

Press Release

New technology to help protect seabirds.

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Northern Ireland company to install a wireless sensor network across Rathlin Island.

Ballygowan-based Lagan Networks has been selected by RSPB NI to provide a wireless radio network and custom wireless sensors for use across Rathlin Island as part of the Rathlin Acting for Tomorrow (LIFE Raft) Project, which is working to protect wildlife from invasive non-native predators.

Rathlin is known as a haven for wildlife, including many threatened species, and hosts Northern Ireland's largest seabird colony. One of the most important breeding sites in both the UK and Ireland, its wildlife is under threat, including 25 bird species and notably the puffin. One of the key threats to the wildlife is from predation by invasive non-native species.

This project will help safeguard Rathlin's seabirds and ground-nesting birds that are under threat through a brown rat and ferret eradication programme.

Mark Walmsley, Lagan Networks Commercial Director, commented, "We are delighted to be working with RSPB NI, the Rathlin Development Community Association and others on this exciting project and look forward to seeing the benefits that it will bring to Rathlin Island".

Dr David Tosh, Eradication Delivery Manager, RSPBNI said,

"Lots of factors must come together to make the LIFE Raft project a success, but our new and ground breaking wireless radio network is especially important. Without it, our staff would have to monitor our equipment manually, which would be a huge task on an island the size of Rathlin. But with Lagan Network's system, LIFE Raft staff can carry out its work in the most efficient and humane way possible".

The project's operations will begin in Autumn 2023, and are expected to run for up to two years.

Ends

Notes to Editors

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About the LIFE Raft Project

<https://rathlin360.com/life-raft/>

The partnership project, known as Rathlin Acting for Tomorrow (LIFE Raft), has received funding from EU LIFE, The National Lottery Heritage Fund (development phase) and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), with contributions from RSPB NI, Rathlin Development and Community Association (RDCA) and Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT).

This £4.5 million island restoration project is set to be the largest-of-its-kind on the island of Ireland and will be delivered over five years. Focusing on natural heritage and community, the initiative will help Rathlin Island's economic recovery following the impact of Covid-19, while protecting its important wildlife.

Rathlin is known as a haven for wildlife, including many threatened species, and hosts Northern Ireland's largest seabird colony, which is one of the most important breeding sites in both the UK and Ireland. However, its wildlife is under threat, including 25 bird species and notably the puffin which has declined by more than half in recent years. One of the key threats is from predation by invasive non-native species.

The project will safeguard Rathlin's seabirds and ground-nesting birds that are under threat through a brown rat and ferret eradication programme. With 70% of visitors to Rathlin citing birds and wildlife as their main reason for visiting, by restoring Rathlin's natural heritage, the project will bring benefits for the local community.

The project will be led by the expert conservation charity, RSPB, which has experience in similar island restoration projects on the Isles of Scilly, the Shiant Isles and most recently on Gough Island in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean. The RSPB has been working on Rathlin Island for over 25 years.

About Lagan Networks Ltd.

<https://lagannetworks.uk/>

Based at Ballygowan, Co Down, Lagan Networks designs, develops and delivers sensor-based data solutions for a wide range of clients and business sectors including manufacturing, retail, education, hospitality, tourism, transport and agriculture. The company has considerable expertise delivering wireless long-range, low-power data collection solutions and are looking forward to further demonstrating the benefits of this technology through this project on Rathlin Island.

About RSPB NI

The RSPB is the UK's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.