



## North Connemara Locally Led Agri-environmental Scheme

Update: 31 January 2019

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/north-connemara-locally-led-agri-environmental>

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### **Geographical location:**

Ireland

### **Main geographical location (NUTS3):**

West

### **Keywords:**

Agricultural production system

Farming practice

Animal husbandry and welfare

Fertilisation and nutrients management

Soil management / functionality

Water management

Climate and climate change

Biodiversity and nature management

### **Internal keywords:**

Biodiversity and nature management

sustainability

### **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:**

2019

### **End date:**

2023

### **Project status:**

ongoing

### **Title (in English):**

North Connemara Locally Led Agri-environmental Scheme

### **Objective of the project (native language):**

Ensure the long-term economic viability of hill farming in the Twelve Bens/Maumturks (TBM) area.

-Develop a landscape-based approach to recapture the historical tradition of governing local commonage.

-Establish a common set of agronomic, economic, social and environmental indicators using

innovative technologies.

- Provide a mechanism to create a social farming initiative.
- Prevent further habitat damage through the formation of management groups.
- Improve the conservation status of Annex I Habitats.
- Preserve and promote the TBM regions farming and cultural heritage.

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**Description of activities (native language):**

- Formulate farmer-led management groups.
- Develop a results-based scoring and payment system.
- Train participants in the use of modern technology.
- Targeted scrub removal of rhododendron encroachment by non-chemical methods.
- Develop a social farming programme.
- Develop a TBM blackface sheep initiative, whereby the indigenous blackface sheep will be maintained and enhanced.
- Manage the impact of recreational use in the TBM through trail definition and maintenance works.
- Develop school education programmes and public outreach.

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**Total budget:**

1424284

**Short summary for practitioners**

**Practice abstract 1**

**Short summary for practitioners (in English):**

The Twelve Bens/Maumturks is a unique upland landscape that encompasses over 30,000 hectares of Natura designated, privately owned HNV farmland and is a region rich in natural cultural diversity. The landowners in the Twelve Bens/Maumturks area face increasingly difficult challenges in farming this landscape due to land abandonment brought about by decreasing economic viability, decrease in the numbers of traditional grazers, encroachment of *Rhododendron ponticum* and labour-intensive practices required to continue farming these upland habitats. Further pressures are brought about by an increase in recreational use on the Twelve Bens/Maumturks.

The project aims to restore, preserve and enhance the biodiversity of this unique Natura 2000 area through the development of a four-year pilot, locally led agri environmental scheme. It also seeks to instil a sense of communal ownership around collective provision of local public goods, particularly biodiversity, walking trails, social inclusion and landscape features unique to the Twelve Bens/Maumturks region, by farmers.

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### **Project coordinator**

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**Partner category:** Other

### **Further details**

#### **Additional information:**

- Establishment of actively operating farm management groups comprised of landowners, implementing work plans, with advice and guidance from project team.
- Development of methodologies for the sustainable management and utilisation of priority Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats in the TBM catchment.
- Establishment a panel of trained farmers to operate drones for shepherding and habitat assessment purposes.
- Establishment of trial areas to test the applicability of virtual fencing and electronic tagging.
- To measure the impact of the introduction of cattle for the management of scrub, and improvement of habitats.
- Cleared 200ha of rhododendron and 100ha of scrub under management.
- To have carried out an accurate census of the remaining blackface sheep in the uplands and to have developed a programme to maintain and enhance the blackface sheep.
- To have trails that will be clearly defined, maintained and fit for purpose to encourage recreational users to remain on marked trails.
- Establishment a number of demonstration farms, in cooperation with the farmers to help promote the project and further disseminate results.
- Establishment of an all-inclusive social farming scheme into the overall project.
- Carried out training events for farmers, covering topics such as Natura 2000, scrub removal, technology training, etc.

-Development an educational awareness programme targeting local primary and secondary schools in the project area.

-Establishment third level undergraduate research projects ongoing under the remit of third level institutions.

-Formation of a panel from within the OG to deal with any appeals or issues brought forward by farmers.

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## **Links**

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