

Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report

Introduction

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015 provides for the preparation and approval of plans by Government in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Under Section 5 of the Act, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment published the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) in January 2018. The NAF specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur. The NAF identifies Biodiversity as one of the priority sectors, and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as the Lead Department for the adaptation plan for the sector. A Biodiversity Sectoral Adaptation Plan has therefore been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) require member states to ensure the protection, conservation and management of habitats and species of conservation interest including those within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), hereafter referred to as European sites. This includes legal obligations in relation to appropriate assessment of plans and projects, as set out in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the outcomes of which affect the decisions that may lawfully be made in relation to the approval of plans and projects.

These requirements are implemented in national law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended (hereafter referred to as “the Regulations”). Regulation 42 of the Regulations requires public authorities to carry out screening for appropriate assessment and, where required, appropriate assessment for all plans and projects proposed for adoption by an authority.

This report has been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to inform screening for appropriate assessment of the Biodiversity Sectoral Adaptation Plan.

Information necessary to inform Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Description of the Plan

The goal of the Biodiversity Sectoral Adaptation Plan is to protect biodiversity from the impacts of climate change and to conserve and manage ecosystems so that they deliver services that increase the adaptive capacity of people and biodiversity. The objectives of the Plan are to:

1. Protect, restore and enhance biodiversity to increase the resilience of natural and human systems to climate change
2. Improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on biodiversity
3. Improve landscape connectivity to facilitate mobility in a changing climate
4. Engage society to protect biodiversity to enhance resilience
5. Ensure sufficient financing is available to implement the Biodiversity Climate Change Adaptation Plan, and
6. Put adequate monitoring and evaluation measures in place to implement to Biodiversity Climate Change Adaptation Plan

The Plan identifies a total of 43 actions which are to be implemented in relation to the objectives in the Plan. The actions are listed in Appendix A. Implementation of actions will involve a range of stakeholders and progress will be monitored and evaluated by the plan team in the National Parks and Wildlife Service on an ongoing basis.

Activities related to the management of a European Site

The Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site or sites.

Identification of European Sites which may be affected by the Plan

The Plan is a national plan and has the potential to affect all European Sites in Ireland. This includes 439 no. SACs and 154 no. SPAs (see Appendix B).

Identification of likely significant effects of the Plan, alone or in combination with other plans and projects

The Actions in the Plan are all high-level strategic actions designed to strengthen the resilience of Ireland's biodiversity, including European sites, in relation to the impacts of climate change. Actions are related to policy development and implementation, research, financing, data-gathering and assessment, and education and awareness. Implementation of the actions in the Plan will require the development of downstream plans and project proposals which will also be subject to screening for appropriate assessment.

Given the national scope of the Plan, all European sites in Ireland have the potential to be affected by its implementation. Therefore an examination of each action has been undertaken to assess whether it is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. A review of all the actions in the Plan has confirmed that actions are focused exclusively on positive outcomes for biodiversity. Any impacts to European sites will have positive effects on the qualifying interests of SACs and the Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of SPAs. It has been concluded that there is no likelihood of impacts which will undermine the conservation objectives of a European site or sites arising from the implementation of the Plan, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

Conclusion

There will be no likely significant effect to any European site arising from the implementation of the Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Appendix A

Assessment of whether the implementation of actions will give rise to likely significant effects to European sites

Action	Likely Significant Effect (Yes/No)
Objective 1: Protect, restore and enhance biodiversity to increase the resilience of natural and human systems to climate change	
1.1 Resource and implement the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021	No
1.2 Restore and enhance natural systems to increase resilience – starting with managing hydrological processes, carbon processes and pollination	No
1.3 Develop and implement a National Soil Strategy to increase the resilience of soils to climate change and to capture co-benefits for carbon sequestration	No
1.4 Promote ecosystem restoration and conservation through Payment for Ecosystem Services and investment in actions that increase carbon sinks while promoting biodiversity (e.g. woodlands, bogs, soil management, hedgerows).	No
1.5 Strengthen the Natura 2000 network by providing additional funding to incentivise land and ecosystem restoration by farmers and land owners and to increase capacity for enforcement of habitat regulations.	No
1.6 Establish and implement an all-island invasive species programme to monitor the spread of terrestrial, aquatic and marine invasive species in a changing climate and control invasive species where their spread is considered problematic	No
1.7 Use OPW flood maps to assess the exposure of biodiversity and Natura sites to current and future flood risk and use assessments to inform future management. Develop an integrated coastal management strategy which includes ecosystem based adaptation actions to manage climate risk and build resilience to climate change	No
1.8 Develop an integrated coastal management strategy which includes ecosystem based adaptation actions to manage climate risk and build resilience to climate change	No
Objective 2: Improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on biodiversity	
2.1 Undertake a comprehensive vulnerability assessment of biodiversity in Ireland, including a priority impact assessment to determine the factors that contribute to exposure and sensitivity and to identify the most at risk species and habitats for priority attention	No

2.2	Monitor the current impacts of climate change on biodiversity including the establishment of an ecohydrological monitoring network at representative sites, with all data made available to inform adaptation and conservation action	No
2.3	Undertake scenario planning to assess the projected impacts of climate change and climate responses (e.g. flood management plans and renewable energy installations) on biodiversity to inform strategic decision-making.	No
2.4	Monitor phenological change including in phenological gardens	
2.5	Develop an impact assessment tool to screen for potential maladaptation impacts (with negative consequences for biodiversity) of climate change adaptation actions across all sectors	No
2.6	Establish a citizen science programme to collect data on how climate change and extreme weather is affecting biodiversity	No
2.7	Conduct research into the ecological and social effectiveness of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation to inform actions to safeguard ecosystem services in Ireland	No
2.8	Collate and share information on biodiversity and ecosystem based adaptation actions being implemented in Ireland to policy review and contribute to better implementation of actions	No
2.9	Educate school children through existing (Heritage in Schools Programme, An Taisce Green Schools, Clean Coasts) and additional educational programmes to raise awareness of the links between biodiversity and climate change	No
2.10	Provide education for educators on biodiversity and climate related issues and create synergies between biodiversity education initiatives at primary, secondary and 3rd level	No
Objective 3: Improve landscape connectivity to facilitate mobility in a changing climate		
3.1	Assess the risks associated with a changing climate in the context of landscape fragmentation and in order to inform site designation, protection and connectivity and to prevent the spread of invasive species	No
3.2	Identify vulnerable ecosystems and species that through enhanced landscape connectivity would be more resilient to climate change	No
3.3	Design corridors to enhance the resilience of protected areas and increase opportunities for dispersal across the landscape	No
3.4	Design and implement measures to reduce the barrier effects of roads, railways and technical objects in rivers and streams to facilitate species spatial responses to climate change	No
3.5	Consider the use of Agri-environment measures to maintain heterogeneity and connectivity in the wider landscape	No
3.6	Conduct research to understand the role of Marine Protected Areas and coastal zones in landscape connectivity for greater climate resilience	No

Objective 4: Engage society and all sectors to protect biodiversity to enhance resilience	
4.1 All relevant sectors to consider nature based solutions as potential low cost win-win climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions, screen for maladaptation and report on relevant action as part of the review of this and other sectoral adaptation strategies	No
4.2 Build and strengthen governance arrangements and promote cross-sectoral communication and cooperation to strengthen nature based adaptation solutions and avoid maladaptation	No
4.3 Design and implement a citizen engagement and awareness campaign on climate change and biodiversity conservation to capture case studies, tell stories and engage citizens in data collection and monitoring	No
4.4 Co-design green spaces and wildlife refuges in cities and peri-urban areas with local communities to provide habitats for species under threat from climate change and to connect people to biodiversity. Ensure that the next national agri-environment scheme (e.g. successor to GLAS) has a focus on protecting biodiversity to increase resilience to climate change in rural areas	No
4.5 Engage stakeholders in all sectors to protect biodiversity in order to increase resilience to climate change	No
Objective 5: Ensure sufficient financing is available to implement the Biodiversity Climate Change Adaptation Plan	
5.1 Develop a financial strategy to implement this plan which includes public and private funds innovative financial mechanisms and enables investment from national to local level	No
5.2 Commission research to explore the potential for innovative finance for biodiversity conservation to increase resilience to climate change e.g. Green Bonds, Payment for Ecosystem Services, carbon offsetting, business investment.	No
5.3 Undertake natural capital accounting in all sectors to ensure natural capital is being valued and cost benefit analyses are undertaken to promote Ecosystem Based Adaptation options where appropriate	No
5.4 Analyse the effectiveness of the Common Agricultural Policy Greening rules and measures under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund to protect biodiversity and increase climate resilience	No
5.5 Set up an interdepartmental group to prioritise, access and administer funding under EU LIFE Climate sub programme	No
Objective 6: Put adequate monitoring and evaluation measures in place to review the implementation of the Biodiversity Climate Change Adaptation Plan	
6.1 Collate and cross-reference actions in other sectoral plans to realise synergies, avoid maladaptation actions and monitor their contribution to this Plan	No
6.2 Monitor climate change risks and associated costs and adaptation actions, costs and outcomes related to biodiversity on a regular basis	No
6.3 Develop monitoring and evaluation indicators, including cross sectoral indicators, that streamline reporting and avoid duplication	No
6.4 Establish a portal on Climate Ireland to direct decision makers to relevant biodiversity databases	No

Appendix B

Natura 2000 Network in Ireland

