

# The Biodiversity Regeneration In a Dairying Environment (BRIDE) Project

Donal Sheehan, Sinéad Hickey and Tony Nagle

[www.thebrideproject.ie](http://www.thebrideproject.ie), [enquiries@thebrideproject.ie](mailto:enquiries@thebrideproject.ie)

## Summary:

- The BRIDE project is a results-based demonstration project that will aim to increase the quantity and quality of habitats on intensively managed farmland.
- The project will be located in the River Bride valley of north County Cork, which constitutes part of the River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation and will run for a five year period with up to fifty farmers involved.
- The project will explore an innovative implementation of a results-based approach for wildlife habitats on intensively managed farmland.

## Introduction

Farmland wildlife has undergone significant declines throughout Ireland and Europe in recent decades. Changes in farming practices (e.g. intensification, specialisation, abandonment) have led to a decrease in habitats and species dependent on agricultural practices. Conservation of natural resources (e.g. water quality, carbon storage, biodiversity) are key environmental objectives of the European Union.

## Objectives

The Project aims to design and implement a results-based approach to conserve, enhance and restore habitats in lowland intensive farmland

The BRIDE project hopes to demonstrate to farmers, the food industry, policy makers, other decision-makers and the general public that it is possible to have thriving systems of modern agricultural production alongside a natural environment that is managed to support farmland wildlife. Irish landscapes that produce high quality dairy, beef and cereals can be managed sustainably to simultaneously protect and enhance farmland habitats and species.

## Approach

The BRIDE approach is a results-based scheme, whereby measures to sustain and enhance farmland wildlife will be specifically designed and targeted to each participating farm. Potential participant farmers will have their farms mapped to determine the percentage of Biodiversity Managed Area (BMA %). Based on the results of the BMA mapping, they will then be presented with a Biodiversity Management Plan for their farm, recommending a number of measures that they can undertake to increase the quantity and quality of their BMA. Monitoring will be conducted to assess the environmental effectiveness and impact of the BRIDE measures.

Farmers will be reimbursed the capital cost payments incurred during the initial instigation of the measures where applicable (e.g. purchase and planting of trees and hedgerows, purchase and installation of nest and bat-boxes, purchase of seed for field margins (Figure 1 and 2)). The results-based approach is a relatively novel approach and will be used to incentivise the improvement of the ecological quality of existing, restored, or created habitats. The greater the quality of individual habitats, the higher the payment. Results Based Payments will thus vary depending both on farmer effort and habitat condition - the BRIDE project does not offer a flat rate area-based payment.

The project is co-funded by the European Union and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine through the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) funding initiative and is expected to run for up to five years.



**Figure 1.** *Pollinator field margin*



**Figure 2.** *Mature Hedgerows*

### Conclusions

An important aim will be to use the BRIDE project to showcase and communicate lessons learned to the agri-food industry. The project will place emphasis on dissemination to a wide variety of stakeholders via multiple methods. We expect that the BRIDE project will become a nationally recognised case study of how a concerted action in intensively managed farmland can achieve farmland wildlife benefits without significantly affecting farm profitability or production.