

Chris Huxley gave an update on the status of the LIFE Lough Carra project :

The signing of the Grant Agreement between the EU and Co-ordinating Beneficiary Mayo CoCo should occur imminently. The delay is with the EU and several other LIFE projects are affected by this delay. As Co-ordinating Beneficiary, Mayo CoCo are responsible for overseeing the project. LCCA do not have the infrastructure or admin support or resources to have taken on this role.

The official title of the project is “Improving ecosystem resilience and reducing nutrient pollution in Lough Carra, one of Europe’s premier SAC marl lakes”. Project acronym is LIFE Lough Carra.

The project is due to start in January 2022 and run until 2026.

The full project document is 169 pages (without attachments) and is a complex document broken down as follows :

Part A – Administration

Part B – Technical information

Part C – What the project is going to do and finance

LIFE Lough Carra comes under LIFE Nature and is subject to strict EU rules and controls. It is governed by EU rules which require compliance with details of the project document.

LIFE Lough Carra is an innovative collaboration between State Agencies and NGOs.

LIFE Lough Carra funding includes €3 million in cash from Europe. €2 million cash and kind from within Ireland i.e. from the Coordinating and Associated Beneficiaries who are Mayo CoCo, DAFM, NPWS (Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage), GSI (Dept of Environment, Climate and Communications), Coillte CGA and LCCA. The major cash donation is from DAFM at €500,000. The Associated Beneficiaries receive from and contribute to the project.

In addition the following are Partners who will co-ordinate their activities with the project, but will not receive funds from the project : EPA, OPW, LawPro, IFI, VWT, Teagasc, NFGWS.

LIFE Lough Carra has a Project Management Group made up of two members from each of the Associated Beneficiaries and the Co-ordinating Beneficiary. The nominated representatives for the LCCA are Tom Byrne and Chris Huxley.

In addition, there will be a Project Stakeholder Group which will be a mixture of all people and community groups. This will be set up at an early stage of the project.

LIFE Lough Carra is the beginning of starting to tackle the problems but they can’t all be solved in the 5 years of project which is why part of the project is called After LIFE and this will detail what happens after the 5 years.

A LIFE project is not very flexible i.e. we can’t start something totally new that isn’t already included in the project document.

LIFE Lough Carra is not a comprehensive answer because the EU rules and structure of LIFE Nature means that we weren’t able to include everything that we wanted. Therefore, the LCCA will have to look at how to address those excluded items.

The LCCA will get 2 days a week of admin time.

Below are the Actions of the project :

A1: Project Set-up, Project Team & Project Office

A2: Groundwater Catchment Study

B1: Acquisition of Land for Demonstration & Conservation Activities *i.e. what can be done to reduce nutrient in flow into the lake*

C1: Agri-Environmental Scheme & Nutrient Management (*DAFM with Teagasc and this consumes the highest slice of the budget at around €2 million to support farmers to change what they do to reduce loss of nutrients into the water*)

C2: Biodiversity and Site Restoration (*this is required by the EU*)

C3: Invasive Species Control (*incl. control of mink and feral geese and prevention strategy for zebra mussel : NPWS, Vincent Wildlife Trust, LCCA, IFI and EPA*)

D1: Farm Monitoring for Results-Based Scheme

D2: Monitoring of Project Impacts (*by Mayo CoCo as Co-ordinating Beneficiary*)

E1: Knowledge-Exchange, Public Outreach & Awareness (*LCCA will be leading this*)

E2: Dissemination of Project Results and Outcomes (*by Mayo CoCo as Co-ordinating Beneficiary*)

Questions :

Q : What will be size of land that will be leased/bought?

A : In the region of 25 acres – hopefully not in one parcel e.g. some land with drainage channels; land with down flow from septic tank etc.

Q : How many farmers will be involved”?

A : Approximately 40 but exact number not yet known.