



EcoCo LIFE Scotland - Implementation of integrated habitat networks to improve ecological coherence across the CSGN

LIFE13 BIO/UK/000428



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Project description:

Background

Habitat fragmentation is recognised as one of the major challenges facing the conservation of habitats and species in a changing climate. The EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy highlights that many ecosystems within the EU have been degraded by habitat fragmentation. Fragmented habitats are often less biodiverse and of poorer quality, with a larger edge-to-habitat ratio, than larger or less fragmented habitat patches. Habitat fragmentation results in diminished ecological coherence and potential reductions in ecosystem services. Both the EU Habitats Directive and the revised Scottish Biodiversity Strategy recognise the contributing effect of habitat fragmentation on ecosystem degradation, and the need to create a fully functioning, ecologically coherent network. The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) area is Scotland's most heavily fragmented lowland area, comprising just 13% of Scotland's land area yet home to 70% of the population and most of its industry.

Objectives

The objective of the EcoCo LIFE Scotland project is to deliver habitat management in the most beneficial places within the CSGN area to improve ecological coherence. It will implement a suite of concrete conservation activities to better connect habitats and increase their biodiversity, with improvements in quality and functionality across landscapes. To do this, the project will develop a

new mapping methodology – an 'Ecological Coherence Protocol' – to identify the most beneficial places for people and wildlife, and it will test its application through the implementation of habitat restoration activities at selected sites. The project will seek to deliver multifunctional benefits – for example, it will help reach the objective of the Water Framework Directive to ensure the good ecological status of water bodies and help implement the Floods Directive by taking coordinated measures to reduce flood risk. The implementation of habitat management restoration to improve ecological coherence will also help fulfil biodiversity objectives and improve the resilience of habitats and species to changing climatic conditions.

Expected results:

- Improved ecological coherence in the most beneficial places in the CSGN;
- Production of a project communication strategy and development of an ecological coherence protocol;
- A suite of ecological coherence maps to reflect four habitats (peatland, wetland, freshwater and open mosaic habitat), a suite of delivery projects across 12 management zones, and management plans/landowner agreements;
- At least 534 ha of restored peatland in at least eight individual sites;
- 53 ha of wet and dry grassland brought into positive management;
- At least 97 ha of wetland habitat brought into positive management;
- 22 ha of brackish lagoons enhanced for wildlife;
- Four islands created for breeding birds;
- 1 ha of wildflower meadow enhanced;
- Habitat enhancement on a minimum of five agricultural sites and management of five brownfield sites;
- Enhancements to riparian zones, with connections made between two tributaries, re-instatement of natural river processes, creation of more natural channel forms (e.g. meandering), and reconnection of a river with the floodplain;
- Habitat connectivity and ecosystem function assessments; and
- Construction of public viewing facilities, promotional boards and numerous dissemination events.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Biodiversity issues - Ecological coherence

Keywords

animal corridor, protected area, integrated management

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Scottish Natural Heritage
Type of organisation	National authority
Description	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is Scotland's statutory nature conservation body. Its mission is to enhance wildlife, habitats and landscapes of Scotland and to help people understand, enjoy and care for them. SNH advises the Scottish Government, and other organisations, on the Habitats Directive and facilitates the implementation of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.
Partners	Buglife(Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust), United Kingdom SEPA(Scottish Environment Protection Agency), United Kingdom EACEI(The East Ayrshire Coalfield Environment Initiative), United Kingdom SWT(Scottish Wildlife Trust), United Kingdom RSPB(The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), United Kingdom BC(Butterfly Conservation), United Kingdom

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE13 BIO/UK/000428
Duration	01-SEP-2014 to 31-MAR -2019
Total budget	3,132,695.00 €
EU contribution	1,566,344.00 €
Project location	Scotland(United Kingdom)

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