

Press Release

SKDP Led Kerry Eco-Social Project Approved for Funding

A South Kerry Development Partnership led project focused on addressing not only biodiversity within the farming landscape but also inclusion and accessibility within rural communities has been approved for funding under the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP) initiative of Ireland's Rural Development Programme. The project will seek to implement biodiversity actions as proven in existing EIP projects on host farms within the Kerry Social Farming (KSF) Network. These actions will include hedgerow management, actions for pollinators and habitat management for birds and bats. Alongside practical actions, training will be offered in habitat management and biodiversity for both host farmers and participants. A system of monitoring and training to maintain standards in biodiversity will be provided to both host farmers and KSF participants and supported through the existing KSF team.

Other partners involved in the initiative include NEWKD, Representative from KSF working Group, Biosphere Officer – Kerry Biosphere Reserve, Transition Kerry, GreenBelt, Biodiversity Partners, Host Farm representatives, Kerry County Council, Teagasc and the NPWS.

Expected outcomes include an increase in biodiversity managed areas on participating host farms and ensuring a wide cohort of people will engage in this biodiversity project; learning and sharing their knowledge and information about the positive role of biodiversity in farming throughout Kerry. Ongoing monitoring of the biodiversity on the participating farms will be undertaken by the KSF participants and it is hoped the project will also promote a greater embeddedness of best ecological practices among participating farms, initially, and across the county, subsequently.

Welcoming the approval of the project for funding SKDP CEO Noel Spillane noted that Kerry has been to the fore in Ireland since 2013 in developing the social farming concept and now has more than 39 participants involved on some 30 host farms. "This project will deliver outcomes that go beyond the farm habitat improvements made during the project timeframe" Noel noted, adding that it will offer training to farmers and participants of KSF throughout the project. The development of a biodiversity map of the farm which will be updated during the final project review and provided to all participating farms, will give them the tools to continue managing areas for biodiversity he said. Noel also noted that a communications plan designed to include the wider community in this project will be put in place to help ensure a wider uptake of these actions will be encouraged in non-participating farms and non-farming landowners, thus increasing the reach of the project and supporting improved biodiversity management within the community. The project will run for a 12 month period beginning later this year.

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For further information please contact:

Seán de Buitléar

Phone: 087 2670689; E-mail: sdebutlear@skdp.net