 2, while Tranche 3 is expected to open in autumn 2016.

The scheme is designed to protect the Environment in three ways:

1. Improving water quality
2. Mitigating Climate Change
3. Promoting Biodiversity

For more information see:

[www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmer-schemes/payments/glas/](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmer-schemes/payments/glas/)

## Revitalising Rural Ireland: a message from Rural Affairs Minister, Heather Humphreys TD



Heather Humphreys TD

As Rural Affairs Minister, I am committed to revitalising rural Ireland by supporting local communities so the benefits of the economic recovery can be felt right

across the country. In July, I signed contracts under the LEADER programme, which is pumping funding directly into rural towns and villages. LEADER allows local groups to make local funding decisions.

The establishment of the new National Rural Network (NRN) is an important initiative under the Rural Development Programme, which includes LEADER. I am very pleased that the NRN will be hosting training events to help Local Action Groups ensure that LEADER funding is being

spent in innovative ways which will most benefit local communities. The NRN will also help to ensure that local communities are better informed and more involved in funding decisions made in relation to their own town-land or village, which is a positive step forward in terms of empowering rural communities.

I would encourage Local Action Groups to become active members of the NRN, as the Network will play an important role in the delivery of the LEADER programme. My Department is working closely with the Network to identify how it can best add value to the LEADER programme. By encouraging innovation and sharing information we can work together to bring even greater benefits to local communities right across Ireland.

- Heather Humphreys TD

### What is the NRN?

The National Rural Network (NRN) is part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020.

Managed by a consortium led by Irish Rural Link in partnership with The Wheel, NUI Galway and Philip Farrelly & Co., the overall aim of the NRN is to build and sustain a membership-based network that maximises the beneficial outcomes of the rural development programme. Our ambition is to bring the RDP into the lives of as many people and communities as possible by communicating its key opportunities and outputs to all relevant stakeholders. See: [www.nationalruralnetwork.ie](http://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie)

### SAVE THE DATE

14 October 2016

National Rural Network  
Conference on EIP-AGRI

9.00am-1.30pm

Sheraton Athlone Hotel  
Athlone, Co. Westmeath

## Join the NRN

Are you interested in rural development?

Join the National Rural Network (NRN) by signing up on our website [www.nationalruralnetwork.ie](http://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie)

Once you have joined, you will receive monthly email updates on the RDP, the LEADER initiative, best practice case studies and more.

For regular updates follow us on:



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### Supported by



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Ireland's EU Structural and  
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2014 - 2020  
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Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
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The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas