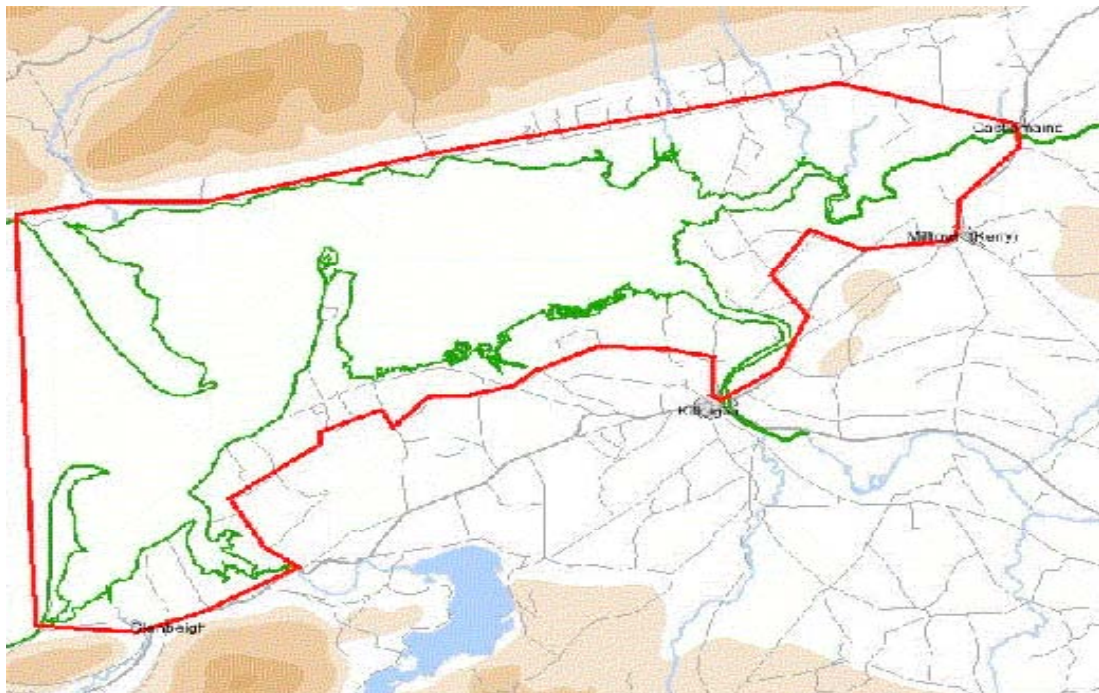


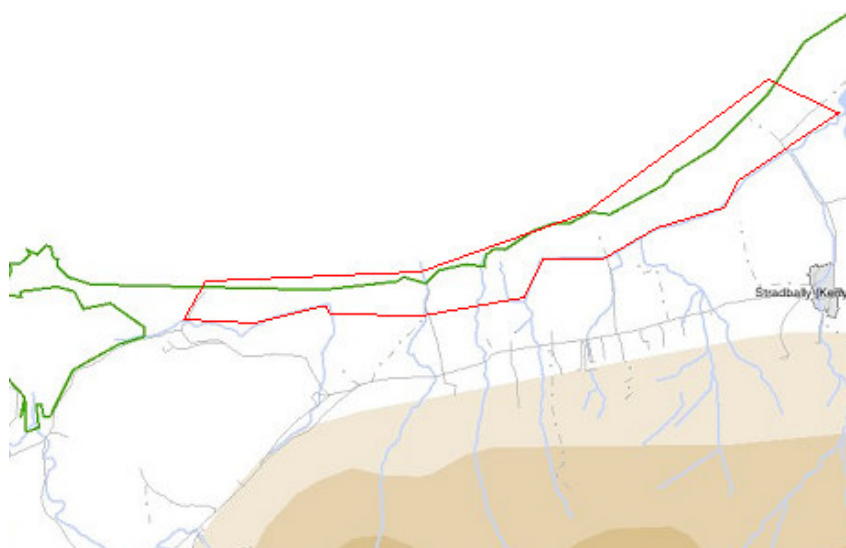
Details of REPS 4 Toads option

Natterjack Toad

The natural range of the natterjack toad in Ireland is confined to a small number of coastal sites on the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas in Co. Kerry. There is evidence that the species was once more widespread, particularly around Castlemaine Harbour. This measure is aimed at restoring suitable breeding and foraging habitats for the natterjack around Castlemaine Harbour and along a stretch of coastline on the north side of the Dingle peninsula: the Natterjack restoration zones (see Maps).



Outline of the Castlemaine Harbour Restoration area



Outline of the Fermoyle Restoration Area

Natterjack Habitat

Natterjacks breed in warm, shallow ponds that are relatively free of vegetation, have a pH of between 5 and 7 and salinity less than 15% of seawater. Ponds that dry up in hot summers are ideal as they tend to support fewer predators (e.g. dragonfly and beetle larvae) of toad eggs and tadpoles. The habitat around the pond is also important. Dense scrub or rank vegetation is not suitable; open areas of low sward provide ideal foraging areas for adult toads. Adults usually stay within 200m of breeding ponds, but are known to occasionally undertake migrations of 1km or more. Natterjacks are nocturnal and during the day they hide under logs and stones. Over winter, natterjacks hibernate in burrows that they dig themselves in sandy soils, or in piles of rocks or dry-stone walls.

Natterjack Habitat Areas

For farmers wishing to participate in this measure, the planner, in consultation with the local NPWS ranger, must identify those areas of the farm that lie within a natterjack restoration zone (see maps). Within those areas the number of and locations for new ponds should be agreed with NPWS and submitted as part of the plan. The ponds should be kept clear of emergent vegetation and the land around each pond must be maintained as a pasture for the duration of the plan – these will be known as the “natterjack habitat areas” (see management practises applicable below). In general a minimum area of 1 ha will have to be managed around each pond, but the actual extent of these areas will vary according to topography, location of field boundaries etc. and will be determined during the planning process in consultation with NPWS staff.

Pond creation

Ponds must be created in Year 1 of the plan. NPWS will oversee the pond creation. One to three ponds should normally be dug, although in large holdings additional ponds may be appropriate. The number and siting of the ponds will be agreed between NPWS, the landowner and the farm planner.

Ponds will be shallow, with a maximum depth of 70-100cm. They will have a saucer-like profile with gradually shelving sides. The minimum size for a pond should be c50 square metres (= 7 x 7 m), up to a maximum of 225 square metres (= 15 x 15m). Some or all of the spoil from the excavation should, if possible, be arranged as south facing bank(s) near the

pond. These will then act as potential hibernation areas. Rocks or rotting logs, if available, should be left near the pond.

Participants of this measure must follow the management prescriptions for natterjack habitat maintenance detailed below. An annual payment will issue subject to certification of compliance by NPWS.

Payment

An annual payment of €500 will be made for each of the first two ponds created per hectare, up to a maximum of 3ha. A 3rd or subsequent pond per hectare, or any ponds in the 4th or subsequent hectare, will attract a further €200 each.

Example 1: 2 ponds dug in the 1st hectare and 1 pond dug in the 2nd hectare = €1500 p.a.

Example 2: 3 ponds dug in the 1st hectare = €1200 p.a.

Example 3: 4 hectares included, each with 3 ponds = $[\text{€}1200 \times 3] + [200 \times 3] = \text{€}4200$

In year one of the plan, NPWS certification will be based on the completion of the pond creation phase. In years 2 to 5, NPWS certification will be based on compliance with the management measures below.

Managing Natterjack Habitat Areas

Following pond creation, the ponds and natterjack habitat area(s) must be managed as follows :

- The ponds should be kept relatively clear of vegetation and, in particular, reeds should be cut back to prevent them invading the pond. This vegetation clearance must be carried out by hand / mechanically; no herbicides may be used.
- Grazing should be carried out at a level identified by the planner as suitable to maintaining areas of low sward around the pond(s). This will normally be in the range 0.3 – 1.0 LU/ha, but a higher density may be required initially if the sward is long.
- Grazing should take place in spring / early summer. Where there is extensive growth of rushes (*Juncus* spp.) winter grazing should also take place.
- Mowing / topping, if required, may only take place between 1st September and March 1st.

- Supplementary feed may be provided, bearing in mind that the main aim of these management measures is to ensure a low sward within the natterjack habitat areas during the toads' breeding season (April – August).
- The application of all fertilisers, including slurry, is prohibited within 30 metres of the ponds.
- Maintenance of existing drains shall be permitted and no other drainage works shall be embarked upon except with the prior agreement of NPWS. Any such permission shall be written into the plan at the time such plan is prepared.
- No dumping or infilling is allowed. Disposal of agri-waste, such as spoiled hay, is considered dumping and is prohibited. The importing of materials from other sites for the purpose of burning is strictly prohibited.
- No reseeding, reclamation or tree planting shall be permitted except with prior agreement with NPWS and any such agreement shall be included in the plan.
- Construction of new roads (including culverts and bridges) permitted only by specific agreement with NPWS. Any such agreement to be written into the plan. The maintenance of existing roadways is not restricted.
- Noxious weeds can only be controlled mechanically; no application of spot treatment is permitted.
- Any dry-stone walls within 200m of a pond should be maintained as they act as hibernation sites for natterjacks.
- Removal of any piles of soil/rubble/rocks should not be permitted during the winter as these could be harbouring hibernating natterjacks.
- At sites where scrub encroachment is occurring control measures should be undertaken. This entails cutting or grubbing out the scrub, burning it and treating the cut stumps with Round-up herbicide to prevent regrowth.