

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

Report to Inform Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

Prepared for:
Wicklow County Council



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin
Wicklow County Council



Ceangal
Clár den Chomhairle Oidhreacht
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Report to Inform Strategic Environmental Screening for Wicklow County Council Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report to Wicklow County Council for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.

This project has been funded by Wicklow County Council and the Heritage Council. The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme is delivered in partnership with the Heritage Council.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Wicklow County Council (WCC) has prepared a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for its functional area (the Plan Area) for the years 2026-2031. The LABAP builds on the former Wicklow BAP (2015-2025) and focuses on actions that Wicklow County Council can lead, support or influence in relation to protecting and managing biodiversity within Wicklow County.

WCC appointed Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) to complete reports to inform SEA and AA Screening of the LABAP.

This report is the report to inform SEA Screening and documents the SEA Screening Assessment undertaken to identify the need for full SEA for the LABAP. This report should be read in conjunction with the corresponding Report to Inform AA Screening and the LABAP.

1.2 Background to Biodiversity Action Plans

LABAPs must be prepared in accordance with The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). These guidelines provide best practice guidance to local authorities on preparing and implementing biodiversity conservation actions within their functional area. These guidelines advise that LABAPs *'should aim to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.'*

LABAPs are designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at local level. Local authorities are required to develop a compelling vision for their LABAP and a set of clear, measurable and achievable objectives for biodiversity conservation in their functional area. LABAPs are developed by local authority Biodiversity Officers with the support of a dedicated Biodiversity Working Group. Public engagement and consultation must be undertaken at the Pre-draft and Draft Plan stages of the Plan-making process. All submissions from stakeholders and members of the public should be considered during the development of a LABAP.

LABAPs should serve to define targeted and focussed action for promoting biodiversity conservation through the functions of a local authority in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes. LABAPs should be in harmony with and support the land use planning framework, including City and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

LABAPs - as non-statutory land use plans - should be screened for the need for SEA and AA.



2. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview of SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme.

SEA aims to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

SEA of plans and programmes is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC ('the SEA Directive'). For a specific range of land-use plans, this Directive is transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

For all other relevant plans and programmes in Ireland (including other types of plans in the land-use planning sector), the SEA Directive is transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

2.2 Overview of the SEA Process

The SEA process comprises the following steps:

- Screening – the process whereby a decision is made on whether a particular plan or programme, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would require SEA. This report relates to this stage of the SEA process.

The following steps are necessary if a plan or programme requires SEA:

- Scoping – Scope and level of detail in the environmental assessment is decided upon, in consultation with the identified statutory bodies;
- Environmental Assessment - An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the relevant plan or programme;
- Preparation of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation of the plan or programme and associated Environmental Report;
- Evaluation of the submission and observations made on the plan or programme and environmental report; and
- Provision of an SEA Statement, identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final plan or programme



SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans or programmes – which give rise to individual projects – are being developed. It is noted that SEA should result in more sustainable development through the systematic appraisal of policy options.

2.3 Legislative Context

LABAPs, as non-statutory land use plans, require to be screened for the need for SEA in accordance with the requirements of:

- The SEA Directive, particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) and 3(5) in relation to 'screening'; and,
- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011)(termed 'SEA Regulations' from this point onward), particularly Schedule 1, which sets out the '*Criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment.*'

2.4 Overview of the SEA Screening Process

The first step of the SEA process is to carry out SEA Screening to determine the need for SEA of a plan or programme

The first stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is the carrying out of a 'Pre-screening Check' (also known as a 'Stage 1 Applicability'). This allows rapid screening-out of a plan or programme that is clearly not going to have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that do require SEA. The second stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is known as 'Stage 2 Screening.' The purpose of this stage is to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment and whether SEA must be carried out in conjunction with a plan or programme. The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required. Annex II of Directive 2001/42/EC sets out the statutory criteria that should be addressed when undertaking this stage. This process is typically undertaken following a broad 8-step approach, as depicted in Figure 2-1.

The first environmental significance criterion relates to the characteristics of the plan or programme, having regard to: the degree to which the plan or programme sets out a framework for other projects and activities; the influence of the plan or programme on other projects, plans or activities; the role of the plan for integrating environmental considerations to promote sustainable development; environmental issues of relevance to the plan or programme and the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of EU legislation on the environment.

The second environmental significance criterion refers to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected, having regard to; the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; the cumulative nature of the effects; the transboundary nature of the effects; the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or intensive use; the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European or international protection status.



Figure 2-1: SEA Screening steps as per the EPA's Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening

2.5 Relevant SEA Guidance

This SEA Screening has been carried out in accordance with and having appropriate regard to the following guidance documents primarily:

- Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening (EPA, 2021).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022)
- SEA of Local Authority Land-Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources (EPA, 2024).

2.6 Appropriate Assessment and Relationship to SEA Screening

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) be carried out where a plan or project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 Site. Natura 2000 Sites in Ireland include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Areas of Protection (SPAs).

The first step is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This is referred to as Screening for AA and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in relation to the site's conservation objectives.



Screening for AA is relevant to Screening for SEA where it is found that a plan may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 Site, or where such an impact cannot be ruled out taking a precautionary approach, an appropriate assessment of the Plan must be carried out, and in any case where a SEA is not otherwise required.

Article 3(c) of the SEA Directive requires that an SEA is carried out on a plan or programme wherever such a plan or programme requires an AA under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Therefore, where the LABAP requires an appropriate assessment, it will also require an SEA.

This SEA Screening Report and the LABAP is accompanied by an AA Screening Report which should be read in conjunction with this document. The Report to Inform AA Screening concluded 'beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information, that the plan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant (negative) effect on European sites.'



3. LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

3.1 Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan

The Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan is a document for guiding practical decision, inform land-use decisions and connect people with the nature around them. This will be done through new partnerships and better supports, community groups, farmers and local schools who will collaborate to manage land for biodiversity enhancement and restoration initiatives.

The following Objectives¹ are defined in the LABAP:

- Objective 1: Embed Biodiversity in Local Authority Planning, Management and Practice
- Objective 2: Protect and Enhance Biodiversity through Science-based, Community-Led Local Action
- Objective 3: Restore and Connect Biodiversity Across Wicklow's Landscapes
- Objective 4: Collaborate at Scale to Address Shared Biodiversity Challenges
- Objective 5: Strengthen the Evidence Base to Guide Action and Track Progress

A series of Actions² have been defined in the LABAP under each Objective. The higher-level Objectives are broader in scope, whilst the Actions underpinning the Objectives are more defined and measurable. These are presented in Table 3-1.

¹ The Objectives listed in this section are as published in the Final LABAP. Amendments to the Draft LABAP Objectives are included in Appendix 2 of this Screening Report.

² Tables 3-1 and 4-3 consider the Draft LABAP Actions (50 no.). Amendments to the Draft LABAP Actions and further screening for SEA have been documented in Appendix 2 of this Screening Report.



Table 3-1: LABAP Objectives and corresponding Actions

Action Group	Action Reference	Action
Mainstreaming biodiversity into decision making, and leading by example through implementation of best practice	1.	Establish a Biodiversity Forum with representatives from key sectors and community groups. To evolve into a Biodiversity Steering Group on adoption of the plan.
	2.	Advance county-wide mapping of Wicklow’s ecological networks and biodiversity features of particular concern or interest, for internal and external use.
	3.	Use maps to showcase work undertaken by WCC and partners, and to highlight areas where ecological connectivity could be further enhanced.
	4.	Review existing policies, including the WCC Glyphosate Policy and Tree Policy, and update where necessary.
	5.	Support relevant WCC sections by providing advice and guidance on minimising negative impacts on biodiversity and identifying opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in Council works.
	6.	Provide biodiversity training for all WCC staff, and for external contractors through tender process where feasible, to ensure compliance with statutory obligations and the application of best practices.
	7.	Assess and plan for future national and EU biodiversity policy obligations by identifying suitable areas for restoration and biodiversity enhancement on WCC lands, ensuring readiness for the implementation of emerging frameworks.
	8.	WCC to become a partner to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026 and support the implementation of actions across all sectors.
	9.	Monitor and respond to the development of national policies with implications for biodiversity, including those relating to commercial forestry, renewable energy, and other land-use sectors.
	10.	Support the integration of ecological expertise and best practice into statutory planning and development processes by providing accessible guidance, capacity building, and specialist input to assist relevant departments in making biodiversity-informed decisions.
	11.	Ensure adequate resources for ecological input into planning and policy processes, including internal ecological reporting, independent review of statutory assessments (EIA, SEA, AA), and promote the use of stand-alone Ecological Impact Assessments (EclAs), where appropriate.
	12.	Ensure WCC has adequate in-house ecological expertise to implement this and future biodiversity plans by establishing an ecology team and a dedicated parks department, in line with evolving national legislation and policy obligations.



Action Group	Action Reference	Action
	13.	Ensure sufficient resources are available within WCC to meet biodiversity needs by securing public funding, developing new funding models, and leveraging grants and private sector partnerships, including for large-scale and community-led restoration projects.
Citizen Science, Community Conservation and Capacity Building	14.	Develop a Biodiversity Ambassadors programme to raise public awareness of the ecological value and sensitivity of amenity areas.
	15.	Roll out a county-wide biodiversity citizen science monitoring and training programme.
	16.	Provide training, guidance, and capacity-building support to community groups to enhance biodiversity at the local level and facilitate the formation of new biodiversity groups in response to interest.
	17.	Support interested community groups in tree and hedgerow seed collection initiatives, and in the development of a network of tree and hedgerow nurseries.
	18.	Deliver public engagement campaigns, events, and workshops that inspire people to reconnect with nature, take positive action for biodiversity, and act as responsible stewards of Wicklow's natural heritage.
	19.	Deliver biodiversity communications, including updates, public guidance, and accessible information, and explore new formats to raise awareness and deepen public engagement.
	20.	Support creative projects that explore the relationship between people and nature, such as nature-inspired murals, performances, or other artistic expressions.
	21.	Develop practical ways to support information sharing, networking and collaboration among individuals and community groups involved in biodiversity projects and activities in Wicklow.
	22.	Support schools in promoting biodiversity awareness and action through participation in existing programmes and by supporting practical learning and locally relevant projects.
	23.	In collaboration with relevant agencies, provide training and demonstration site visits for farmers and landowners interested in biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration.
	24.	Support farmers and landowners to implement biodiversity enhancement and landscape resilience measures on private land by offering technical guidance and access to funding opportunities.
	25.	Investigate the potential to establish a training programme in applied ecology and land management, based in Wicklow and accredited through collaboration with a third-level institution.



Action Group	Action Reference	Action
Protect, Restore and Build Resilience	26.	Continue implementing targeted biodiversity restoration and management measures at WCC sites with established ecological management plans, such as key coastal locations under active restoration.
	27.	Identify WCC-owned lands countywide with known or potential biodiversity value that require further ecological assessment and develop site-specific strategies to guide future restoration and conservation actions.
	28.	Promote urban biodiversity and ecological connectivity through demonstration projects and green infrastructure measures, including wildlife-friendly lighting, nature-based SuDS, green corridors, and climate-resilient habitats.
	29.	Identify WCC-owned lands in urban and semi-urban areas with potential for habitat creation — particularly woodland and wetland — and support the implementation of biodiversity enhancement measures on these sites.
	30.	Support LAWPRO, Inland Fisheries, and other stakeholders in activities aimed at improving water quality and implementing the 3rd (and 4th) cycle of the River Basin Management Plan.
	31.	Pilot conservation grazing on selected WCC lands to enhance habitat quality and support traditional land management, with a view to establishing a wider programme incorporating biodiversity and social farming objectives.
	32.	Explore innovative nature-based solutions to build county-wide resilience.
	33.	Support projects that enhance marine ecosystems through the restoration of oyster beds, seagrass meadows, and kelp forests in suitable areas.
	34.	Support existing and future EIP, LIFE, and other EU-funded projects focused on ecosystem restoration as a delivery mechanism for WCC objectives.
Collaborate at Landscape Scale for Impact	35.	Support projects focused on the restoration of river corridors and natural water retention features to enhance biodiversity, reduce flood risk, and strengthen upland–coastal connectivity.
	36.	Support East Wicklow Rivers Trust, Inland Fisheries, and LAWPRO in delivering a barrier removal programme to improve fish passage in Wicklow rivers.
	37.	Support collaborative efforts to identify and advance upland restoration opportunities, recognising the unique biodiversity value of these areas and their potential co-benefits for water quality, climate resilience, and sustainable local economies.
	38.	Work with Wicklow Naturally and other partners to promote venison as a sustainable food source, and raise public awareness of the need to manage deer populations in Wicklow.



Action Group	Action Reference	Action
	39.	Review, strengthen, and further develop evidence-based measures to address the impacts of outdoor recreation on biodiversity, ensuring that access and amenity use are balanced with the protection of nature.
	40.	In partnership with NPWS, WUC, and others, establish a Dark Sky Reserve in WMNP and use it as a platform to raise awareness of the need for dark spaces and to implement light pollution reduction initiatives in selected communities.
	41.	Support and participate in invasive species control initiatives, in collaboration with relevant agencies, targeting invasive plants, mammals, aquatic species, and invertebrates.
	42.	Develop mechanisms to improve communication, cooperation, and resource-sharing with national agencies and other state bodies on key issues impacting biodiversity, including forestry, water quality, recreation, and agriculture.
Build Evidence Base through Research and Monitoring	43.	Continue to support existing species- and habitat-specific conservation projects, and work with partners to develop and implement new initiatives that align with identified priorities.
	44.	Encourage and facilitate the collection of baseline and ongoing monitoring data on priority species and habitats in the county, particularly those specified in Annexes II & IV of the Habitats Directive.
	45.	Undertake an audit of existing biodiversity monitoring and research activity in County Wicklow, including species and habitat coverage, methodologies, partnerships, and data availability, to identify gaps and priorities for future work.
	46.	Review and improve systems for biodiversity data management within WCC, and develop protocols to support the sharing of ecological data with key external partners, including the NBDC and NPWS.
	47.	Investigate options for assessing the impact of conservation actions in Wicklow, and for monitoring BAP implementation.
	48.	Pilot ecosystem accounting approaches on WCC Lands and assess feasibility of undertaking a comprehensive Natural Capital Assessment for County Wicklow.
	49.	Compile and promote information on the biodiversity value of historic demesnes and graveyards.
	50.	Support feasibility studies for circular economy projects which may have biodiversity benefits (e.g. wild graveyards, uses of sheep wool, use of habitat management by-products.)



3.2 Draft Plan Consultations and Amendments

This document is consolidated version of the SEA Screening Report, which has been updated in response to the submissions received during the consultation period, and considers amendments that were made to the original Draft Plan. The local authority has consulted with the following Environmental Authorities within the Republic of Ireland:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Ireland
- The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Development Applications Unit
- The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- The Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine

A copy of the Draft LABAP and the Draft SEA and AA Screening Reports were sent to the Environmental Authorities, who were given four weeks to make submissions on the Draft Plan and the accompanying environmental reports. Two submissions were received; from the EPA and the Development Applications Unit³ on behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Services. These submissions have been included in Appendix 1 of this Screening Report.

Draft Plan amendments arising from consultation submissions and the Plan-making process have been subject to further SEA Screening Assessment. This assessment is presented in Appendix 2 of the report. The amendments will not introduce a source of negative impact beyond what has already been assessed for the Draft LABAP. Where a new action has been introduced by way of amendment, it was found to broadly have positive effects on primary interacting environmental receptors (i.e., biodiversity, flora and fauna). The majority of the amendments do not change the scope of the original actions and achieve the same outcomes as intended by their Draft Plan counterparts.

3.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

The LABAP sits within a hierarchy of plans and has been informed by and is consistent with the aims and objectives of other plans, programmes and strategies developed at national, regional and local levels. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

National Level

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (2018).
- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework First Revision (2025).
- Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage (2022).
- Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028 (2023).
- The 4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023 - 2030 (2024) (discussed further in Section 3.1.1 below).
- Climate Action Plan (2025).

³ The NPWS is fully integrated in the Heritage Division of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and holds the responsibility for the protection and conservation of Ireland's natural heritage and biodiversity at national government level. The DAU is responsible for the routing of and central coordination of Department responses to development applications and plans that might have significant effects on either architectural heritage, archaeology and/or nature conservation referred to the Minister in their role as a statutory consultee under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.



Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly 2019 - 2031.
- The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022 - 2028.
- The Wicklow Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029.
- The Draft County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2025-2029.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans within the Republic of Ireland will also serve to complement their Northern Ireland counterparts, which include:

- Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland
- Biodiversity Strategy (Draft Nature Recovery Strategy)
- Climate Change Adaptation Programme and Action Plan for Northern Ireland

3.3.1 The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023 - 2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to protect and value nature. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to '*act for nature.*' This plan provides the overarching arching framework for delivering biodiversity conservation through LABAPs.

This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. The five overarching objectives to address new and emerging issues include the following:

- Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
- Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
- Objective 3 - Secure Nature's Contribution to People
- Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
- Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives



The NBAP contains actions pertaining to the preparation to LABAPs under *Objective One: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity* and *Objective Three: Secure Nature's Contribution to People*, including the following:

Table 3-2: NBAP Actions pertaining to the preparation of Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans

Action Number	Action
1C5	The Heritage Council will publish updated guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans and their integration with City and County Development Plans.
1C6	All Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan adopted by the end of 2026 which is subject to regular review and revision processes in line with relevant guideline standards.
3A3	Local Authorities will work to identify and respond to opportunities for enhancing the biocultural value of GBUE through appropriate design strategies, the use of visual and performing arts, and enhancing equity of access and promoting use of GBUE by community groups and integrating cultural services in local biodiversity action plans.

Local Authorities are expected to align their LABAPs with national commitments defined in the NBAP to ensure a cohesive approach to biodiversity conservation across the country.



4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

This section of the report documents the SEA Screening undertaken.

Stage 1 Applicability Analysis was undertaken initially. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.1 of this report (Table 4-1 and Table 4-2).

Stage 2 Screening Analysis was then undertaken. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.2 of this report (Table 4-3, Table 4-4 and Table 4-5).

4.1 Stage 1 - SEA Applicability Analysis

Table 4-1: SEA Applicability Analysis

SEA Applicability Analysis	
Status of Plan/Programme (P/P) Maker	
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	The LABAP has been prepared by a local authority.
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	The LABAP is required by administrative provisions. The local authority is required to prepare the LABAP by the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030. The NBAP has been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The NPWS is an executive agency within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) of the Government of Ireland.
Nature of the Plan/Programme	
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	LABAPs are non-statutory land use plans.
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No.
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No.
Exemptions	
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No.



Table 4-2: Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis

Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis	
Applicability Analysis Criterion	Outcome (Yes or No)
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	Yes
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	Yes
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No
Conclusion	
Having regard to the SEA Screening Process defined in Section 2,4, it has been concluded that Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis is required to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and whether a full SEA of the plan is needed.	



4.2 Stage 2 - SEA Screening Analysis

Table 4-3: Evaluation of Potential Environmental Effects of LABAP Actions

Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
Mainstreaming biodiversity into decision making, and leading by example through implementation of best practice	1.	Establish a Biodiversity Forum with representatives from key sectors and community groups. To evolve into a Biodiversity Steering Group on adoption of the plan.	<p>The action proposes the establishment of a Biodiversity Forum and subsequent Biodiversity Steering Group through engagement with representatives from key sectors and community groups. The action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the Plan Area. This will contribute to the effective delivery of the Plan, and result in biodiversity improvements generally.</p> <p>The action, in and of itself, does not have the potential to result in the occurrence of a negative impact on the receiving environment.</p>
	2.	Advance county-wide mapping of Wicklow's ecological networks and biodiversity features of particular concern or interest, for internal and external use.	<p>The action proposes progressing mapping and baseline surveying of Wicklow's biodiversity networks and features for interested stakeholders. This will help underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action, in and of itself, does not have the potential to result in the occurrence of a negative impact on the receiving environment.</p>
	3.	Use maps to showcase work undertaken by WCC and partners, and to highlight areas where ecological connectivity could be further enhanced.	<p>The action proposes showcasing biodiversity initiatives undertaken by the local authority and stakeholders, and highlighting areas where there is potential for enhancing ecological connectivity. This is proposed to be done through mapping. The action will foster public interest in work done till date, and underpin and support the implementation of the Plan by identifying opportunities for improvement. The action, in and of itself, does not have the potential to result in the occurrence of a negative impact on the receiving environment.</p>



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	4.	Review existing policies, including the WCC Glyphosate Policy and Tree Policy, and update where necessary.	The action proposes reviewing policies on pesticide use and updating where necessary. The action will potentially positive impact receiving environmental components such as soils, water and biodiversity, as well as result in indirect positive effects on interacting human health and livestock. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact on the receiving environment.
	5.	Support relevant WCC sections by providing advice and guidance on minimising negative impacts on biodiversity, and identifying opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in Council works.	The action will support relevant Wicklow County Council sections by providing specialist advice and guidance in their decision-making to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity and identify opportunities for enhancement and restoration works that can be integrated into local authority works. The action will protect and enhance biodiversity and generate direct positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna (key species and habitats), and potential indirect positive effects on interacting components such as soil, water and air. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact on the receiving environment.
	6.	Provide biodiversity training for all WCC staff, and for external contractors through tender process where feasible, to ensure compliance with statutory obligations and the application of best practices.	The action promotes biodiversity-related training for WCC staff and external contractors (where feasible) and has the potential to improve biodiversity-related expertise and implementation within projects, therefore underpinning and supporting biodiversity improvements within the Plan Area. The action has the potential to positively impact interacting environmental components, including biodiversity, flora and fauna, and soils and water. It will not introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	7.	Assess and plan for future national and EU biodiversity policy obligations by identifying suitable areas for restoration and biodiversity enhancement on WCC lands, ensuring readiness for the implementation of emerging frameworks.	The action proposes assessing and planning for future national and EU policy obligations relating to biodiversity, including the identification of suitable areas for restoration and biodiversity enhancement on lands under WCC ownership, and preparing for the implementation of higher-order policy frameworks within Wicklow County. The action has the potential to enhance biodiversity metrics within the Plan Area, therefore benefitting interacting receptors such as biodiversity, flora and fauna and the soils and water environments. It will not introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	8.	WCC to become a partner to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026 and support the implementation of actions across all sectors.	The action supports the implantation of the upcoming All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (2026) across all applicable sectors. The implementation of the action will have positive effects for biodiversity by improving diversification and species richness and consequently supporting pollinator populations. These mutualistic interactions between plant and pollinators have the potential to arrest pollinator decline and contribute to stability of plant-pollinator communities ⁴ . The action does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	9.	Monitor and respond to the development of national policies with implications for biodiversity, including those relating to commercial forestry, renewable energy, and other land-use sectors.	The action proposes Wicklow County Council to act as a stakeholder in the national policy-making process in relation to biodiversity developments. It involves monitoring and providing input in the development of national policies with implications for biodiversity, including policies relating to land-use sectors (e.g. forestry and renewable energy development).

⁴ Huang et. al (2021) *Ecosystem complexity enhances the resilience of plant-pollinator systems*. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332221004668> (Accessed September 2025)



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			<p>The action is engagement-based and will create and foster a collaborative approach to designing implementable biodiversity policy nationally and at a local level and potentially contribute to the effective delivery of biodiversity improvements.</p> <p>The action will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>
	10.	Support the integration of ecological expertise and best practice into statutory planning and development processes by providing accessible guidance, capacity building, and specialist input to assist relevant departments in making biodiversity-informed decisions.	The action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within the land use framework and development planning process through the provision of specialist information and input within the planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. The action does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	11.	Ensure adequate resources for ecological input into planning and policy processes, including internal ecological reporting, independent review of statutory assessments (EIA, SEA, AA), and promote the use of stand-alone Ecological Impact Assessments (EclAs), where appropriate.	The action revolves around securing adequate financial resourcing to support specialist input into the planning and policy processes, therefore ensuring robust reviews of ecological reporting and assessments, and promoting EclAs as appropriate. Such integration of biodiversity considerations into the planning process will contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and other indirect positive effects on interacting receptors. The action does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	12.	Ensure WCC has adequate in-house ecological expertise to implement this and future biodiversity plans by establishing an ecology team and a dedicated parks department, in line with evolving national legislation and policy obligations.	The action focuses on securing resources for retaining in-house specialist expertise to facilitate the ongoing implementation of the current and any future BAPs, in line with the national legislation and policy obligations. The action has the potential to improve biodiversity-related expertise within WCC and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan Area.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.
	13.	Ensure sufficient resources are available within WCC to meet biodiversity needs by securing public funding, developing new funding models, and leveraging grants and private sector partnerships, including for large-scale and community-led restoration projects.	The action focuses on securing sufficient resources through existing and new funding streams, which will be used for supporting large-scale and community-led biodiversity restoration projects. The action will protect and enhance biodiversity within the Plan Area and potentially generate positive effects on the biodiversity components (key species and habitats). It does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
Citizen Science, Community Conservation and Capacity Building	14.	Develop a Biodiversity Ambassadors programme to raise public awareness of the ecological value and sensitivity of amenity areas.	The action is engagement-based with the intention to development an ambassadorship programme. The programme will engage with the wider community on the ecological value and sensitivity of amenity areas that are used for recreation by the public. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation, and the wider community. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.
	15.	Roll out a county-wide biodiversity citizen science monitoring and training programme.	The action proposes the development of a citizen science programme, which will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the Plan Area. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the Plan and enable informed decision making through collection of baseline information. The action has the potential to contribute to biodiversity improvements generally. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	16.	Provide training, guidance, and capacity-building support to community groups to enhance biodiversity at the local level and facilitate the formation of new biodiversity groups in response to interest.	The action is training-based to empower community groups to contribute to biodiversity enhancement at the local level. This will potentially foster interest in local wildlife and biodiversity and lead to the formation of new biodiversity groups and increased stewardship of the environment by the local community. The action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the area, positively effecting biodiversity components (key species and habitats) and interacting components (soils and water). The action does not have the potential to generate a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	17.	Support interested community groups in tree and hedgerow seed collection initiatives, and in the development of a network of tree and hedgerow nurseries.	Such seed banks and nurseries can potentially benefit biodiversity, particularly at-risk native flora through conservation of plant genetic material, that can be used for purposes of ecosystem restoration or scientific research. The action is positive for biodiversity, flora and fauna and cultural and natural heritage, and by extension, on population and human health. The action will enhance ecosystem resilience by improving plant disease and pest resistance (existing and emerging) and potentially produce economically viable crops in the future. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the environment.
	18.	Deliver public engagement campaigns, events, and workshops that inspire people to reconnect with nature, take positive action for biodiversity, and act as responsible stewards of Wicklow's natural heritage.	The action is engagement-based and will foster public interest in and stewardship from the wider community in relation to biodiversity in County Wicklow. The action will underpin the delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements generally, with the potential to result in positive effects on biodiversity components (key species and habitats), and interacting environmental components such as soil and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the environment.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	19.	Deliver biodiversity communications, including updates, public guidance, and accessible information, and explore new formats to raise awareness and deepen public engagement.	The action is engagement- and awareness-based for disseminating information and exploring other methods of raising awareness. This will foster further public interest in the protection and enhancement of local biodiversity. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.
	20.	Support creative projects that explore the relationship between people and nature, such as nature-inspired murals, performances, or other artistic expressions.	The action is aimed at supporting nature relational art and creative projects and has the potential to positively impact cultural and natural heritage and population and human health by fostering human wellbeing and environmental awareness. The action does not the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	21.	Develop practical ways to support information sharing, networking and collaboration among individuals and community groups involved in biodiversity projects and activities in Wicklow.	The action is awareness- and engagement-based relating to the exchange of information and collaboration between individuals and groups involved in biodiversity activities in County Wicklow. The action creates and fosters a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improvements in the Plan Area, contributing to the effective delivery of the Plan and Biodiversity Improvements generally. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	22.	Support schools in promoting biodiversity awareness and action through participation in existing programmes and by supporting practical learning and locally relevant projects.	The action promotes biodiversity-related education in schools and incentivises school students to learn about the natural environment. This will result in increased engagement from younger members of the wider community and underpin and support biodiversity improvements generally within the Plan Area. The action will not result in the occurrence of an adverse effect due to the absence of a source of negative impact.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	23.	In collaboration with relevant agencies, provide training and demonstration site visits for farmers and landowners interested in biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration.	The action is engagement-based as it intends to provide training and demonstration site visits for interested farmers and landowners considering the integration of biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration measures on their landholdings. The action will potentially improve biodiversity-related expertise within these groups and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan Area. The action will not result in the occurrence of an adverse effect due to the absence of a source of negative impact.
	24.	Support farmers and landowners to implement biodiversity enhancement and landscape resilience measures on private land by offering technical guidance and access to funding opportunities.	The action will facilitate interested farmers and landowners in implementing suitable biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration measures across their landholdings through the provision of specialist advice and access to funding streams. The action will generally protect and enhance existing biodiversity in these ecosystems and generate positive effects for any key species and habitats present. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	25.	Investigate the potential to establish a training programme in applied ecology and land management, based in Wicklow and accredited through collaboration with a third-level institution.	The action will assess the feasibility of establishing and providing a training programme in applied ecology and land management through a third-level institution in Wicklow. The action promotes biodiversity-related education and has the potential to improve biodiversity expertise and underpin and support enhancement and restoration efforts within the Plan Area. The action will not result in the occurrence of an adverse effect due to the absence of a source of negative impact.
Protect, Restore and Build Resilience	26.	Continue implementing targeted biodiversity restoration and management measures at WCC sites with established ecological management plans, such as key coastal locations under active restoration.	The action is aimed at the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity conditions within the Plan Area and has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and species, and co-benefits for other environmental components.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	27.	Identify WCC-owned lands countywide with known or potential biodiversity value that require further ecological assessment, and develop site-specific strategies to guide future restoration and conservation actions.	The action proposes the identification of local authority-owned lands within the Plan Area that have a known or potential biodiversity value for further ecological assessment. This will be done with the view to develop site-specific strategies for guiding restoration and conservation actions. These sites will benefit from a bespoke and coordinated approach to managing and enhancing existing biodiversity. The implementation of this action has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna (key species and habitats), and indirect positive effects on soils and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	28.	Promote urban biodiversity and ecological connectivity through demonstration projects and green infrastructure measures, including wildlife-friendly lighting, nature-based SuDS, green corridors, and climate-resilient habitats.	The action will propose the use of demonstration or pilot projects and green infrastructure measures (such as wildlife-friendly lighting, nature-based SuDS and green corridors) for promoting urban biodiversity and showcasing the potential for co-existence of urban and natural ecosystems. The action is awareness-based and has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement efforts and initiatives carried out by the local authority. The action will not result in the occurrence of an adverse effect due to the absence of a source of negative impact.
	29.	Identify WCC-owned lands in urban and semi-urban areas with potential for habitat creation — particularly woodland and wetland — and support the implementation of biodiversity enhancement measures on these sites.	The action will identify suitable lands under the ownership of Wicklow County Council that can support the implementation of biodiversity enhancement measures. The action will protect and enhance existing biodiversity in the Plan Area, with the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components (key species and habitats), and result in indirect positive effects on water, soils, and air quality.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact than can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	30.	Support LAWPRO, Inland Fisheries, and other stakeholders in activities aimed at improving water quality and implementing the 3rd (and 4th) cycle of the River Basin Management Plan.	The action supports compliance with the Water Framework Directive through engagement with LAWPRO, Inland Fisheries and other stakeholders in activities that improve water quality in waterbodies in the Plan Area and by implementing applicable actions within the current and upcoming River Basin Management Plan. The action will positively impact aquatic ecosystems and interacting receptors such as water, soil, and biodiversity, flora and fauna. The action does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	31.	Pilot conservation grazing on selected WCC lands to enhance habitat quality and support traditional land management, with a view to establishing a wider programme incorporating biodiversity and social farming objectives.	Controlled or conservation grazing has the potential to improve sward quality by preserving good soil structure and minimising soil compacting. This practice also potentially enhances the ecosystem through requiring reduced fertiliser and herbicide applications by conditioning swards for subsequent grazing rotations ⁵ , therefore resulting in environmentally sustainable grazing areas. The action has the potential to positively impact biodiversity, flora and fauna, the soils and water environments, and air and climate. The action does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.

⁵ Spring Grazing Management (Teagasc). Available at: <https://teagasc.ie/crops/grassland/grass10/grazing-management/spring-grazing-management/> (Accessed September 2025).



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	32.	Explore innovative nature-based solutions to build county-wide resilience.	<p>The action proposes the review of nature-based solutions (NBS) that can be applied across the Plan Area to contribute to biodiversity improvements. NBS involves assimilating nature into addressing societal challenges and can translate to integration of biodiversity-friendly features into private sector and local authority developments. The development of any such NBS infrastructure will be carried out under the land-use framework of the local authority and will be subject to the planning process.</p> <p>The action will underpin and support biodiversity improvements in the Plan Area. It does not, in and of itself, have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>
	33.	Support projects that enhance marine ecosystems through the restoration of oyster beds, seagrass meadows, and kelp forests in suitable areas.	<p>The action will support projects aimed at improvement of marine ecosystems, such as the restoration of oyster beds, seagrass meadows, and kelp forests in suitable areas. The restoration of such ecosystems will protect and enhance biodiversity within the marine environment of County Wicklow, and result in direct positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna (habitats and key species) and interacting receptors such as soil and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>
	34.	Support existing and future EIP, LIFE, and other EU-funded projects focused on ecosystem restoration as a delivery mechanism for WCC objectives.	<p>The action pledges support to existing and planned EU-funded projects, including those funded by European Innovation Partnership (EIP) and LIFE (L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement), as delivery mechanisms for the Local Authority's objectives. The action will protect and enhance biodiversity in general, and will result in positive effects on biodiversity components (habitats and key species) and interacting receptors such as soil and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
<p align="center">Collaborate at Landscape Scale for Impact</p>	35.	<p>Support projects focused on the restoration of river corridors and natural water retention features to enhance biodiversity, reduce flood risk, and strengthen upland–coastal connectivity.</p>	<p>The action will support projects aimed at the restoration of river corridors and water retention features that can enhance biodiversity, reduce flood risk and strengthen connectivity between inland and coastal ecosystems. This will result in in direct positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna (habitats and key species) and interacting receptors such as soil and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>
	36.	<p>Support East Wicklow Rivers Trust, Inland Fisheries, and LAWPRO in delivering a barrier removal programme to improve fish passage in Wicklow rivers.</p>	<p>The action proposes that Wicklow County Council support and collaborate with state bodies in the delivery of a barrier removal programme across Wicklow County to improve fish migration. The removal of barriers across watercourses aids in the restoration of river habitats, contributing to national obligations towards EU Water Framework and Habitats Directives and fostering a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives within County Wicklow. These works were subject to various environmental assessments to inform planning consent⁶, including an ecological impact assessment and screening for appropriate assessment.</p> <p>The action will potentially result in in direct positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna (habitats and key species) and interacting receptors such as soil and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>

⁶ Restoring fish passage by reopening ~41 km of salmonid habitat in Eastern Ireland (Dam Removal Europe). Available at <https://damremoval.eu/portfolio/ballinglen-bridge-weir-ireland/#:~:text=Since%202020%2C%20the%20Wicklow%20Fish,aiming%20at%20improving%20habitat%20and> (Accessed September 2025).



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
	37.	Support collaborative efforts to identify and advance upland restoration opportunities, recognising the unique biodiversity value of these areas and their potential co-benefits for water quality, climate resilience, and sustainable local economies.	<p>The action will support collaborative efforts between various state bodies for identifying and advancing upland restoration opportunities in recognition of the unique biodiversity values and potential ecosystem services these areas can offer. The restoration of these native woodlands will provide habitats for native flora and fauna and promote ecological diversity and connectivity. The vegetation in these woodlands act as natural filters, improving the quality of water that flows through streams and rivers traversing these areas.</p> <p>The action will potentially result in in direct positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna (habitats and key species) and interacting receptors such as soil and water. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>
	38.	Work with Wicklow Naturally and other partners to promote venison as a sustainable food source, and raise public awareness of the need to manage deer populations in Wicklow.	<p>Deer populations in County Wicklow have increased drastically, requiring intervention from the Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine for managing deer populations and preventing the environmental and economic impacts of deer grazing. Native and broadleaf trees are at particular risk from deer damage⁷. Venison can be a sustainable source of meat due to its relatively lower environmental footprint when compared to traditional livestock, as these deer populations do not require extensive resource use⁸.</p> <p>The action intends to raise awareness regarding venison as a sustainable food source and indicate to the need to manage deer populations in Wicklow.</p>

⁷ Wicklow Deer Management Project 2019-2022 Final report (Wicklow Uplands Council, March 2022). Available at: <http://irishdeercommission.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Wicklow-Deer-Project-Final-Report-April22.pdf> (Accessed September 2025)

⁸ Venison: A Sustainable and Ethical Meat Choice (Irish Deer Society). Available at: <https://www.irishdeersociety.ie/wild-venison-healthy-and-sustainable/> (Accessed September 2025)



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			The action will foster public interest in relation to this issue. The action, being awareness-based, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.
	39.	Review, strengthen, and further develop evidence-based measures to address the impacts of outdoor recreation on biodiversity, ensuring that access and amenity use are balanced with the protection of nature.	The action proposes the development of evidence-based measures for address the impacts of outdoor recreation on biodiversity in an effort to balance amenity use and ecological protection. The action will protect and enhance biodiversity around areas that see increased human activity due to their amenity value. The action will generate positive effects on biodiversity components (habitats and key species), and co-benefits for other environmental components (soil, water, air and climate). The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	40.	In partnership with NPWS, WUC, and others, establish a Dark Sky Reserve in WMNP and use it as a platform to raise awareness of the need for dark spaces and to implement light pollution reduction initiatives in selected communities.	Light pollution presents a threat to light-sensitive, nocturnal species inhabiting in or around urban or peri-urban settlements. The development of a Dark Sky Reserve within the Wicklow Mountains National Park will have positive effects on the local wildlife which require natural darkness, and as per Dark Sky Ireland's findings, potentially positively impact population and human health, cultural heritage and tourism and recreation. The action does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	41.	Support and participate in invasive species control initiatives, in collaboration with relevant agencies, targeting invasive plants, mammals, aquatic species, and invertebrates.	The action will prevent and minimise the spread of invasive species in the Plan Area and has the potential to result in positive effects for biodiversity. Native species and habitats that are at risk due to invasive species will benefit through the reduction or elimination of competition for resources. The action also creates and fosters a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives that will improve biodiversity in the Plan Area. This will contribute to the effective delivery of the Plan.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			The action does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	42.	Develop mechanisms to improve communication, cooperation, and resource-sharing with national agencies and other state bodies on key issues impacting biodiversity, including forestry, water quality, recreation, and agriculture.	The action proposes the development of mechanisms and systems for enhancing communication across national and other European bodies on key issues relating to biodiversity and other sectors such as forestry, water quality, and agriculture. This creates and fosters a collaborative approach where knowledge and expertise can be exchanged and initiatives can be effectively implemented for improving biodiversity in the Plan Area. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.
Build Evidence Base through Research and Monitoring	43.	Continue to support existing species- and habitat-specific conservation projects, and work with partners to develop and implement new initiatives that align with identified priorities.	The action will protect and enhance biodiversity in the Plan Area, and potentially generate direct positive effects on biodiversity components (habitats and key species), and indirect positive effects for other interacting environmental components such as water and soil. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	44.	Encourage and facilitate the collection of baseline and ongoing monitoring data on priority species and habitats in the county, particularly those specified in Annexes II & IV of the Habitats Directive.	The action will facilitate the collection of baseline ecological surveying and ongoing monitoring on priority species and habitats in the Plan Area. This will underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan, potentially leading to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.
	45.	Undertake an audit of existing biodiversity monitoring and research activity in County Wicklow, including species and habitat coverage, methodologies, partnerships, and data availability, to identify gaps and priorities for future work.	The action intends to undertake a review of existing monitoring and research activity within County Wicklow to identify opportunities for improvement and prioritisation for future work. The action furthers baseline ecological surveying within the Plan Area, which underpins and supports the effective implementation of the Plan.



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			<p>This leads to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements.</p> <p>The action, being reviewed-based, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>
	46.	<p>Review and improve systems for biodiversity data management within WCC and develop protocols to support the sharing of ecological data with key external partners, including the NBDC and NPWS.</p>	<p>The action will create and foster a collaborative approach to reviewing and improving existing systems for data management and sharing, which in turn facilitates knowledge exchange and improves expertise. The action will contribute to the effective delivery and implementation of the Plan, and biodiversity improvements generally. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>
	47.	<p>Investigate options for assessing the impact of conservation actions in Wicklow, and for monitoring BAP implementation.</p>	<p>The action proposes exploring options for assessing the impacts of conservation actions in the Plan Area, including the monitoring of the implementation of the BAP. This can potentially involve the carrying out of ecological surveys, climate risk assessments and conservation initiatives within the Plan Area, which will underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan, and lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements within County Wicklow. The action, being research-based, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>
	48.	<p>Pilot ecosystem accounting approaches on WCC Lands and assess feasibility of undertaking a comprehensive Natural Capital Assessment for County Wicklow.</p>	<p>Ecosystem accounting is a statistical framework for organising data, tracking changes in the extents and conditions of ecosystems, measuring ecosystem services, and linking this information to economy and other human activity⁹.</p>

⁹ *Ecosystem accounts – measuring the contribution of nature to the economy and human wellbeing* (Eurostat). Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ecosystem accounts - measuring the contribution of nature to the economy and human wellbeing](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ecosystem_accounts_-_measuring_the_contribution_of_nature_to_the_economy_and_human_wellbeing) (Accessed September 2025)



Theme	Action Reference	Action	SEA Screening
			<p>The action proposes the piloting of ecosystem accounting on local authority lands and additionally assess the feasibility of undertaking a comprehensive Natural Capital Assessment for the Plan Area, which can provide valuable information for sustainable decision-making.</p> <p>The action will underpin and support effective implementation of the BAP and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action, being research-based, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>
	49.	Compile and promote information on the biodiversity value of historic demesnes and graveyards.	<p>The action will promote awareness of the biodiversity value of historic demesne and graveyards, which can foster interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local community. The action, being awareness-based, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>
	50.	Support feasibility studies for circular economy projects which may have biodiversity benefits (e.g. wild graveyards, uses of sheep wool, use of habitat management by-products.)	<p>The action proposes undertaking feasibility studies for circular economy projects that can positively interact with biodiversity, such as the use of natural textiles, and the use of by-products harvested through habitat management of ecosystems. The action has positive implications for biodiversity, flora and fauna, air and climate and population and human health (economy), through potential reduced resource extraction if executed. The action, being research-based, will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment due to the lack of a source of any negative impact.</p>



Table 4-4: Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Environmental Effects - Characteristics of the Plan

Potential Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Plan or Programme having regard, in particular to:	
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>	<p>The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the plan area, including local authority controlled lands. The LABAP defines a vision for biodiversity in the plan area, and themes, aims and targets for achieving this vision. The LABAP proposes a number of biodiversity management related projects and activities, including projects and activities at specific areas. These projects and activities all relate to biodiversity protection and enhancement, however. The LABAP does not propose or support any intensive land use or development projects outside the land use planning framework and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. Considering the Precautionary Principle enshrined in European Union (EU) environmental law, the Objectives and Actions in the LABAP should be assessed having regard to criteria defined in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The LABAP is defined as a Tier 2 Local Action Plan under The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). The LABAP is therefore a lower order plan in the context of the European, national, regional and local plan hierarchy. Local Action Plans set out specific objectives and actions for managing and protecting heritage in a particular area, such as biodiversity, archives, archaeology, heritage engagement, education etc., within the context of a higher order heritage related plan, for example. Each Local Action Plan is developed by a Working Group that includes representatives from relevant stakeholders and is led by heritage professionals within the local authority. The LABAP fits into this tier of plans. The LABAP supports the development of lower order area specific biodiversity management plans and supports the implementation of biodiversity related measures defined in inter-related plans, including the County Development Plan.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>The LABAP supports and promotes the integration of biodiversity protection and enhancement measures into development and activities occurring in the Plan area and supports ecological sustainability.</p>



Potential Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Plan or Programme having regard, in particular to:	
	<p>The LABAP does not, however, stipulate specific development planning requirements and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.</p>	<p>Biodiversity in the plan area faces a number of known threats and pressures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development (residential, commercial, infrastructural and agricultural), • Agricultural activity and expansion, • Urbanisation, • The spread of invasive species, • Pollution (e.g., air, noise, water, light pollution), • Climate change, • Recreational activity, • Land abandonment, • Urban wastewater, • Changes in the hydrological environment. <p>These threats and pressures may cause a range of negative impacts on biodiversity, including habitat loss, reduction and fragmentation; disturbance to key species; reduction in species density, impacts on designated sites and locally important non-designated sites present or connected to the plan area, or changes to indicators of conservation value (i.e. water quality, air quality, habitat quality).</p> <p>The LABAP defines a variety of actions to address these threats and pressures.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g., plans linked to waste-management or water protection).</p>	<p>The LABAP is a non-statutory land use plan. It does, however, support the achievement of aims of EU nature-related legislation at a local level, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, • Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (the 'Nature Restoration Law'), • Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ('the Birds Directive'), • Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'),



Potential Significant Effects

Characteristics of the Plan or Programme having regard, in particular to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended, • Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ('the Water Framework Directive'), • European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722/2003), as amended , • Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy ('the Marine Strategy Framework Directive'), • European Communities (Marine Strategy Framework) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 249/2011), as amended, • Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks ('the Floods Directive'), • European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 122/2010), as amended, • Directive 2006/113/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the quality required of shellfish waters ('the Shellfish Waters Directive'), • European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 268/2006), as amended.
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Table 4-5: Criteria for Determining Potential for Significant Effects - Characteristics of the Effects

Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.</p>	<p>The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the Plan area. It defines the biodiversity actions that support and promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice biodiversity management and improvement, • Local authority biodiversity protection and enhancement initiatives, • The improvement of biodiversity on local authority controlled lands, • Biodiversity training and awareness events, • Biodiversity education and training, • Planting of native species (i.e. trees, shrubs, plants etc.) • Ecological surveying and mapping to identify areas of risk from threats and pressure and areas for targeted biodiversity protection/enhancement action, • Collaborating with key stakeholders and the public to achieve biodiversity aims. <p>The range of actions defined in the LAPAP have the potential to have a range of likely, slight to very significant, temporary to long-term, positive environmental effects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects on biodiversity, including habitats, key species, designated sites and locally important non-designated sites. • Indirect positive effects on water quality and hydrology - e.g., through the promotion of the use Nature Based Solutions in drainage management and the protection of the aquatic environment. • Positive effects on population and human health - e.g., - through the protection and enhancement of areas of biodiversity that provide amenity value, and support public health and well-being. • Positive effects on the soils environment - e.g., biodiversity has the potential to improve soil quality, structure and function.



Potential for Significant Effects

Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects on Climate - e.g., through the promotion of areas of enhanced biodiversity that can contribute to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) sequestration levels, and protect against the effects of climate change related events (i.e. floods, erosion etc.). • Positive effects on landscape and visual amenity - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage that contributes to scenic value and visual amenity. <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. They have been carefully reviewed and it has been concluded that these actions do not have the potential to have unintended negative effects on the receiving environment.</p> <p>The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. There is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The LABAP is in harmony and consistent with inter-related plans, including land use plans relevant to the plan area, higher order heritage related plans, the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, the national Climate Action Plan and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The range of positive effects that may be realised by the implementation of the LABAP have the potential to interact and combine with positive effects associated with biodiversity measures defined in these inter-related plans to create larger, more significant positive effects.</p> <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to interact and combine with negative effects associated with measures defined in these inter-related plans or projects to create larger, more significant negative effects.</p>



Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
<p>The transboundary nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in or connected to the plan area. These effects will be relatively localised however given that the LABAP is a local authority action plan.</p> <p>These effects have the potential to be transmitted to areas surrounding and outside the local authority functional area via environmental pathways. It is unlikely these effects will be transmitted to Northern Ireland or any other country outside of Ireland however given the distance from the local authority functional area to these other countries and the lack of direct environmental pathways from the functional area to said countries. Actions in the LABAP that may benefit migratory birds have some degree of potential to create positive effects beyond the national boundary of Ireland, however.</p> <p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the ability to be transmitted beyond the national boundary of Ireland.</p>
<p>The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents).</p>	<p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to create risks to human health or the environment.</p>
<p>The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in the plan area or connected to the plan area via environmental pathways, including elements that may up the receiving biodiversity environment such as habitats, key species, designated sites and non-designated locally important sites.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • Intensive land-use. 	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects that contribute to enhanced biodiversity and natural heritage; enhanced water, soil or air quality in the plan area, and more sustainable, ecologically diverse land use.</p> <p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that may affect special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (including built or archaeological heritage), or contribute to the exceedance of environmental quality standards, in the plan area.</p> <p>The LABAP does not support or promote intensive land use or development projects that may create negative environmental effects.</p>



Potential for Significant Effects

Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:

<p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, community or international protection status.</p>	<p>There are a variety of sites designated for their ecological value (e.g., Special protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, proposed Natural Heritage Areas) present in and connected to the plan area. The actions in the LABAP have been carefully designed to support the protection and enhancement of these designated sites.</p> <p>There are sites in the plan area that are designated for their landscape and visual amenity value. The implementation of the LABAP has the potential to have positive effects on landscape and visual amenity generally and such designated sites - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage settings that contributes to landscape character, scenic value and visual amenity.</p>
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Table 4-6: Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

<p>Summary of SEA Screening Analysis</p> <p>Having regard to the evaluation undertaken in Table 4-3 and the Stage 2 Screening Analysis undertaken in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5, it is concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.</p>



5. CONCLUSIONS

An SEA Screening Assessment was undertaken to determine the need for an SEA for the Wicklow County Council LABAP. It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP. The principal reasons for this are as follows:

- The LABAP does not introduce any source of negative environmental effect.
- All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. There is no requirement to integrate further environmental considerations into the LABAP given its intrinsic nature, its stated aims and objectives, and the potential positive effects associated with its actions.
- The LABAP is in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes.
- The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects.
- The LABAP is not a statutory land use plan. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. It aligns with and supports with policy defined in the Wicklow County Development Pan 2022 – 2028.

All amendments made to the Draft LABAP over the Plan-making process were also subject to further SEA Screening. It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as a result of these amendments. The principal reason for this is as follows:

- The amendments are minor and will not introduce a source of negative impact that will result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.

Therefore, a full SEA of the County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031 is not required.

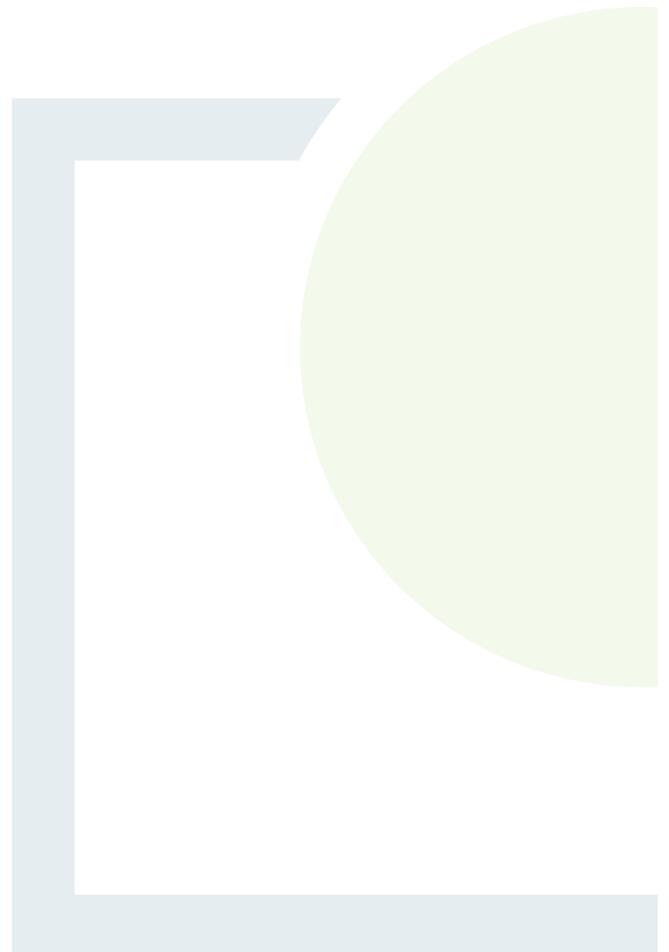


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APPENDIX 1

SEA Screening Consultation
Responses from Prescribed
Environmental Authorities





Headquarters, PO Box 3000
Johnstown Castle Estate
County Wexford, Ireland

Ceanncheathrú, Bosca Poist 3000
Eastát Chaisleán Chaile Sheáin
Contae Loch Garman, Éire

T: +353 53 916 0600

F: +353 53 916 0699

E: info@epa.ie

W: www.epa.ie

LoCall: 1890 33 55 99

Dr Hannah O'Kelly
Biodiversity Officer
Wicklow County Council

7th October 2025

Our Ref: 250909.1

Re. SEA Screening for Wicklow Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan 2025.

Dear Dr O'Kelly,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 30th September 2025 in relation to the Wicklow Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening.

In our role as an SEA environmental authority under the SEA Regulations, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into plans and programmes¹ and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the plan or programme. Our functions do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans or programmes.

As a priority, we focus our efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. For land use plans at county and local level, we provide a 'self-service approach' via our guidance document '[SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources](#)'. This document is updated regularly and sets out our key recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into Local Authority land use plans. In finalising your SEA screening determination, we suggest that you take this guidance document into account and incorporate the relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the plan or programme.

¹ 'Plan or programme' is defined in the SEA Directive as including modifications to plans or programmes, which in the Irish context, includes material amendments/alterations, variations etc.

SEA Determination

If a proposed SEA determination hasn't been made regarding the plan or programme, you should determine whether implementing the plan or programme would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The SEA Regulations, Schedule 2A (S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended) or Schedule 1 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended), as appropriate, set out the '*Criteria for determining whether a Plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment*' to use to determine whether the plan or programme would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Guidance on the SEA process, including an SEA pack and checklist, is available on our website at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-resources-and-guidance/>.

We recommend that you take the available guidance into account in making your SEA Screening Determination and incorporate the relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the plan or programme.

EPA SEA Screening Guidance

Our [*Good Practice Guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) Screening*](#) (EPA, 2021) provides specific stand-alone guidance to assist plan or programme makers and SEA practitioners. It focuses primarily on plans/programmes in the non-land use sector in Ireland and includes an elaboration of the steps needed for screening, the legislative landscape underpinning SEA screening, and step-by-step process and templates to assist in preparing the required documentation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities

The [*Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities*](#) (DHLGH, 2022) provides advice on carrying out SEA in the land-use planning sector for those plans listed in S.I. No.436 of 2004, as amended. These plans comprise regional, county and local plans, including Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, County or City Development Plans, variations of Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes for Strategic Development Zones. The Guidelines replace previous guidance for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities published in 2004.

Sustainable Development

In proposing and in implementing the plan or programme, you should ensure that the plan or programme is consistent with the need for proper planning and sustainable development. Adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the plan or programme.

In considering the plan or programme, you should take into account the need to align with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as

incorporating any relevant recommendations in sectoral, regional and local climate adaptation plans.

You should also ensure that the plan or programme aligns with any key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The Plan should also align with the OPW's '[The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities](#)' (OPW, 2009), as relevant and appropriate, in the zoning and development of lands.

Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024

In October 2024, the EPA published the latest iteration of our 4-yearly State of the Environment Report. This report should be considered, and relevant aspects integrated as appropriate, in implementing the Plan outputs/ recommendations. It is available at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-environment-report/>.

Available Guidance & Resources

Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:

- SEA process guidance and checklists;
- Inventory of spatial datasets relevant to SEA;
- Topic and sector specific SEA guidance (including [SEA and Integration Guidance](#) (EPA, 2025), [Good practice note on Cumulative Effects Assessment](#) (EPA, 2020), [Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA](#) (EPA, 2015), and [Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment](#) (EPA, 2012)).

You can access these guidance notes and other resources at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-topic-and-sector-specific-guidance/>

EPA SEA WebGIS Tool

Our SEA WebGIS Tool has been updated recently and is now available at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA>. It allows an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area to be produced. It is intended to assist public authorities in SEA screening and scoping exercises.

Catchments.ie

Our <https://www.catchments.ie/maps/> website provides a single point of access to water quality and catchment data from the National WFD monitoring programme.

Future amendments to the plan or programme

Where changes to the plan or programme are made prior to finalisation, or where modifications to the plan or programme are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the

criteria set out in Schedule 2A (S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended) or Schedule 1 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended) of the SEA Regulations, as appropriate.

Appropriate Assessment

You should ensure that the plan or programme complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant. Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the key findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the plan or programme.

EPA AA GeoTool

Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It allows users to select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is available at: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool> .

Environmental Authorities

Under the SEA Regulations, prior to making your SEA determination you should consult with:

- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
- Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment; and,
- Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.

For land use plans covered under S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended, you should also consult with:

- any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed variation or local area plan.

SEA Determination

As soon as practicable after making your determination as to whether SEA is required or not, you should make a copy of your decision, including, if appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection in your offices and on your website. You should also send a copy of your determination to the relevant environmental authorities consulted.

If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: sea@epa.ie.



Yours sincerely,

Eleanor Ryan

*Strategic Environmental Assessment Unit
Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring*

Eleanor Ryan



Planning Ref: **FP2025-091**

(Please quote in all related correspondence)

28 October 2025

Director of Services-Planning
Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow Town
Co Wicklow
A67 FW96

Upload Via Portal: hokelly@wicklowcoco.ie Climatepolicy@wicklowcoco.ie

**Proposed Development: Wicklow County Council: Wicklow Local Authority
Biodiversity Action Plan for Review: Wicklow County**

A Chara

I refer to correspondence received in connection with the above. Outlined below are heritage-related observations/recommendations coordinated by the Development Applications Unit under the stated headings

Nature Conservation

The following observations are made by the Department in its role as the authority with overarching responsibility for nature conservation and the nature Directives (i.e. the EU Birds and Habitats Directives) and as an environmental authority under SEA legislation. The observations are not exhaustive and are offered to assist Wicklow County Council in meeting its obligations in relation to nature conservation, European sites, biodiversity and environmental protection in the preparation of the **Draft County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030**.

The Department welcomes the proposed objectives and actions outlined in the draft Wicklow County Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030, which provides a comprehensive framework for the conservation of biodiversity in the county over the following five year period.

The Department commends the Council for the 50 well-considered proposed actions. The importance that is placed on biodiversity outside of designated sites, and the highlighting of severe biodiversity decline is particularly welcomed. The Plan represents a vital step towards strengthening the county's response to the biodiversity and climate-change emergency, and aligning with Ireland's broader obligations under the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and EU environmental regulations such as the Nature Restoration Law. However, whilst it sets out an encouraging framework, and it is recognised that this draft will evolve over time and



will be updated regularly; the Department has the following comments to note which highlight some gaps within the Draft BAP that may limit its potential effectiveness:

- The Draft BAP rightly highlights the range of habitats and species within Wicklow. However, this could be greatly expanded on to really celebrate and demonstrate the unique biodiversity that Wicklow supports. The draft BAP provides a limited baseline on the current status and distribution of flora and fauna, and only a sample list of designated sites. It is commended that a number of actions are included in the Plan that target the collection of data that will inform future conservation measures. However, there is a lot of data already available that could be included in the Plan, so that the general public are engaged and encouraged to help protect our existing biodiversity. A detailed section on each of the varied habitat types within Wicklow e.g. coastal, upland, woodland, marine etc., and the species that these habitats support, both within and outside of designated sites, would really draw the reader in and focus conservation efforts.
- The list of 50 actions provided within the draft BAP cover a range of topics that are well considered and vital for ensuring the objectives of the draft BAP will be met. However a number of the proposed actions are framed with aspirational language e.g. “supporting” biodiversity initiatives/projects or “promoting biodiversity awareness”, without the detail on how these actions will be completed in practical terms or how success will be measured, other than the number of schools/farms involved or meetings held etc. Some of these actions could go a lot further and be more specific on conservation measures that could be developed and implemented across Wicklow. It is recognised that a lot of these will be developed over time as the draft BAP progresses, but some simple measures could be proposed such as the management of verges and green spaces to benefit pollinators; an attempt should be made to approximately map and quantify those areas, propose simple measures to manage them for pollinators, such as cutting less frequently and removing the cuttings, and then tracking the implementation of those measures over the course of the plan. Similarly, management of invasive species on land managed by the Council would benefit from methods to approximately quantify the problem for a given area, propose measures of control and then track the implementation of those measures over the course of the plan.
- The importance of mainstreaming biodiversity across all sectors is recognised within the plan, and the list of proposed actions under this heading cover a range of topics. However, key areas such as agriculture, development, tourism, forestry etc. all exert significant pressures on Wicklow’s biodiversity and the focus in the plan appears to be on internal policies and procedures in Wicklow County Council. Objectives that specifically target the above sectors to ensure they are actively contributing to improving biodiversity would be hugely beneficial, e.g.; no net loss of habitats of local importance (higher value) or greater at a minimum, within new developments. It should be noted that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is gaining traction in Ireland following rollout in the UK, and Transport Infrastructure Ireland are involved in producing a new metric for this. By including an objective and/or action within the



draft BAP at this early stage, the transition to BNG within Wicklow will be an easier process that should have huge benefits for biodiversity.

A review has also been undertaken of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report submitted with the application. The Department have no comments to issue in this regard.

This Department, and particularly the National Parks and Wildlife Service looks forward to co-operating with the County Council in implementing this action plan.

You are requested to send further communications to the Development Applications Unit (DAU) at manager.dau@npws.gov.ie, or to the address below.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diarmuid Buttimer', is written over a circular stamp or seal.

Diarmuid Buttimer
Development Applications Unit
Administration

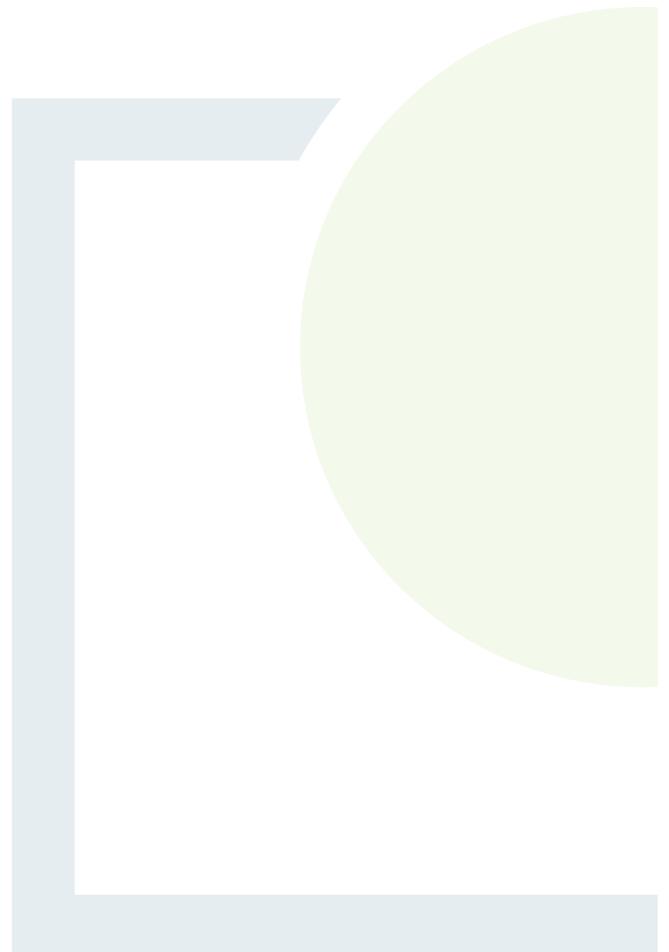


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APPENDIX 2

SEA Screening for
Amendments to the Draft
LABAP



Overview

The following tables present the amendments made to the Actions of the Draft Wicklow County Council Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031 made over the Plan-making process. Additions to the Draft Plan have been denoted in blue, with removals represented in ~~blue strikethrough~~. These amendments have been subject to further SEA Screening.

Table 1: SEA Screening of Draft Plan Amendments – Objectives

Objective Ref. (Final Plan)	Draft Plan Objective	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
Objective 1	Embed Biodiversity in Local Authority Planning and Practice	Embed Biodiversity in Local Authority Planning, Management and Practice	The amendment has added clarity to the Local Authority's role and remit in the implementation of biodiversity measures. It does not change the scope of the original Draft Plan objective. There will be no negative impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
Objective 2	Protect and Enhance Biodiversity through Community-Led and Local Action	Protect and Enhance Biodiversity through Science-based , Community-Led and Local Action	The amendment has introduced a clause to integrate science-based measures into any community-led action or initiatives. The amendment strengthens the Draft Plan objective by ensuring conservation measures are best in the scientific method and best practice. There will be no negative impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.

Table 2: SEA Screening of Draft Plan Amendments – Actions

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
N/A	N/A	<p>3. Ensure that any relevant actions with this plan, or results of these actions, receive commensurate policy provision in future iterations of the County Development Plan for Wicklow.</p>	<p>The amendment has introduced a new Action, which proposes that any relevant actions will receive commensurate policy provision in the future iterations in the land-use planning framework for County Wicklow, which is subject to its own SEA and AA processes.</p> <p>The action ultimately supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and improvements within the development planning process, and will contribute to the realisation of positive effects on receiving biodiversity within the Plan Area. The amendment will not introduce a source of negative impact that can generate any adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>
3.	<p>Use maps to showcase work undertaken by WCC and partners, and to highlight areas where ecological connectivity could be further enhanced.</p>	<p>3. 4. Use maps to showcase work undertaken by WCC and partners, and to highlight areas where ecological connectivity could be further enhanced.</p>	<p>The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.</p>
4.	<p>Review existing policies, including the WCC Glyphosate Policy and Tree Policy, and update where necessary.</p>	<p>4. 5. Review existing policies, including the WCC Glyphosate Policy and Tree Policy, and update where necessary.</p>	<p>The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.</p>

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
5.	Support relevant WCC sections by providing advice and guidance on minimising negative impacts on biodiversity and identifying opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in Council works.	5. 6. Support relevant WCC sections by providing advice and guidance on minimising negative impacts on biodiversity and identifying opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in Council works.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
6.	Provide biodiversity training for all WCC staff, and for external contractors through tender process where feasible, to ensure compliance with statutory obligations and the application of best practices.	6. 7. Provide biodiversity training for all WCC staff, and for external contractors through tender process where feasible, to ensure compliance with statutory obligations and the application of best practices.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
7.	Assess and plan for future national and EU biodiversity policy obligations by identifying suitable areas for restoration and biodiversity enhancement on WCC lands, ensuring readiness for the implementation of emerging frameworks.	7. 8. Assess and p Plan for future national and EU biodiversity policy obligations by identifying suitable areas for restoration and biodiversity enhancement on WCC lands, and by ensuring readiness for the implementation of emerging frameworks National Nature Restoration Plan (NNRP).	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action and made an additional change pertaining to the implementation of a specific Framework. The National Nature Restoration Plan (NNRP) is designed to meet the targets of the EU Nature Restoration Regulations and will contain a plan on restoring degraded ecosystems, particularly those with the most potential to capture and store carbon for preventing and reducing the impacts of natural disasters from climate change.

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
			<p>The refocusing of the Draft Plan Action to align with the aims and targets of the NNRP will have additional positive impacts on climate, material assets and population and human health, furthermore to the identified positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna and the soils and water environments.</p> <p>The amendment will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>
8.	WCC to become a partner to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026 and support the implementation of actions across all sectors.	8. 9. WCC to become a partner to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026 and support the implementation of actions across all sectors.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
9.	Monitor and respond to the development of national policies with implications for biodiversity, including those relating to commercial forestry, renewable energy, and other land-use sectors.	9. 10. Monitor and respond to the development of national policies with implications for biodiversity, including those relating to commercial forestry, renewable energy, and other land-use sectors.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
10.	Support the integration of ecological expertise and best practice into statutory planning and development processes by providing accessible guidance, capacity building, and specialist input to assist relevant departments in making biodiversity-informed decisions.	10. 11. Support the integration of ecological expertise and best practice into statutory planning and development processes by providing accessible guidance, capacity building, and specialist input to assist relevant departments in making biodiversity-informed decisions.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
11.	Ensure adequate resources for ecological input into planning and policy processes, including internal ecological reporting, independent review of statutory assessments (EIA, SEA, AA), and promote the use of stand-alone Ecological Impact Assessments (EclAs), where appropriate.	11. 12. Ensure adequate resources for ecological input into planning and policy processes, including internal ecological reporting, independent review of statutory assessments (EIA, SEA, AA), and promote the use of stand-alone Ecological Impact Assessments (EclAs), where appropriate.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
12.	Ensure WCC has adequate in-house ecological expertise to implement this and future biodiversity plans by establishing an ecology team and a dedicated parks department, in line with evolving national legislation and policy obligations.	12. 13. Ensure WCC has adequate in-house ecological expertise to implement this and future biodiversity plans by establishing an ecology team and a dedicated parks department, in line with evolving national legislation and policy obligations.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
13.	Ensure sufficient resources are available within WCC to meet biodiversity needs by securing public funding, developing new funding models, and leveraging grants and private sector partnerships, including for large-scale and community-led restoration projects.	13. 14. Ensure sufficient resources are available within WCC to meet biodiversity needs by securing public funding, developing new funding models, and leveraging grants and private sector partnerships, including for large-scale and community-led restoration projects.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
14.	Develop a Biodiversity Ambassadors programme to raise public awareness of the ecological value and sensitivity of amenity areas.	14. 15. Develop a Biodiversity Ambassadors programme to raise public awareness of the ecological value and sensitivity of amenity areas.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
15.	Roll out a county-wide biodiversity citizen science monitoring and training programme.	15. 16. Roll out a county-wide biodiversity citizen science monitoring and training programme.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
16.	Provide training, guidance, and capacity-building support to community groups to enhance biodiversity at the local level and facilitate the formation of new biodiversity groups in response to interest.	16. 17. Provide training, guidance, and capacity-building support to community groups to enhance biodiversity at the local level and facilitate the formation of new biodiversity groups in response to interest.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
17.	Support interested community groups in tree and hedgerow seed collection initiatives, and in the development of a network of tree and hedgerow nurseries.	17. 18. Support interested community groups in tree and hedgerow seed collection initiatives, and in the development of a network of tree and hedgerow nurseries.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
18.	Deliver public engagement campaigns, events, and workshops that inspire people to reconnect with nature, take positive action for biodiversity, and act as responsible stewards of Wicklow's natural heritage.	18. 19. Deliver public engagement campaigns, events, and workshops that inspire people to reconnect with nature, take positive action for biodiversity, and act as responsible stewards of Wicklow's natural heritage.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
19.	Deliver biodiversity communications, including updates, public guidance, and accessible information, and explore new formats to raise awareness and deepen public engagement.	19. 20. Deliver biodiversity communications, including updates, public guidance, and accessible information, and explore new formats to raise awareness and deepen public engagement.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
20.	Support creative projects that explore the relationship between people and nature, such as nature-inspired murals, performances, or other artistic expressions.	20. 21. Support creative projects that explore the relationship between people and nature, such as nature-inspired murals, performances, or other artistic expressions.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
21.	Develop practical ways to support information sharing, networking and collaboration among individuals and community groups involved in biodiversity projects and activities in Wicklow.	21. 22. Develop practical ways to support information sharing, networking and collaboration among individuals and community groups involved in biodiversity projects and activities in Wicklow.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
22.	Support schools in promoting biodiversity awareness and action through participation in existing programmes and by supporting practical learning and locally relevant projects.	22. 23. Support schools in promoting biodiversity awareness and action through participation in existing programmes and by supporting practical learning and locally relevant projects.	The amendment has changed the number reference of the Draft Plan Action. There will be no impact or subsequent environmental effects from this amendment.
23.	In collaboration with relevant agencies, provide training and demonstration site visits for farmers and landowners interested in biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration.	24. Support farmers and landowners in implementing biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration measures on private land through technical guidance and training, and by facilitating access to funding opportunities.	The amendment has subsumed Draft Plan Actions 23 and 24 into one Action, which will support interested farmers and landowners in implementing biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration measures on private landholdings by providing technical guidance and training, and by facilitating access to available funding.
24.	Support farmers and landowners to implement biodiversity enhancement and landscape resilience measures on private land by offering technical guidance and access to funding opportunities.		

Draft Plan Action Code	Draft Plan Action	Summary of Amendment	Potential Sources of Impact
			There will be no additional or new sources of impacts that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
32.	Explore innovative nature-based solutions to build county-wide resilience.	32. Explore innovative nature-based solutions to address biodiversity loss and build county-wide resilience.	<p>The amendment introduces a clause that will explore nature-based solutions to address biodiversity loss and consequently build resilience to threats and pressures endangering biodiversity within the Plan Area.</p> <p>The amendment does not change the intention or the scope of the original action, and will achieve the same outcomes as the Draft Plan Action (i.e. underpin and support biodiversity improvements in the Plan Area). The amendment will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>



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