

Special EU Programmes Body

# Project Case Study

## HELP (Halting Environmental Loss Project)

Programme:  
**INTERREG IVA Programme**

Theme:  
**Environment & Infrastructure**

Funding:  
£1,390,719

Lead Partner:  
**RSPB**

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Geographical area:  
Northern Ireland, Border  
Region of Ireland, Western  
Scotland.

The aim of HELP is to improve habitats for a range of priority species that have undergone severe declines in number and range.

The species targeted for action are the cough, corncrake and breeding waders (curlew, lapwing, snipe and redshank).

Habitat management work for these species will also benefit other wildlife including the great yellow bumblebee, Irish lady's tresses, marsh fritillary butterfly and Irish damselfly.

As well as restoring wet grassland habitat, the project utilises natural heritage assets, particularly birds, educating locals and visitors alike and attracting tourists with the associated economic benefits to small rural islands off the west coast of Scotland.

The main issues that needed to be addressed by HELP in Northern Ireland

were the spread of rushes, spread of scrub, the numbers of vantage points for predators, under-grazing and lack of muddy areas where chicks could feed.

HELP project officers made contact with almost 300 farmers, provided detailed field by field advice to over 150 farmers and ran over 20 training events.

As a direct result of these one-to-one interventions, farmers have been cutting rushes, targeting grazing, clearing scrub and creating shallow pools and muddy areas for chicks to feed.

### Key Project Outputs:

- **Identify and survey key breeding sites for curlew in target project areas suffering sharpest declines (border region of Ireland);**
- **Assess habitat conditions on at least 25% of identified curlew breeding sites in target project areas;**
- **Provide advice and training annually to landowners in two key breeding sites in Donegal, where trial habitat management is taking place;**
- **Share best practice management techniques from successful trial recovery work in Scotland.**

