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A Sustainable Agricultural Plan for the MacGillycuddy Reeks - Conservation and restoration of Upland Habitat in the MacGillycuddy Reeks

Geographical location:

Ireland

Main geographical location (NUTS3):

South-West (IE)

Keywords:

Agricultural production system

Farming practice

Animal husbandry and welfare

Water management

Biodiversity and nature management

Farming / forestry competitiveness and diversification

Main funding source:

Rural development 2014-2020 for Operational Groups (in the sense of Art 56 of Reg.1305/2013)

Project type:

Operational group

Starting date:

2018

End date:

2021

Project status:

ongoing

Title (in English):

A Sustainable Agricultural Plan for the MacGillycuddy Reeks - Conservation and restoration of Upland Habitat in the MacGillycuddy Reeks

Objective of the project (native language):

The project aims to improve the economic viability of farming in the MacGillycuddy Reeks through the development of practical, achievable actions and innovative solutions to address the issues facing farmers on the Reeks.

The following objectives will be perused:

-Develop, in collaboration with landowners, innovative management interventions for the preservation, restoration and enhancement of upland habitats in a farmed, HNV landscape.

-Provide a mechanism to create a positive outreach programme and to prevent further habitat damage due to increasing recreational pressures on the Reeks through the formation of a landowner ranger system, and trail maintenance and definition works.

Objective of the project (in English):

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Description of activities (native language):

Activities include:

-Setting up farmer led collective farm management groups to manage the uplands in a sustainable manner.

-Establishing a landowner ranger system to manage recreational pressures impacting on the agricultural practices & habitats in the Reeks.

-Developing a Reeks mountain ewe initiative, whereby ewe lambs bred in the Reeks will produce an animal suitable for sustainable management of the habitats through extensive grazing regimes.

-Reintroducing suitable cattle breeds to manage upland peatlands & grasslands.

-Trail definition & maintenance works to manage the impact of recreational use in the Reeks & installation of sediment traps to reduce sediment input to watercourses.

Description of activities (in English):

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Total budget:

950000

Project coordinator

Contact person: Noel Spillane
Address: South Kerry Development Partnership CLG Head Office, West Main Street, Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry
E-mail: nspillane@skdp.net ^[1]
Phone: 00353 66 9472724
Partner category: Representative of an NGO

Short summary for practitioners

Practice abstract 1

Short summary for practitioners (in English):

The MacGillycuddy Reeks is a unique upland landscape that encompasses over eight thousand hectares of Natura designated, privately owned HNV farmland. The Reeks landowners face increasingly difficult challenges in farming this landscape as it is not economically viable at present, with labour intensive practices required to continue farming the uplands coupled with rising pressures brought about by a large increase in recreational use on the Reeks. The unique combined challenges of farming in an upland area subject to uneconomic labour-intensive farming practices, coupled with an upland area subject to largely uncontrolled and unmonitored recreational use by over 125,000 people annually, is largely absent from other upland areas throughout Ireland. This project's aim is to develop practical, achievable actions and innovative solutions to address the issues facing farmers in the MacGillycuddy Reeks through the development of a four-year pilot locally led agri-environmental scheme, targeting 1500ha of upland habitats, to restore, preserve and enhance the biodiversity of this unique Natura 2000 area.

Short summary for practitioners (native language):

The MacGillycuddy Reeks is a unique upland landscape that encompasses over eight thousand hectares of Natura designated, privately owned HNV farmland. The Reeks landowners face increasingly difficult challenges in farming this landscape as it is not economically viable at present, with labour intensive practices required to continue farming the uplands coupled with rising pressures brought about by a large increase in recreational use on the Reeks. The unique combined challenges of farming in an upland area subject to uneconomic labour-intensive farming practices, coupled with an upland area subject to largely uncontrolled and unmonitored recreational use by over 125,000 people annually, is largely absent from other upland areas throughout Ireland. This project's aim is to develop practical, achievable actions and innovative solutions to address the issues facing farmers in the MacGillycuddy Reeks through the development of a four-year pilot locally led agri-environmental scheme, targeting 1500ha of upland habitats, to restore, preserve and enhance the biodiversity of this unique Natura 2000 area.

Further details

Description of the context of the project:

Landowners on the MacGillycuddy Reeks face increasingly difficult challenges in farming. Farming in this unique upland landscape, encompassing over eight thousand hectares of Natura designated, privately owned HNV farmland, is subject to economically unviable labour-intensive practices, coupled with rising pressures brought about by the largely uncontrolled and unmonitored recreational use by over 125,000 people on the Reeks annually.

Additional information:

The expected results and practical recommendations from the project are:

To have established actively operating collective farm management groups comprised of landowners, implementing work plans, with advice and guidance from project team.

To have established trained Landowner rangers present on the Reeks, taking responsibility and active part in managing recreational impacts in the Reeks, thus raising awareness of key issues facing the landowners.

To develop of methodologies for the sustainable management and utilisation of priority Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats in the Reeks catchment.

To measure the impact of the introduction of cattle for the management of scrub, and improvement of habitats.

To have cleared 85ha of rhododendron and 85ha of bracken under management.

To have trails that will be clearly defined, maintained and fit for purpose to encourage recreational users to remain on marked trails thereby preventing further damage to sensitive habitats and loss of vegetation.

To have carried out training events for farmers, covering topics such as Natura 2000, scrub removal, Leave No Trace, etc.

To develop and establish an educational awareness programme targeting local primary and secondary schools in the project area. Third level undergraduate research projects ongoing under the remit of the agricultural science department at the Institute of Technology Tralee.

A panel will be formed from within the OG to deal with any appeals or issues brought forward by farmers.

Source URL:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/sustainable-agricultural-plan-macgillycuddy-reeks>

Links

[1] <mailto:nspillane@skdp.net>