



WILD ATLANTIC  
NATURE LIFE

# Experiences and processes of leveraging complementary funding

Building capacity to drive investment in our environment, Waters of LIFE

Dr Gary Goggins, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023



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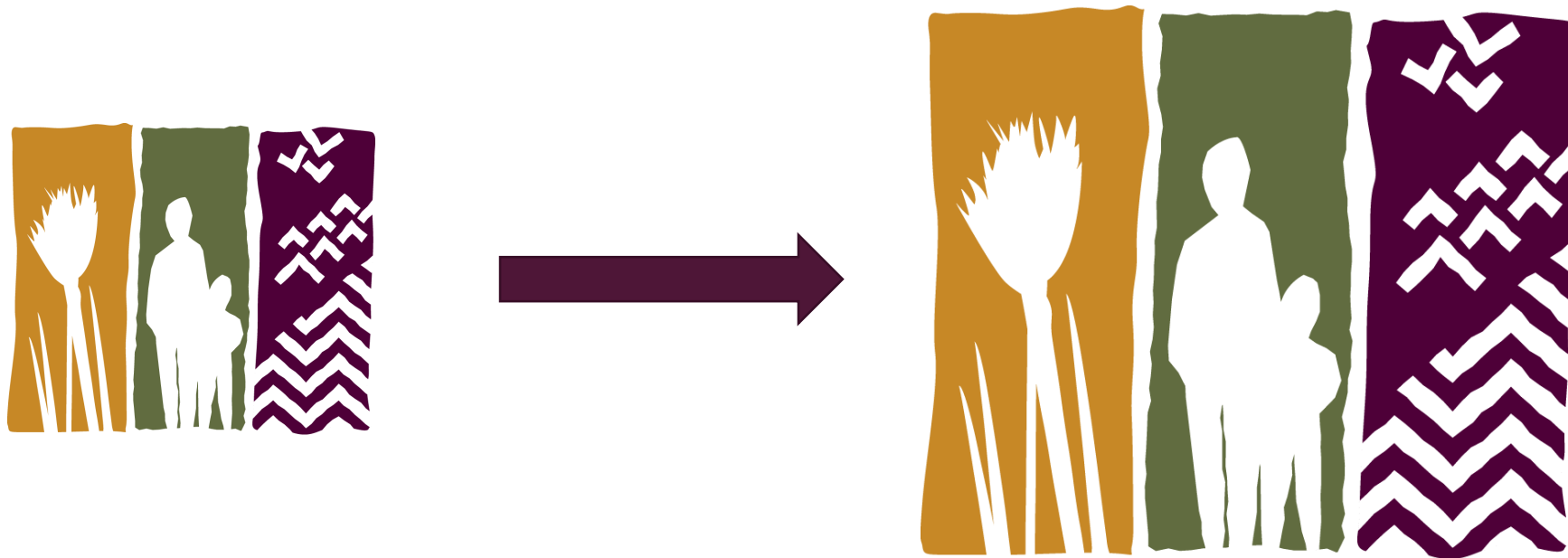


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# LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature overview

- Long-term project (-2029) funded under EU LIFE
  - Coordinated by DHLGH, 9 partners
- Total budget €20.6m (EU €12.3m)
  - Remit to attract complementary funding
- Aimed at management of Natura 2000 network
  - Specific focus on Ireland's SAC network of blanket bog
- > 75 project actions (A, C, D, E, F)
  - Farmer, community focused, supported by government

# Wild Atlantic Nature 2021-2023



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# Complementary actions

- Seed funding for community groups (Philanthropy)
- Partnership in other EU projects, e.g. WaterLANDS (Horizon 2020)
- General peatland restoration (Corporates)
- Research projects, e.g. 3 PhDs starting (various sources)
- Community-led restoration projects (NPWS)
- Domestic heating/retro-fitting/turf-cutting project (NPWS)
- Capacity-building (Shared Island)



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# Lessons learned

7 recommendations



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# 1. Start with a vision

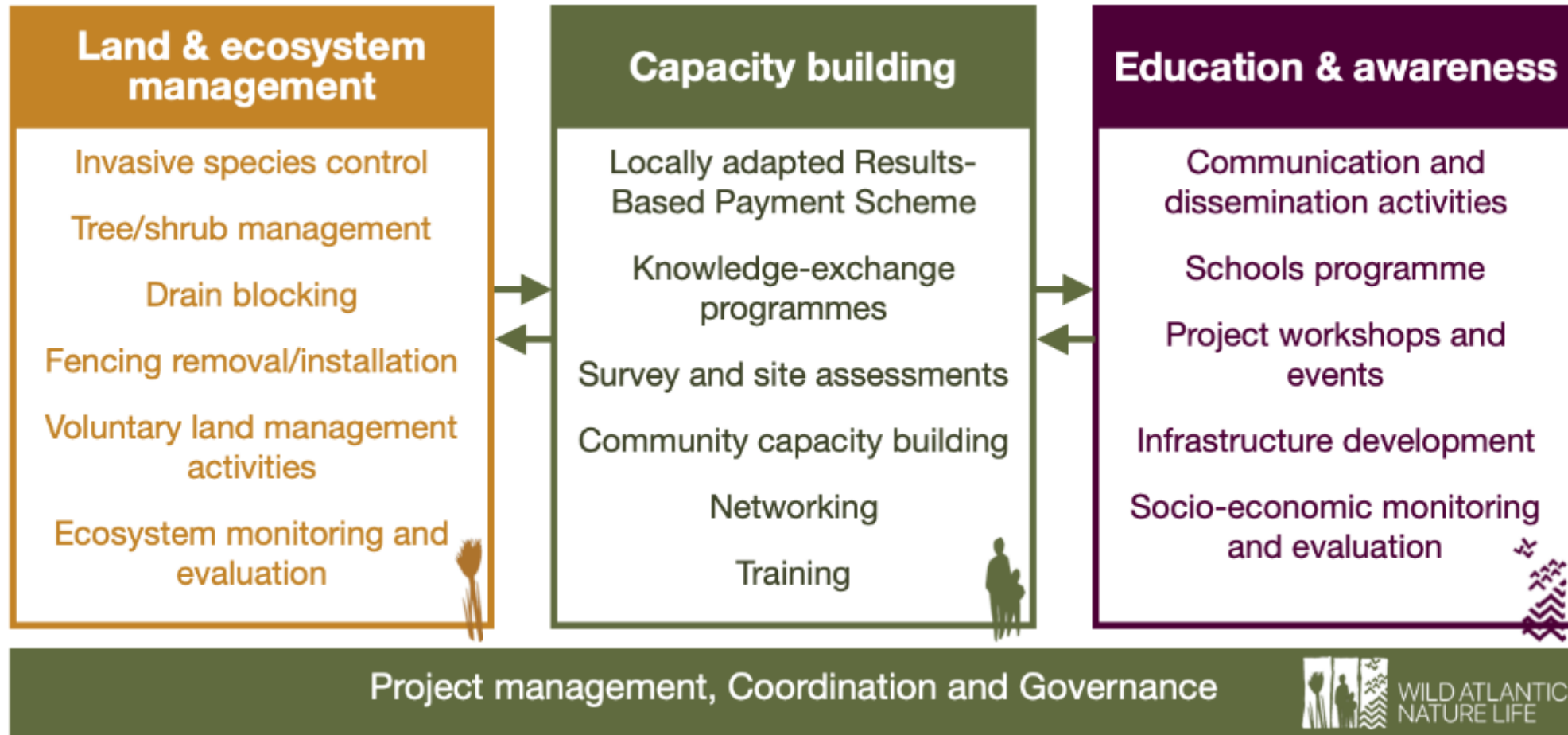
- Think long-term
- Align project actions
- Strategic thinking, problem solving, planning
- Develop a clear & coherent messaging
- Consider positionality



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# Wild Atlantic Nature programme approach



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# Wild Atlantic Nature programme approach

- Key objective = high **quality** habitats, sensitive to local contexts that deliver for the **environment, farmers and local communities**



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## 2. Build relationships

- Projects are partnerships
- Identify key actors, treat people as equals
- Develop good communications
- Maintain contact, offer support
- Meet up in person



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# Communication, dissemination & exploitation



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# 3. Get solid financial/admin systems in place

- Network and identify best practice
- Understand budgets, deliverables, reporting requirements, etc.
- Ensure demonstration of compliance, paperwork, operating procedures, etc.
- Plan IT, financial and admin systems to cope with upscaling
- Be seen as a 'safe pair of hands' (reputation is key!)




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# Results-based agri-environment programme (RBPS)




**Peatland Habitat Score Card**

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Farmer ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Surveyor: \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score: /100**  
(A+B+C)

Plot number: \_\_\_\_\_ Survey date: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following best describes the plot (land parcel) (tick most appropriate):  
 Blanket bog  Heath  Mosaic of heath & bog  Mosaic of heath with grassland

**A Ecological Integrity** Total score A (sum of A1 to A5): /55

<p><b>Positive indicators:</b> (tick those present)</p> <p><b>Moss Layer:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Branched Mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Non-crustose (bushy) Lichens <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum Mosses	<p><b>Sedge / Herb Layer:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Bog Asphodel <input type="checkbox"/> Bog Bean <input type="checkbox"/> Bog Cotton <input type="checkbox"/> Deer Grass <input type="checkbox"/> Lousewort <input type="checkbox"/> Sundews <input type="checkbox"/> White-beaked Sedge	<p><b>Shrub Layer:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Bell Heather <input type="checkbox"/> Bilberry <input type="checkbox"/> Bog Myrtle <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-leaved Heather <input type="checkbox"/> Ling Heather <input type="checkbox"/> Western Gorse	<p><b>Negative indicators:</b> (tick those present)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Bramble <input type="checkbox"/> Conifers (Sitka Spruce or Lodgepole Pine) <input type="checkbox"/> European Gorse <input type="checkbox"/> Nettle <input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron <input type="checkbox"/> Other alien invasive
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**A1** How many positive indicators are present in the plot?  
 Count total number of positive indicators present:

No. of plants	Score	No. of plants	Score
Low: 0-4	0	High: 7-8	5
Medium: 5-6	2	Very high: 9+	10

**A2** What is the combined cover of positive mosses & lichens (listed above) throughout the plot?

Cover:	Score	Cover:	Score
Rare: 0-5%	0	Abundant: 21-30%	15
Frequent: 6-20%	10	Dominant: >30%	20

**A3** Presence of **non-native** species within the plot (rhododendron, self-sown conifers, other alien invasive)?

Score
Present <span style="background-color: red; color: white;">-10</span>
Absent <span style="background-color: green; color: white;">0</span>

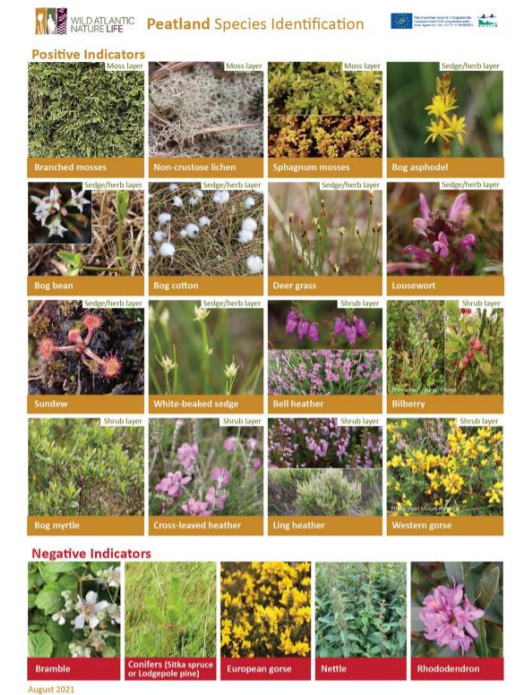
**A4** What is the combined cover of all **negative** indicators/weeds (listed above) throughout the plot?

Cover:	Score	Cover:	Score
High: >25%	-15	Med-low: 1-10%	-5
Medium: 11-25%	-10	Absent/negligible	10

**A5** Quality of vegetation structure?

<b>Very Poor</b> Vegetation height is uniformly low. Little or no heather present on wet heaths. Often lacking moss and shrub layer. Often resulting from over grazing or recent peat cutting. Score <span style="background-color: red; color: white;">-15</span>	<b>Poor</b> Rank sward. Purple moor-grass/mat-grass and rank senescent heather dominating. Litter cover high, thatch forming in large continuous patches. Poorly developed ground layer. Often resulting from under grazing. Score <span style="background-color: orange;">-10</span>	<b>Moderate (high grazed)</b> Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have tight uniform vegetation although not throughout. Score <span style="background-color: yellow;">0</span>	<b>Moderate (low grazed)</b> Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have rank vegetation although not throughout. Score <span style="background-color: yellow;">0</span>	<b>Good</b> Sward in good condition, abundant grass and sedge-like vegetation on blanket bog with hummock, hollow, and pool complexes on bog. On heath, all stages of heather / shrub growth present, mostly >30cm. Mix of bog and / or heath vegetation at varying heights throughout. Well structured vegetation with all three layers (moss, sedge / herb, and shrub) well represented. Score <span style="background-color: green;">15</span>
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# 4. Create multiple small-scale demonstration pilot projects

- Develop proof-of-concept
- Identify available capacity, resources
- Tackle issues head-on, learn from success/failures
- Build on lessons learnt from similar projects
- Tie into overarching vision

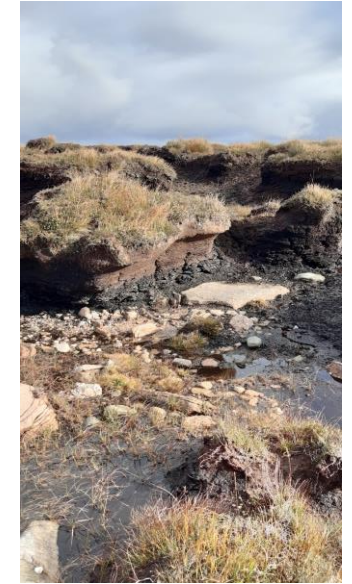


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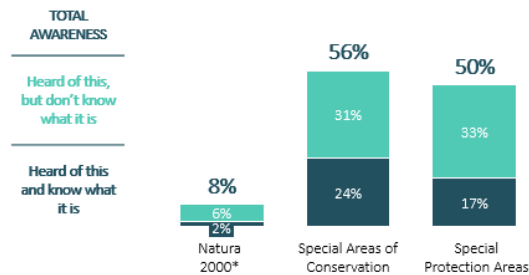


# Evidence >> Investment & funding



## Low awareness of the Natura 2000 Network brand name, but at least half recognise SAC and SPA

Awareness of brand names: Natura 2000, SACs and SPAs



Overall awareness of the Natura 2000 brand name is quite low – any comms activity needs to be cognisant of this. There is greater familiarity with the SACs and SPAs, although actual understanding of what they are is a good bit weaker.

\* A Eurobarometer survey conducted in Dec 2018 using a face-to-face methodology found that 18% of the population claimed they had heard of Natura 2000. While some of the difference in the results may be accounted for by the different methodological approaches (online v face-to-face), it is also possible that awareness of Natura 2000 has also declined over the last three years.

Q1: Awareness of Natura 2000 brand, SPAs and SACs  
 Base - All adults aged 18+; n=1,538



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# 5. Plan for upscaling

- Consider who is in a position to lead potential extension
- What sources of funding are available, appropriate
- What other resources, supports are needed
- Have end goal in mind, push to get there

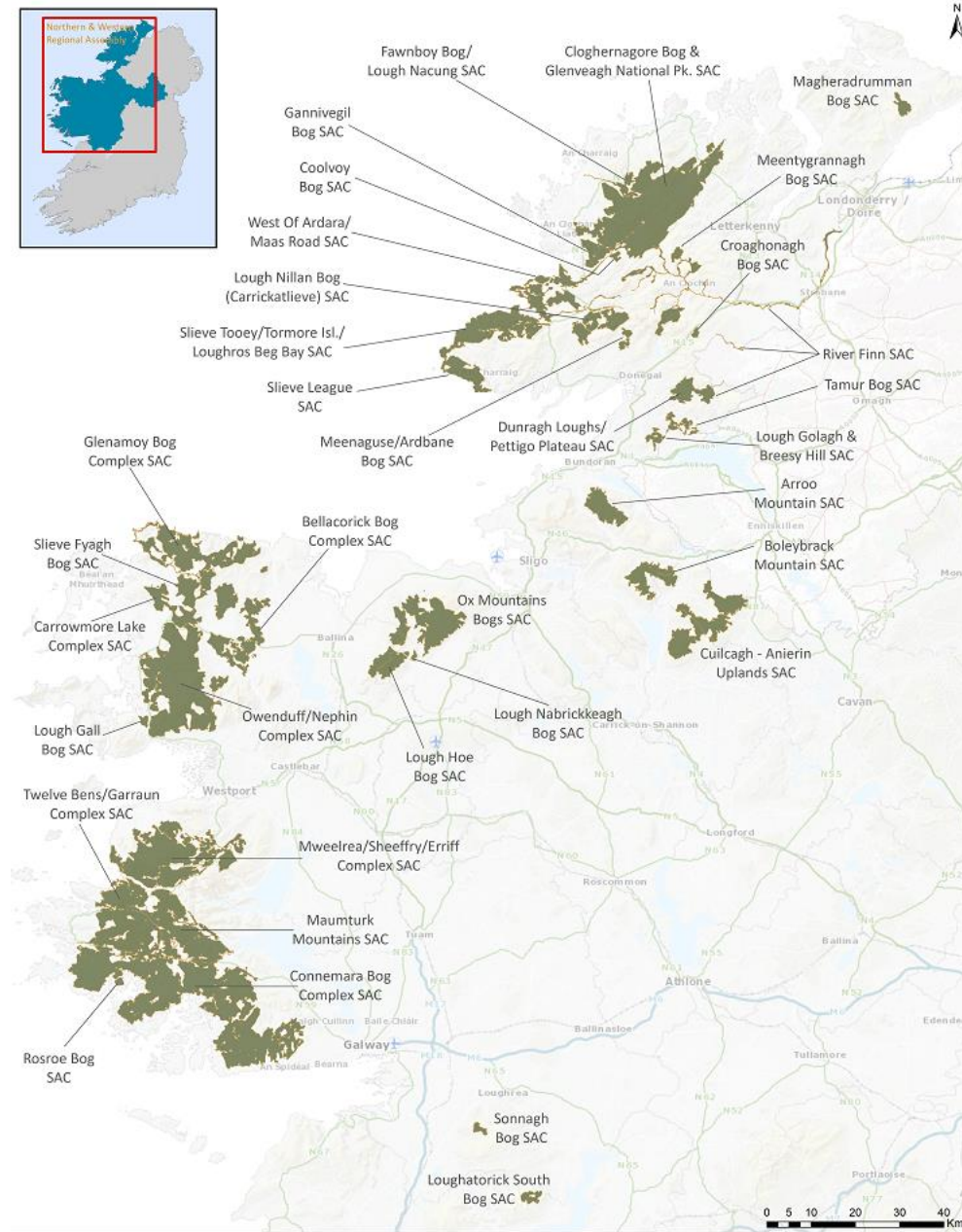
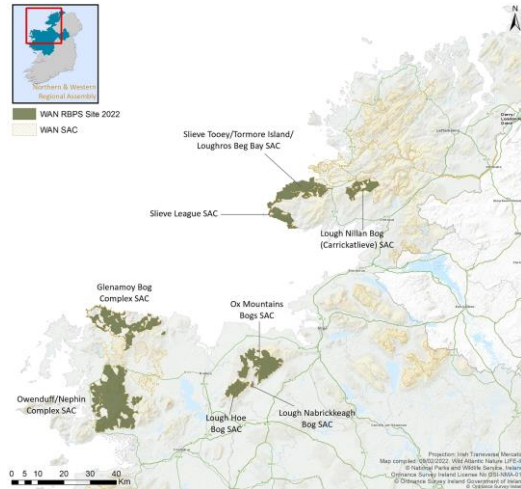


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# Project sites

- 35 sites
  - 4/5 demonstration sites
  - Dissemination and exploitation of results



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# 6. Hire good staff who are flexible and adaptable

- Maintain high standards
- Capitalise on people's strengths
- Aim to plug skills gap via contractors, complementary projects, etc.
- Use available support from within Department



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# 7. Be ambitious

- Don't over rely on any one partner or organisation
- Be reflexive, try to anticipate what will be needed
- Manage timelines & workload (esp. when dependent on external partners)
- Lean on existing infrastructure and knowledge where possible

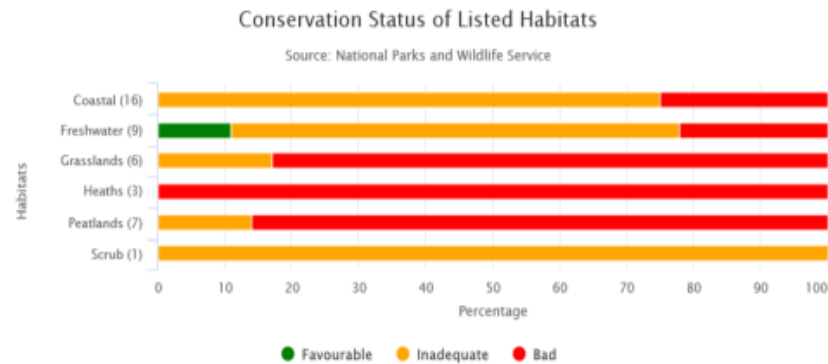


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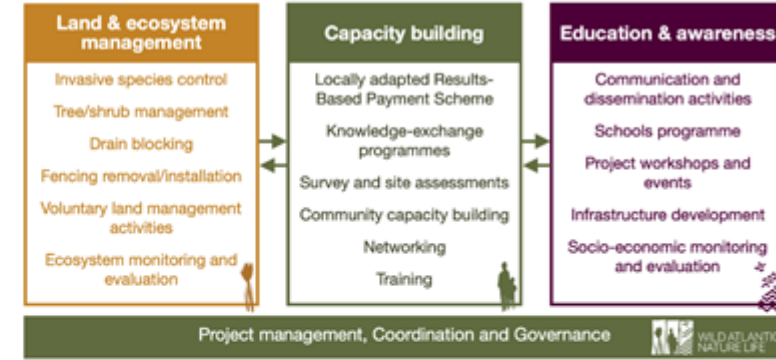
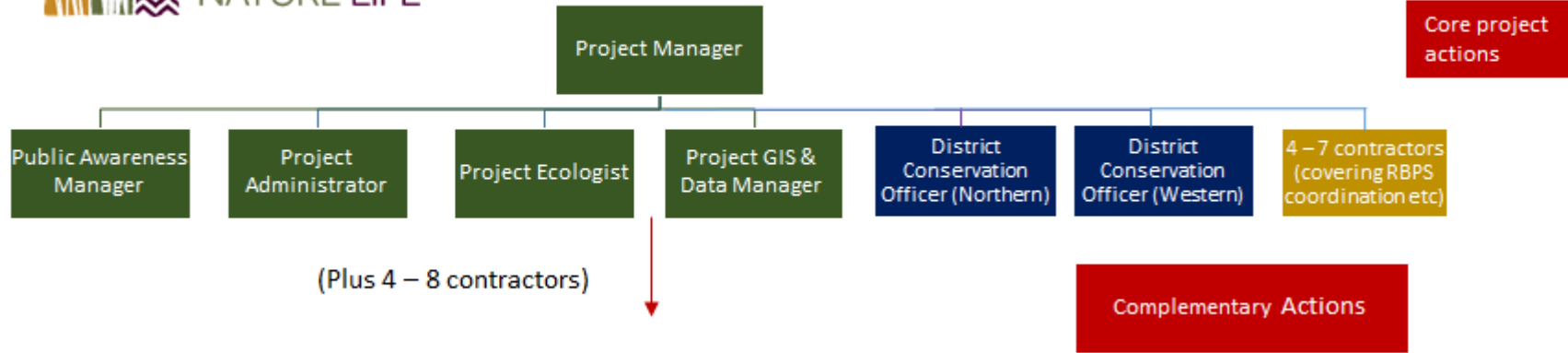
# Organizational and institutional barriers to environmental improvement

Often, our land use policies don't align!

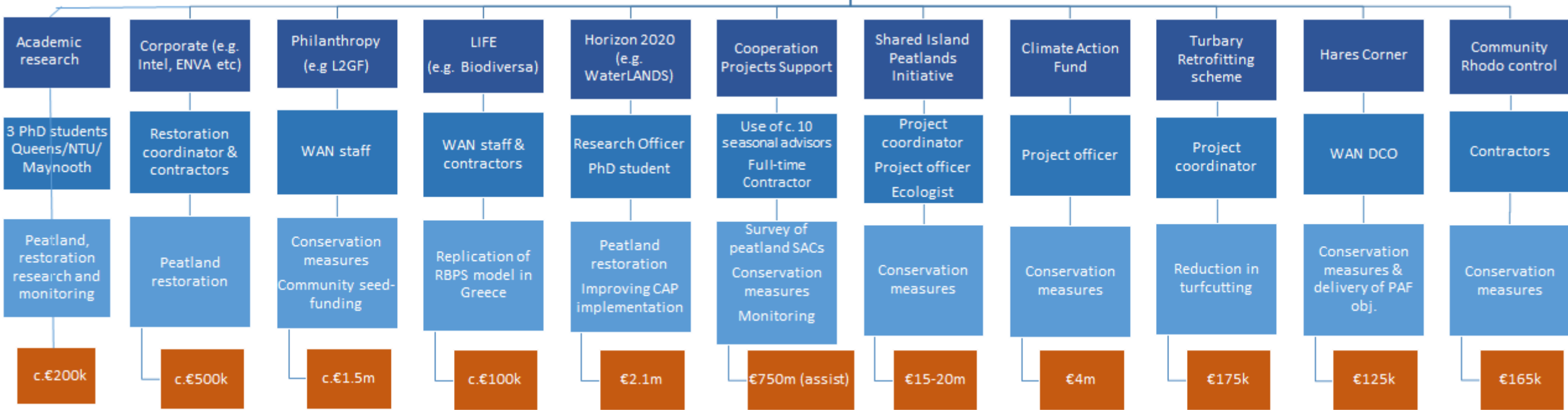


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**Complementary Actions**



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Bia agus Mara  
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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



Thank you for your attention!

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

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