



Corncrake  
Traonach LIFE

**Information booklet**

September 2021

**Corncrake/Traonach LIFE aims to improve the conservation status in Ireland of the corncrake through the enhancement of key habitat to support this iconic species.** The project will take place on 8 project sites (located in 9 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and surrounding farmland), in the northwest of Ireland. These areas (referred to as "Corncrake catchments") will be targeted in the project and are eligible for participation in project activities.

The ultimate success of **Corncrake/Traonach LIFE** will depend heavily on cooperation with farmers, communities and local stakeholders. To that end, the project will include specific actions aimed at securing landowner cooperation and promoting local community involvement including the development of a Results-Based Payment Scheme (RBPS). **Corncrake/Traonach LIFE RBPS** will reward participating farmers for managing land for corncrakes and for delivering broader environmental services. RBPS payments are directly related to habitat quality. This rewards farmers for providing public services on their land whilst ensuring they retain the flexibility to farm according to their needs.

The project is scheduled for completion in December 2024 but may be extended depending on its success. **Corncrake/Traonach LIFE RBPS** is fully compatible with existing agri-environmental schemes and can be participated in in addition to existing schemes. Overall, **Corncrake/Traonach LIFE** aims to deliver actions across 1,000ha of its total project area, subject to landowner agreement.

*Cover photo credit: Andrew Kelly*



*This project has received funding from the European Union's LIFE programme under Grant Agreement No. LIFE18 NAT/IE/000090 LIFE Atlantic Crex*



**Corncrake**  
**Traonach** LIFE

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## LIFE Atlantic Crex

Improving Curlew conservation status in Ireland by the enhancement of the SPA network and surrounding farmland.



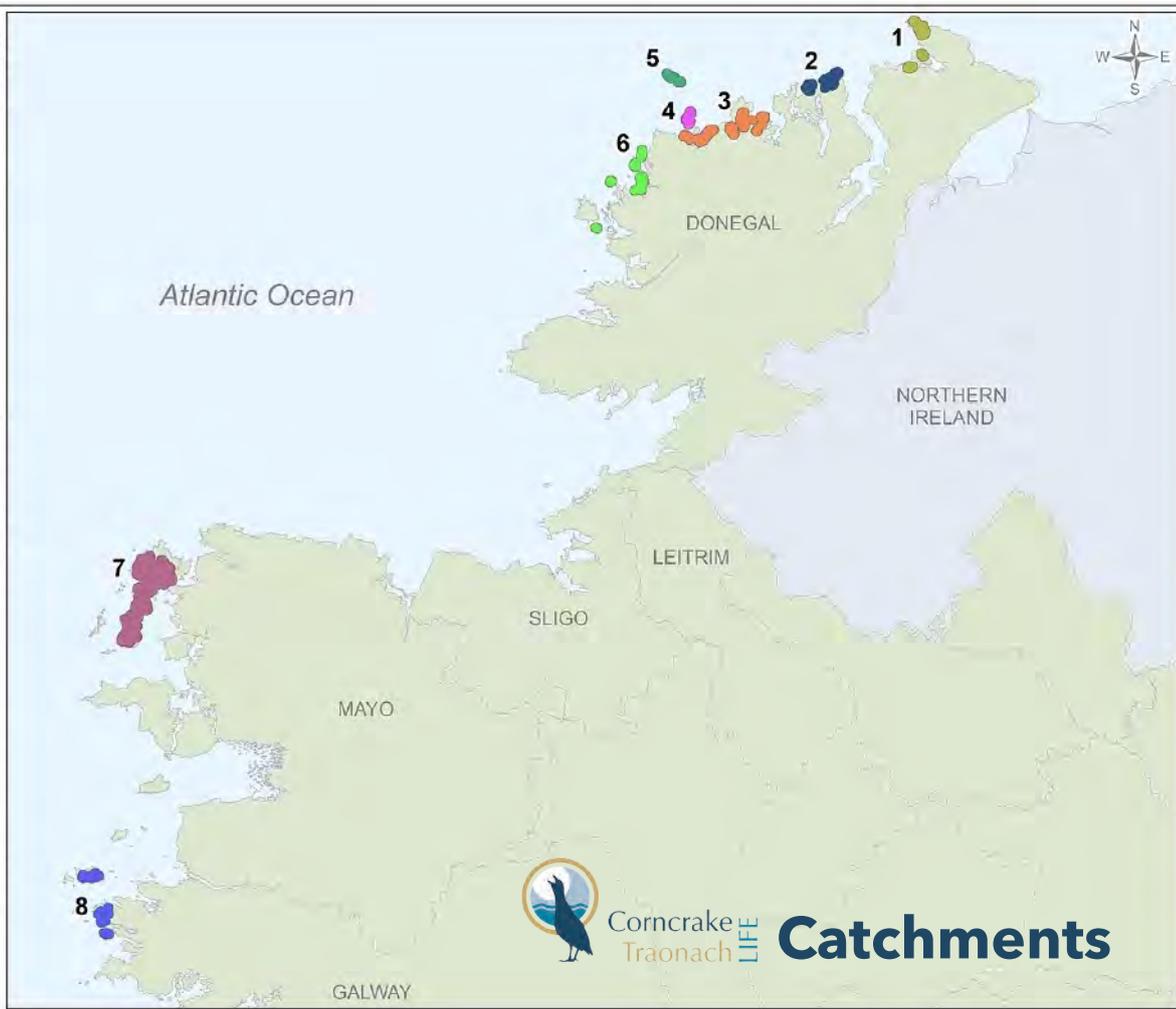
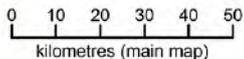
## OVERVIEW

Overview map showing national context and adjacent counties

### Catchment (with site number)

The eight catchments associated with Special Protection Areas (SPA) are, for clarity, generalised and enlarged on this map only.

-  Malin Head (1)
-  Fanad Head (2)
-  Marblehill to Meenlaragh (3)
-  Inishbofin and Inishdooney (4)
-  Tory Island (5)
-  West Donegal (6)
-  The Mullet (7)
-  Inishbofin, Omev Island and Turbot Island (8)



Corncrake  
Traonach LIFE

# Catchments

# The Corncrake annual migration to Ireland

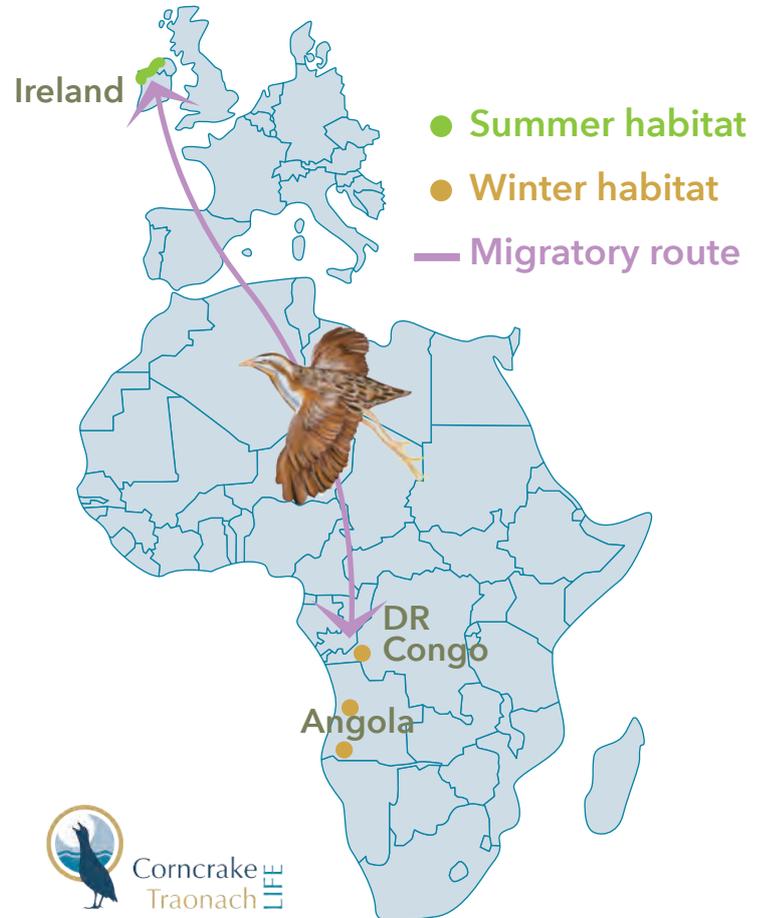
Corncrakes breed annually in Ireland between April and September after making the long journey north from their winter residence in Western Africa.

While they were once found all over Ireland, in recent years they are mostly confined to the northwest coast.

When the birds arrive from Africa, they look out for stands of herbacious species such as nettles, cow parsley or common hogweed (which should be quite visible from the air) to nest.

Towards the end of the summer, fledgling chicks make the long journey south to the same areas in Africa, alone.

Very little is known about the habits of the birds during their winter residence.



# The Corncrake *An Traonach* (*Crex crex*)

Corncrakes are summer visitors, breeding in Ireland from April to September and migrating to Africa for the winter. Once widespread in the Irish countryside, and an integral part of the summer wildlife chorus, the decline of the corncrake has been drastic and their loss has been lamented by many people. While the distinctive 'Krek krek' call of the male corncrake is well known to those who grew up with it, an entire generation of Irish people are unfamiliar with the bird. Indeed, it's highly elusive nature, preferring to conceal itself in long vegetation, means that while it was often heard, it was little seen.

## The life of the corncrake

Corncrakes are generally found in taller vegetation in traditional late cut fields and rough pastures. Increasingly, due to the loss of hay meadows, they will utilize silage fields for cover and nesting sites. Arriving back to Ireland in April each year, the birds preferentially seek out stands of herbaceous species such as nettles, cow parsley or common hogweed as meadow growth is restricted until later in the summer. These 'early cover plots' are an essential part of the birds survival strategy; especially on the exposed western and northern coastline of Ireland

A male's territory can sometimes encompass several nests over many acres, creating local concentrations of breeding birds. The nest is made on the ground from stems and leaves. Females lay 8-12 eggs, and usually produce two broods a year; one in early June and one late July. Nests are difficult to locate and are usually found within a 250m radius of calling males, but can be much further away. Throughout the breeding cycle, they require continuous cover of tall vegetation, at least 20cm in height, which retains an open structure that allows the birds to move along the ground - vegetation which becomes too dense as the season progresses tends to be avoided.

Males attract mates with their loud and distinctive rasping song, calling most consistently for several hours from midnight onwards, from shortly after arrival until mid-July, when



calling activity declines. They form a loose pair-bond with females during egg laying, at which time they sing less frequently at night.

The female is the sole carer, incubating the clutch of usually 8-12 eggs in a shallow nest on the ground concealed in tall vegetation. First brood chicks are accompanied by the female for about 12 days, with the female then abandoning the chicks to lay a second clutch. The second clutch of chicks hatches around the end of July and are fully fledged by mid-September and ready to leave for Africa.

## Why have our corncrake disappeared?

The most recent assessment of Corncrakes in Ireland, submitted in Ireland's report to the EU under Article 12 of the Birds Directive, notes an 85% decrease in population since 1978 and a 92% decrease in range. More than 80% of the corncrake population now occurs within SPAs and associated hinterland. The major causes of the dramatic deterioration in conservation condition since the 1970s are the move from hay-making to silage, the homogenisation of agricultural enterprises, increased fertiliser applications, reseeding of semi-natural grasslands, the use of larger, more efficient machinery and increased exposure to predation. The fact that Corncrakes are now effectively confined to Donegal and West Connacht is a serious cause of concern and therefore supporting Corncrake populations in these remaining strongholds is critical.



### The three keys to corncrake conservation:

#### Early

Early season cover in the form of patches of wildflowers or crops

#### Middle

Middle-out mowing to give the birds a chance to escape

#### Late

Leaving meadow management as late in the season as possible to afford the bird's time to nest

# Corncrakes in Ireland



Corncrake  
Traonach LIFE

Early cover plots

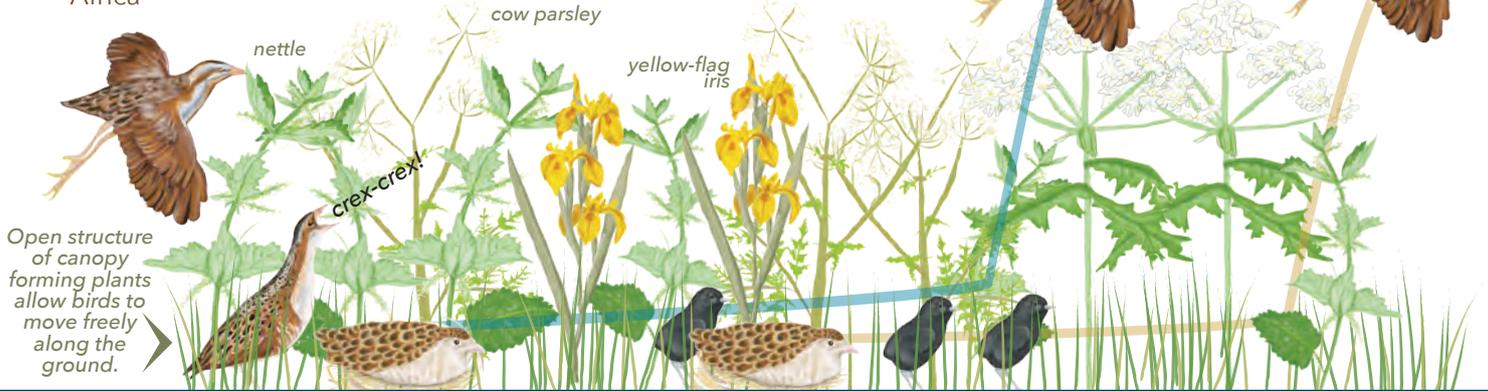
Requires >20cm cover height

Late cover & meadows

Adults  
arrive  
from  
Africa

First brood  
departs  
for  
Africa

Second  
brood  
depart  
for  
Africa



Open structure  
of canopy  
forming plants  
allow birds to  
move freely  
along the  
ground.

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

ADULTS:

Arrival

Males calling

FIRST  
BROOD:

Lay

Chick care

Departure

Incubation

Independent chicks

SECOND  
BROOD:

Lay

Chick care

Departure

Incubation

Independent chicks

# Corncrake breeding habits

*Throughout the breeding cycle, corncrake require continuous cover of tall vegetation, at least 20cm in height, which retains an open structure that allows the birds to move along the ground.*

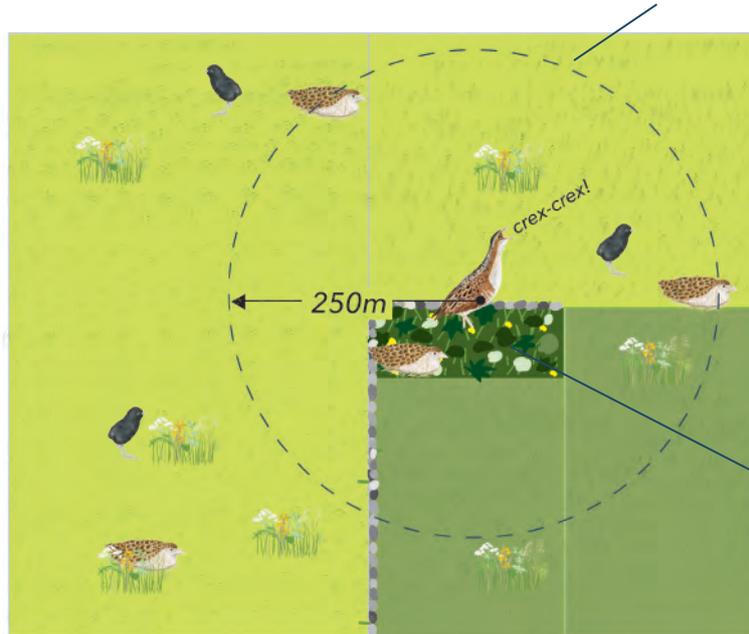
*Nests are difficult to locate and are usually found within a 250m radius of a calling male, but both nests and young chicks can be much further away.*



*A male's territory can sometimes encompass several nests over many acres, creating local concentrations of breeding birds.*



*Males attract mates with their loud and distinctive rasping song, calling most consistently for several hours from midnight onwards, from shortly after arrival until mid-July.*



*Corncrakes are generally found in taller vegetation in traditional late cut fields and rough pastures.*



*Arriving back to Ireland in April each year, the birds preferentially seek out stands of herbaceous species such as nettles, cow parsley or common hogweed.*

## Results-based approach: Corncrake/Traonach LIFE

One of the key aims of Corncrake/Traonach LIFE is to establish a voluntary pilot Results Based Payment Scheme (RBPS) linked to the quality of the corncrake habitat and a commitment to sympathetic management of grasslands for the birds. This puts the land manager's skills, expertise and knowledge of their land as central to the development of this project. It creates a new market for environmental services provided through land management.

In many cases, lands may already be delivering high quality habitat for corncrakes and additional environmental services. In other cases, land managers who wish to improve the quality of their lands for corncrakes will be supported to achieve this. This provides an exciting opportunity for farmers in the project areas to manage their lands for an iconic species while simultaneously being rewarded for their vital input to our biodiversity and climate challenges. It also provides an opportunity to enhance the resilience of farming communities in and around Natura 2000 sites.

## What is a Results-Based Payment Scheme (RBPS)?

Results-Based Payments Schemes (RBPS, pronounced 'r-baps') link payments to the environmental quality of land, with higher nature quality resulting in a higher payment level.



# How the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE RBPS will operate

Corncrake/Traonach LIFE RPBS will be using similar payment structures to those developed and tested in comparable locally-led programmes.

All participating land in the project's target area, is divided into plots which each receive a habitat score annually of 0 to 100, depending on environmental quality. This habitat score determines one of the payment levels (*habitat quality payment*).

Further to this, the farmer selects a range of actions which they can commit to which helps to protect corncrakes (*ELC & refuge area payments*).

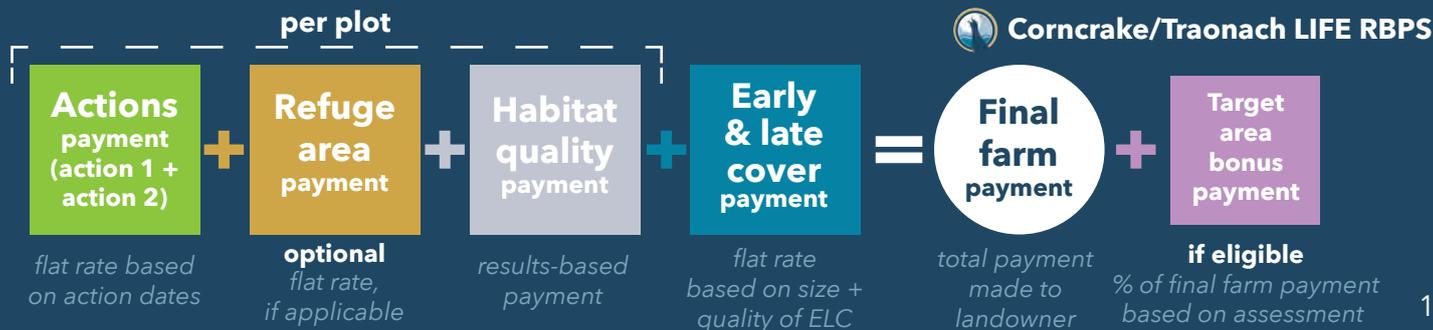
The timing and method of agricultural activities determines another payment level (*actions payments*). The overall quality and extent of habitat and late season

actions influences the final payment via a target area assessment (*target area bonus payment*) which examines the overall contribution of the target lands towards corncrake conservation and applies a bonus.

Due to the nature of the project as a pilot initiative with a limited budget, it is hoped to engage as many farmers as possible to demonstrate how the RBPS approach works and provide farmers with practical experience of RBPS.

Farmers will be asked to nominate an approved project planner to draft their annual plan, advise on capital works relating to corncrake habitat management, undertake habitat scoring and submit scoring on behalf of the participant. Advisers will be paid directly by the project.

For land owners who are not claiming direct payments from the department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the project can engage in a targeted habitat management agreement and should be contacted directly at [CorncrakeLIFE@housing.gov.ie](mailto:CorncrakeLIFE@housing.gov.ie)





**Actions  
payments**



**Flat rate payments  
applied to each plot**

**PLOT CLOSING DATE**

### Action 1

Cessation of  
mowing/grazing



The **longer the period where no agricultural activities** are taken on plot, i.e., *mowing & grazing*, the **greater the chance of survival of the corncrake & the higher the payment rate to the landowner.**

**PLOT OPENING DATE**

### Action 2

Commencement of  
mowing/grazing.  
*(late season actions)*



**Excessive fertilizer use** will likely reduce habitat scores.



**Longer rest periods** allow grassland to recover from winter grazing more naturally and will likely increase habitat scores.

## Action 1 payments

Based on the date by which plots are allowed to recover in advance of corncrake arrival.

## Action 2 payments

Based on the date by which plots are opened to active management.

Corncrakes are a doubled-brooded ground nesting species which means **they have a clutch of chicks in early June and again in late July**. Plots which are managed after August 15th are more likely to provide suitable habitat for corncrakes and are thus rewarded with significantly higher payment rates.



Plots within SPAs will receive a higher rate of payment to incentivise the delivery of the Natura 2000 site specific conservation objectives.



**Grazing occurring after April 1st = NO Action 1 payment**

**Grazing occurring after April 15th = NO Action 2 payment.** A habitat payment is available if the plot scores a habitat assessment score of  $\geq 40$ .

**Agricultural operations (such as fertilizing, liming etc.) after May 15th = NO Action 2 payment**

To qualify for Actions payments you must practice wildlife friendly mowing, maintain a plot of early & late cover and actively manage your plots.

*Where lands are not grazed or mown, payments may be curtailed or adjusted. Lands which are left unmanaged due to prescriptions by the project team and the participant's advisor will be eligible for payment. This must be captured in the participant's farm plan.*

Obligatory

**Wildlife Friendly Mowing (WFM)**



Obligatory

**Plot of early & late cover (ELC)**



Obligatory

**Active management of plots**



## Action 1 payment rates

Stock removal (before this date)	€ per ha
Jan 1st	100
Feb 1st	75
March 1st	50
April 1st	25
Plot grazed after April 1st	0
Plot grazed after April 15th	Does not qualify for Action 2*
Agricultural operations after May 15th	Does not qualify for Action 2

\*a habitat payment can be made where a plot scores  $\geq 40$



## Action 2 payment rates

Mowing & grazing commencement dates:	€ per ha			
	Grazing	Grazing (SPA)	Mowing	Mowing (SPA)
before July 15th	0	0	50	50
July 15th	50	50	75	75
Aug 1st	75	75	125	125
Aug 15th	125	150	175	225
Sept 1st	150	175	225	275
Sept 15th	175	200	250	300

Mowing refers to Wildlife Friendly Mowing (WFM) also known as Corncrake Friendly Mowing.

Participants must select a date from the Action 2 list per target plot.



## Early & late cover (ELC) payment rates

(Years 1 & 2 only)

Area:	€/0.1ha
First 1,000m <sup>2</sup>	300
Second 1,000m <sup>2</sup>	175
Third 1,000m <sup>2</sup>	125
Per 1,000m <sup>2</sup> thereafter	75*



\*subject to a maximum payment of €900 per farm

## Early and late cover creation

Early and Late Cover (ELC) payments are flat rate payments paid on existing cover areas that are clearly delineated, or areas created as part of the project. A separate guide to ELC creation and maintenance will be made available. For existing ELC areas, at least 50% of the area must meet the species composition standards set by the projects ELC guidelines in years one and two of participation to achieve payment. ELC is paid per square meter to a maximum payment of €900. ELC plots must be a minimum size of 0.05ha (1/8th of an acre) and an area of 0.1ha (1/4 of an acre) must be created by each farmer participant.

## Refuge area payment

*(mowed plots only)*

Refuge area payments are optional flat rate payments based on the commencement date of mowing/grazing on *each* plot.

When meadows are cut, the retention of uncut refuge areas provides invaluable cover for corncrakes and other wildlife. **Refuge areas should be a minimum of 0.05 hectares** (1/8th of an acre) in area which equates to a 2m strip 250m long or a 5m strip 100m long. A refuge area must be left ungrazed/unmown for a period of two weeks post-cutting and should be clearly delineated for verification.

Refuge area payment rates	
Mowing & grazing commencement dates:	€/plot
before July 15th	150
July 15th	125
Aug 1st	125
Aug 15th	100
Sept 1st	100
Sept 15th	75

Refuge area payment is paid per plot, to a max. of €500.

# Habitat quality payments

Each target plot will be assessed using the corncrake grassland habitat scorecard which awards points for the vegetation species composition and structure as well as specific features which may benefit corncrakes. For habitats to qualify for payment they must score  $\geq 40$  on the habitat assessment scorecard.

Habitat assessments will take place between July 1st and August 1st although checks can occur on plots throughout the year. Participants will be notified directly or through their advisers where a breach of agreements has been identified and a payment adjustment applied at the end of the season (please refer to the terms and conditions).

*The project reserves the right to adjust habitat payment rates through the course of the project including an increase in threshold for payment qualification.*

## Habitat payment rates are linked to late season actions (Action 2 dates).

No habitat payment rate is available to a plot which has been mown prior to July 15th. Plots grazed before July 15th may still support corncrakes if the structure and function remains intact and the habitat scores  $\geq 40$  during assessment. This is normally achieved by a stocking density of  $< 0.75$  livestock units per ha.

Habitat quality payment rates						
Habitat score range	Pre-July 15 <i>(grazing only)</i>	ACTION 2 DATE (€ per ha)				
		July 15	Aug 1	Aug 15	Sept 1	Sept 15
91-100	80	100	175	275	325	350
81-90	70	90	150	250	300	325
71-80	50	80	100	200	250	275
61-70	45	60	85	175	225	250
51-60	35	50	65	125	175	200
40-50	30	45	50	100	150	175
0-39	0	0	0	0	0	0

## Target area bonus

The entire target area of the farm plan will be subject to an assessment which adjusts the participant's final payment based on the combined contribution of their actions and the quality of their habitat within their target area.

A bonus payment is made based on the maximum contiguous area of the holding which fulfils the following criteria:

- **Action 2 measures taken place on or after August 15th**
- **A habitat score of  $\geq 61$**



*The maximum contiguous area is defined as plots which are directly connected or connected through the provision of permanent corncrake habitat such as ELC plots. Plots are not considered directly connected if intersected by a public road; this does not include farm roads which are internal routes within farm holdings.*

## Target area bonus rates:

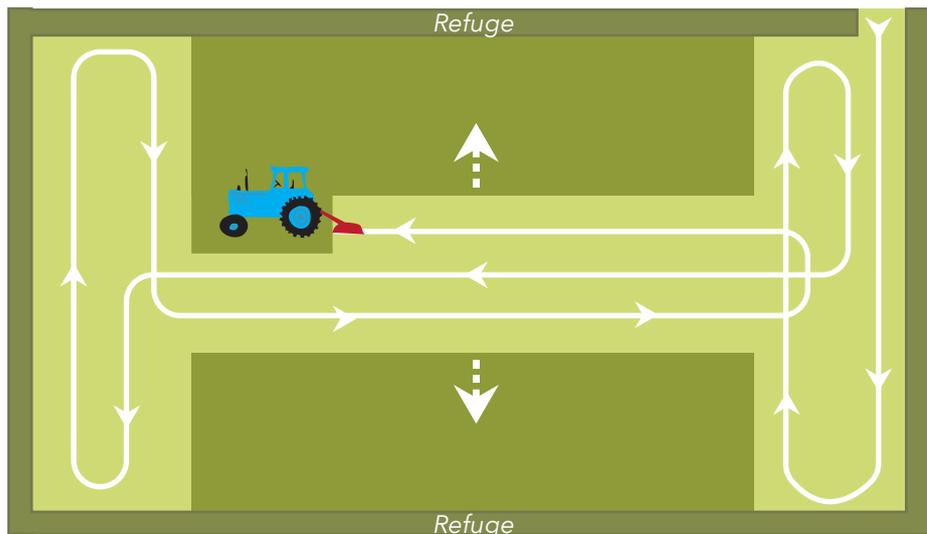
Final payment bonus % rate:	PROPORTION OF THE TARGET AREA ELIGIBLE FOR BONUS:			
	0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	>30%
	0%	5%	10%	20%

## Wildlife Friendly Mowing (WFM)

Wildlife Friendly Mowing (WFM) (also referred to as Corncrake Friendly Mowing) is key to increasing the survival rate of Corncrakes during mowing activities. WFM consists of maintaining a low mowing speed (5-7km/hr) and mowing from the centre-out to push birds to the edges of the fields and into cover. Mowing the perimeter of the plot must be avoided, as Corncrakes are reluctant to break cover and cross open ground. All mowing which a participant undertakes within the target area must be wildife-friendly.

WFM must be verified by the project team. The project team should be contacted in advance of any mowing.

**N.B.** Don't forget if you leave wildlife refuge areas ( $\geq 500\text{m}^2$ ) for at least 2 weeks post-mowing you increase the chances of survival of the corncrake (and other wildlife) and are eligible for the Refuge area payment. Refuge areas must be identified in the submitted plan and will be verified by the project team.



### Method A

1. Cut a small area for turning at either end of the field.
2. Mow down the centre of the field.
3. Continue to mow from the centre outward.

Must maintain low mowing speed (5-7km/hr)

*(most frequently used technique)*



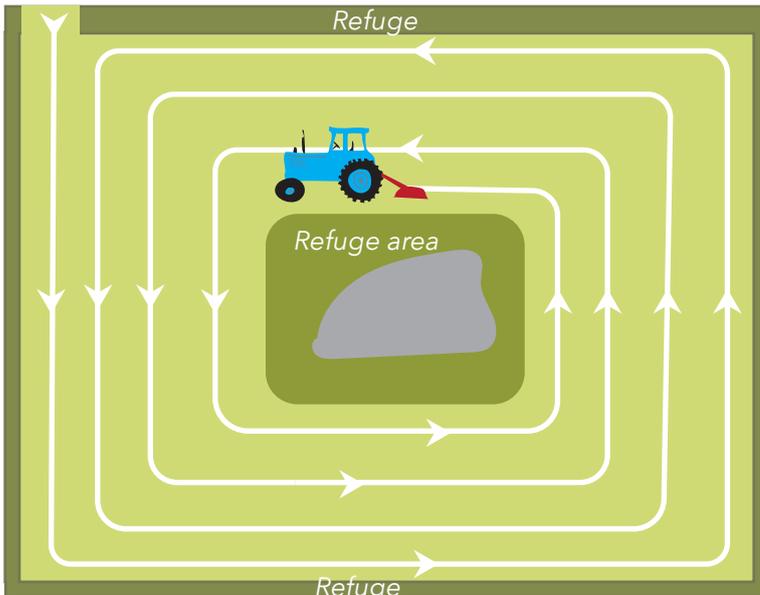
## Method B

Cut the field in strips from one side to the other.

Leave refuge area at end of plot.

Must maintain low mowing speed (5-7km/hr)

*(this is often done in narrow fields)*



## Method C

Where there is a rocky knoll in the middle of a field:

1. Cut the field in a traditional manner from the outside in.
2. Leave a sizeable refuge zone of tall vegetation around the knoll.

Must maintain low mowing speed (5-7km/hr)

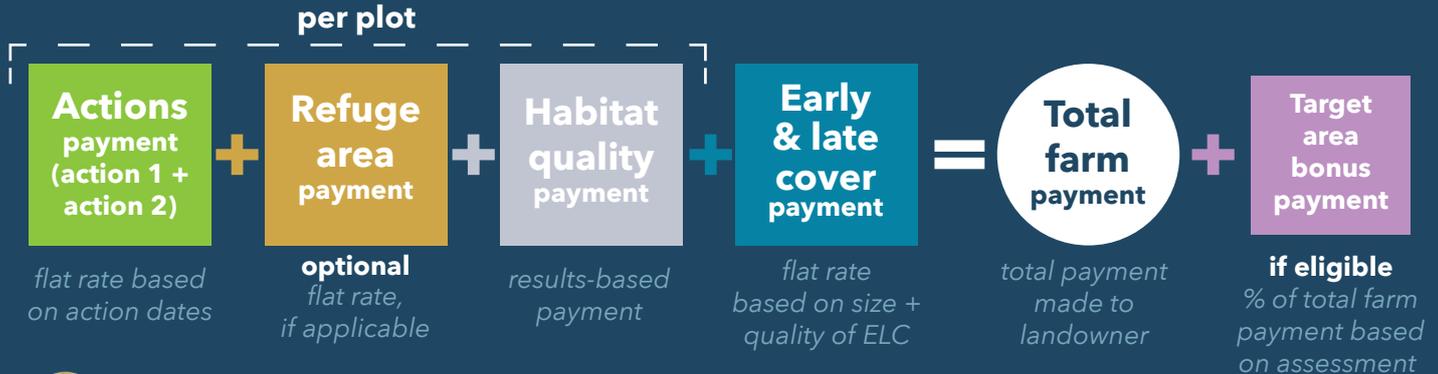
**Wildlife  
Friendly  
Mowing  
(WFM)**

# Calculation of final payment

Payments are made based on the combined rates of payments due for selecting actions within each plot *plus* total ELC payment. If refuge areas are selected as part of the plan these will be added to total payment calculation.

Habitat quality is assessed using a specifically designed scorecard and each plot is awarded a score between 0 and 100. The habitat quality payment is then calculated by multiplying area of lands by the corresponding payment rate.

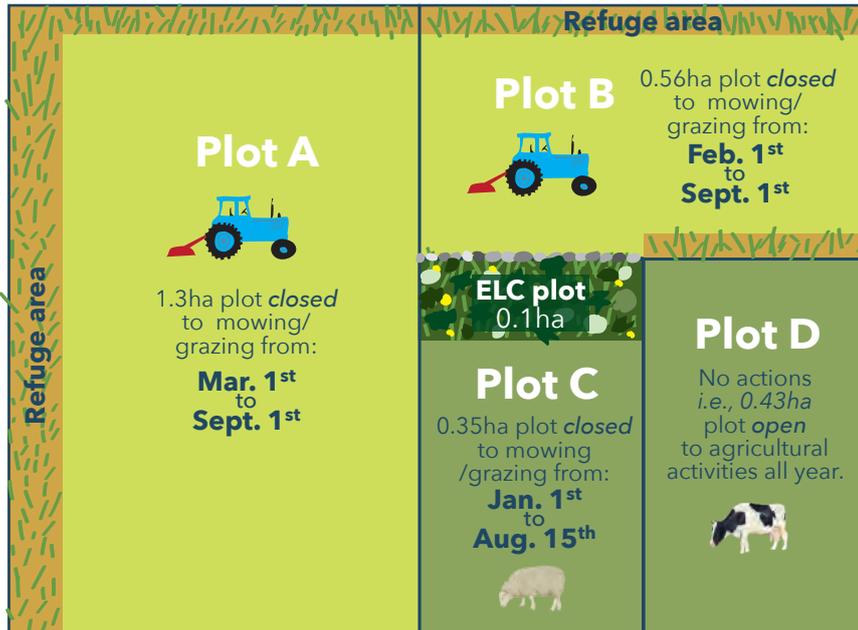
If the participant has enough contiguous lands which qualify for the target area bonus payment, this will be added to the total farm payment.





# Sample farm payment calculation 1

Mary's RBPS plots:



Mary (*farmer & RBPS participant*), has a 5ha farm. After consulting with the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE team and her farm advisor, 4 plots totalling 2.74ha were deemed eligible for the pilot RBPS programme.



She designated a suitable area to set aside (with light touch management) as an early and late cover (ELC) plot. Her farm advisor was able to advise on how to do this.

Together with her advisor and the project team, she chose dates to close and open the different plots to agricultural activity (*i.e.* *Action dates*).

The team arranged a habitat quality assessment of her farm in July, giving her a score for each plot and the overall target area.

In her first year, Mary received a results-based payment according to her farm assessment.

*See overleaf for payment calculation.*

# Sample farm payment calculation 1 *(continued)*

## Plot A: (Mowing)

1.3 ha closed March 1st to Sept 1st.

Habitat score: 75

**Action 1:** €50 x 1.3 = **€65**

**Action 2:** €225 x 1.3 = **€292**

**Refuge area payment:** **€100**

Habitat quality payment: €250 x 1.3 = **€325**

## Plot B: (Mowing)

0.56 ha closed Feb 1st to Sept 1st.

Habitat score: 61

**Action 1:** €75 x 0.56 = **€42**

**Action 2:** €225 x 0.56 = **€126**

**Refuge area payment:** **€100**

Habitat quality payment: €225 x 0.56 = **€126**

## Plot C: (Grazing)

0.35 ha closed Jan 1st to Aug 15th.

Habitat score: 82

**Action 1:** €100 x 0.35 = **€35**

**Action 2:** €125 x 0.35 = **€43**

**Refuge area payment:** **n/a**

Habitat quality payment: €250 x 0.35 = **€88**

	Action 1	Action 2	Refuge area	Habitat quality	Total
<b>Plot A</b>	65	292	100	325	782
<b>Plot B</b>	42	126	100	126	394
<b>Plot C</b>	35	43	n/a	88	166
<b>Plot D</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	13
					<b>1,355</b>
<b>ELC</b>					300
<b>Final farm</b>					<b>1,655</b>
<b>Bonus @20%</b>					331
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>€1,986</b>

## Plot D: (Grazing)

0.43 ha open all year.

Habitat score: 45

**Action 1:** **n/a**

**Action 2:** **n/a**

**Refuge area payment:** **n/a**

Habitat quality payment:

€30 x 0.43 = **€13**

**ELC plot:** 0.1ha

**ELC payment:** **€300**

**Target area bonus:**

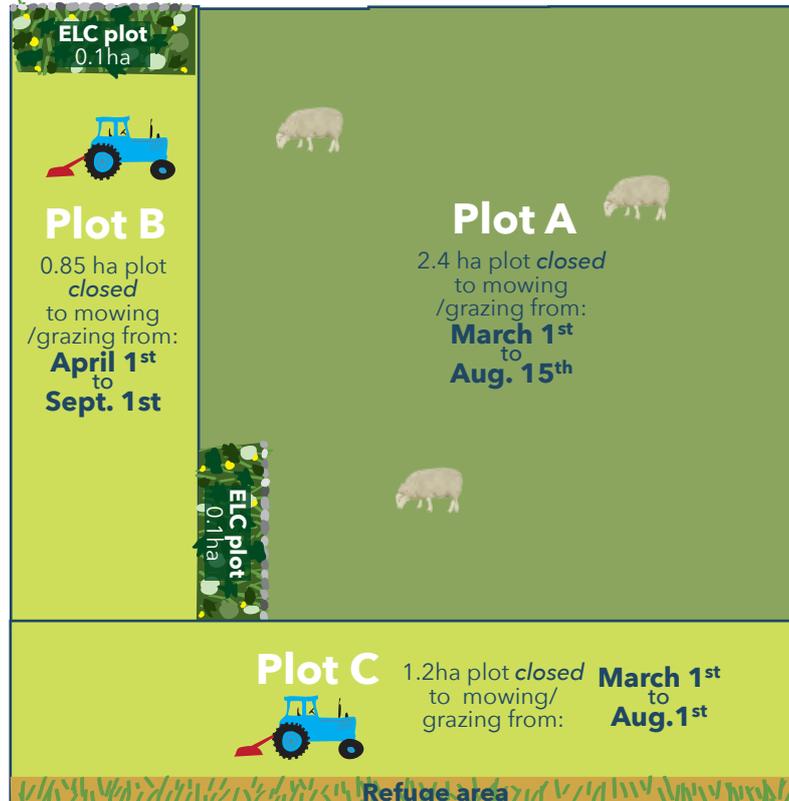
>30% target area eligible  
= 20% of final payment

**Bonus payment:** **€372**



# Sample farm payment calculation 2

Gary's RBPS plots:



Gary (farmer & RBPS participant), has an 8ha farm. After consulting with the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE team and his farm advisor, 3 plots totalling 2.74ha were deemed eligible for the pilot RBPS programme.

He designated 2 suitable areas to set aside (with light touch management) as early and late cover (ELC) plots. His farm advisor was able to advise on how to do this.

Together with his advisor and the project team, he chose dates to close and open the different plots to agricultural activity (i.e. Action dates).

The team arranged a habitat quality assessment of his farm in July, giving him a score for each plot and the overall target area. In his first year, Gary received a results-based payment according to his farm assessment.

*See overleaf for payment calculation.*

## Sample farm payment calculation 2 *(continued)*

### Plot A: (grazing)

2.4ha closed March 1st to Aug 15th

Habitat score: 63

**Action 1:** €50 x 2.4 = **€120**

**Action 2:** €125 x 2.4 = **€300**

**Refuge area payment:** n/a

**Habitat quality payment:** €175 x 2.4 = **€420**

### Plot B: (mowing)

0.85 ha closed April 1st to Sept. 1st

Habitat score: 60

**Action 1:** €75 x 0.85 = **€64**

**Action 2:** €225 x 0.85 = **€191**

**Refuge area payment:** €100 x 0.85 = **€85**

**Habitat quality payment:** €175 x 0.85 = **€149**

### Plot C: (mowing)

1.2ha closed March 1st to Aug 1st

Habitat score: 55

**Action 1:** €50 x 1.2 = **€60**

**Action 2:** €125 x 1.2 = **€150**

**Refuge area payment:** €125 x 1.2 = **€150**

**Habitat quality payment:** €65 x 1.2 = **€78**

	Action 1	Action 2	Refuge area	Habitat quality	Total
<b>Plot A</b>	120	300	n/a	420	840
<b>Plot B</b>	64	191	85	149	489
<b>Plot C</b>	60	150	150	78	438
					<b>1,767</b>
<b>ELC</b>					475
<b>Final farm</b>					<b>2,242</b>
<b>Bonus @20%</b>					448
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>€2,690</b>

**ELC plot:** 0.1ha + 0.1ha = **0.2ha**

**ELC payment:** €300 + €175 = **€475**

### Target area bonus:

>30% target area eligible  
= 20% of final payment

**Bonus payment:** **€448**



# Sample farm payment calculation 3

Tom (farmer & RBPS participant), has a 16ha farm. After consulting with the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE team and his farm advisor, 5 plots totalling 11ha were deemed eligible for the pilot RBPS programme.

He designated 1 suitable area to set aside (with light touch management) as early and late cover (ELC) plot. His farm advisor was able to advise on how to do this.

Together with his advisor and the project team, he chose dates to close and open the different plots to agricultural activity (i.e. Action dates).

The team arranged a habitat quality assessment of his farm in July, giving him a score for each plot and the overall target area. In his first year, Tom received a results-based payment according to his farm assessment.

*See overleaf for payment calculation.*

Tom's RBPS plots:



# Sample farm payment calculation 3

## Plot A: (Mowing)

2.3ha closed Feb 1st to Aug 15th.

Habitat score: 45

Action 1: €75 x 2.3 = **€173**

Action 2: €175 x 2.3 = **€403**

Refuge area payment: n/a

Habitat quality payment: €100 x 2.3 = **€230**

## Plot B: (Grazing)

3ha closed April 15th to Aug 1st.

Habitat score: 41

Action 1: n/a

Action 2: €75 x 3 = **€225**

Refuge area payment: n/a

Habitat quality payment: €50 x 3 = **€150**

## Plot C: (Mowing)

1.5ha closed April 1st to July 15th.

Habitat score: 42

Action 1: €25 x 1.5 = **€38**

Action 2: €75 x 1.5 = **€113**

Refuge area payment: **€125**

Habitat quality payment: €45 x 1.5 = **€68**

	Action 1	Action 2	Refuge area	Habitat quality	Total
<b>Plot A</b>	173	403	n/a	230	806
<b>Plot B</b>	n/a	225	n/a	150	375
<b>Plot C</b>	38	113	125	68	344
<b>Plot D</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
<b>Plot E</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
					<b>1,525</b>
<b>ELC</b>					475
<b>Final farm</b>					<b>2,000</b>
<b>Bonus</b>					0
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>€2,000</b>

## Plot D: (Grazing)

2.5ha open all year.

Habitat score: 35

Action 1: n/a

Action 2: n/a

Refuge area payment: n/a

Habitat quality payment: **0**

## Plot E: (Grazing)

1.5ha open all year.

Habitat score: 10

Action 1: n/a

Action 2: n/a

Refuge area payment: n/a

Habitat quality payment: **0**

## ELC plot:

0.2ha

ELC payment: **€475**

## Target area bonus:

n/a



## Supporting actions payments

Supporting actions are voluntary measures that a farmer may choose to undertake with the aim of improving habitat quality. Where a farmer/landowner (or group of farmers/landowners) wishes to carry out supporting actions, additional funding is available on the basis of a needs assessment. Typical supporting actions that will be funded by the programme are ELC creation, fencing, invasive species control, livestock drinking facilities, and drain-blocking. The project team will consider funding other actions that are likely to help meet the project aims, subject to value for money and the necessary consents being in place. Priority will be given to actions that reflect traditional grassland management that benefits the restoration and maintenance of species rich grassland and/or ELC creation and maintenance.

Project team approval for supporting actions is required prior to works commencing. Supporting actions are subject to terms & conditions. Payment for actions are made following declaration by the participant that the works have been delivered and evidence of the action being complete.

## Knowledge-exchange groups

Participation in one annual knowledge-exchange group will be required as a condition for inclusion in the RBPS.

## Interaction with existing schemes

It is envisaged that many of the Project participants will also be participating in existing agri-environmental schemes. To avoid the risk of double payments, when the participants are in GLAS, there is a reduction of the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE RBPS payment by 50% for the following GLAS measures:

- Low Input Permanent Pasture
- Traditional Hay Meadows
- Corncrake
- Breeding waders
- Twite

GLAS wild bird cover is not eligible for payment under the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE project.

For LIFE project participants who are participating in the REAP scheme, there is a reduction of the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE RBPS payment by 50% in REAP plots.

# Adjustment of mowing dates in an active corncrake territory

In the event of a calling male corncrake establishing a territory with 250m of an SPA designated plot which is part of the LIFE project, the project participant will be eligible for an increased payment on such eligible plots which may have been selected for pre-August 15th mowing operations. The participant will be required to select a later mow date at the new increased flat rate for that action but retaining the habitat payment of the original plan. For example; if a participant within an SPA selected August 1st as a mowing date and is notified of an active corncrake territory, the participant will be required by the project to move their cutting date to at least August 15th. The participant will be paid the *actions* payment associated with August 15th but will maintain the August 1st *habitat* rate. The project can only offer adjustments to mowing dates in the SPA network to later than August 15th. For plots within 250m of a corncrake territory, where a statutory instrument does not apply, the same eligibility to delay mowing dates will be offered with the same conditions. It is not mandatory for a participant with an eligible plot outside an SPA to select a delayed date as no statutory instrument applies. Plots which

are adjusted to later mowing dates and score  $\geq 61$  on habitat assessment will qualify as eligible for the bonus.

Should a project participant within the SPA wish to mow a plot earlier than August 15th and they are subject to a notification letter regarding an active corncrake territory, they are entitled to seek compensation from the relevant Department. The project is not the statutory or regulatory authority and cannot give permission to its participants for early mowing (pre August 15th) in circumstances where the statutory instrument applies. Cases will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Mowing or grazing earlier than a date agreed within the farm plan is not permitted.

Should a project participant wish to graze lands instead of mowing them owing to operational reasons, the participant must inform both their planner and the project team to make such an amendment. An amendment can only be sanctioned by the project team. In the case of an amendment, the lowest payment rate applies for a switch in management type.





# Frequently asked questions

## How do I apply?

Submit a completed expression of interest form to the project team. Detailed information can be downloaded from the project website ([www.corncrakelife.ie](http://www.corncrakelife.ie))

## I'm already in GLAS/REAP, will I still be eligible to apply?

Yes. However, to avoid the risk of double payments, when the participants are in the Low Input Permanent Pasture (LIPP) or Traditional Hay Meadow (THM) measures in GLAS, there is a reduction of the Corncrake LIFE RBPS payment by 50% for LIPP/THM/Corncrake/Breeding Waders and Twite and REAP. Prior to any supporting actions being approved, the potential for double payment against GLAS measures is assessed.

## Will my BPS be affected?

The payments will be in addition to other supports such as BPS, GLAS, REAP and ANC. The project recognises the importance of farming in sustaining a high quality environment. The actions in the project are designed to be compatible with BPS eligibility rules.

## Do you need a farm advisor to get into the programme?

For participants in receipt of direct payments, the participant nominates an advisor to support them during the pilot. The advisor must be trained and approved by the project. In the case of land owners not in receipt of direct payments, the project will act in the capacity of adviser/assessor and may engage a third party to undertake advisory and/or assessment roles.

## Can I use my existing GLAS advisor?

Advisors are approved by the Project and a list of approved advisors will be provided. If your current advisor is on the approved list you may use them.

## Who pays the advisor?

The advisor will be paid directly by the project team. The cost of advisor input has been factored into the results payment. The advisor fee will be paid directly to the advisor prior to farmer receiving payment. An administrative allowance will be paid by the programme.

### **Does my land have to be designated Natura 2000 site (SPA)?**

No. All farm land within the catchments are included, however, priority access will be given to designated lands and lands where corncrakes have been regularly recorded in the past five years.

### **Will commonage be included in the project?**

Commonage land is not included in target areas as it cannot be subject to targeted actions by an individual land manager.

### **Do I have to attend knowledge-exchange workshops?**

Knowledge exchange is vital for participants and workshops will be led by the project. Attendance will be required at one annual knowledge exchange group.

### **What measures do I have to do?**

This is a voluntary programme whereby the farmer gets paid according to the environmental quality result achieved and specified actions. The approach allows for a high level of flexibility for the farmer. The farmer can choose the means by which they manage their lands in order to achieve the result within the parameters of the actions which have been agreed.

### **What mandatory or conditional actions must I undertake?**

All grassland mowing in the target areas must be wildlife-friendly. Each participant must also create a patch of early and late cover for corncrakes.

### **How can I achieve a higher result and increased payment?**

It is ultimately up to the land manager as to how they manage their land. The project team can provide advice and there are a series of voluntary supporting actions that the land manager may choose to undertake in order to help improve the habitat quality. The better the habitat quality result the higher the payment. Supporting actions are co-funded by the programme.

### **Where can I get further information on the programme?**

Further details on the programme including, detailed Terms and Conditions can be provided by the project team or are available on the project website ([www.corncrakelife.ie](http://www.corncrakelife.ie)).



## LIFE programme



The LIFE programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action since its inception in 1992. The European Union recognises that a transition to a sustainable economy requires major shifts in investments towards new infrastructures, new technologies, new business models, and new modes of production and consumption of all types of goods and services, including food and natural resources. Through its targeted support to policy and market uptake actions, the LIFE programme aims to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment, protect human health and pursue the prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources. To date, LIFE has co-financed approximately 4,000 projects across the EU, contributing more than €3 billion to the protection of the environment.

## Natura 2000



Natura 2000 is a European network of important ecological sites stretching over 18% of the EU's land area and more than 8% of its marine territory. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, respectively. The aim of the network is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The Corncrake/Traonach LIFE project sites are all SPAs and Natura 2000 sites.

# Notes



[www.corncrakelife.ie](http://www.corncrakelife.ie)

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