

CLARE BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2031

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Prepared for:
Clare County Council



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL



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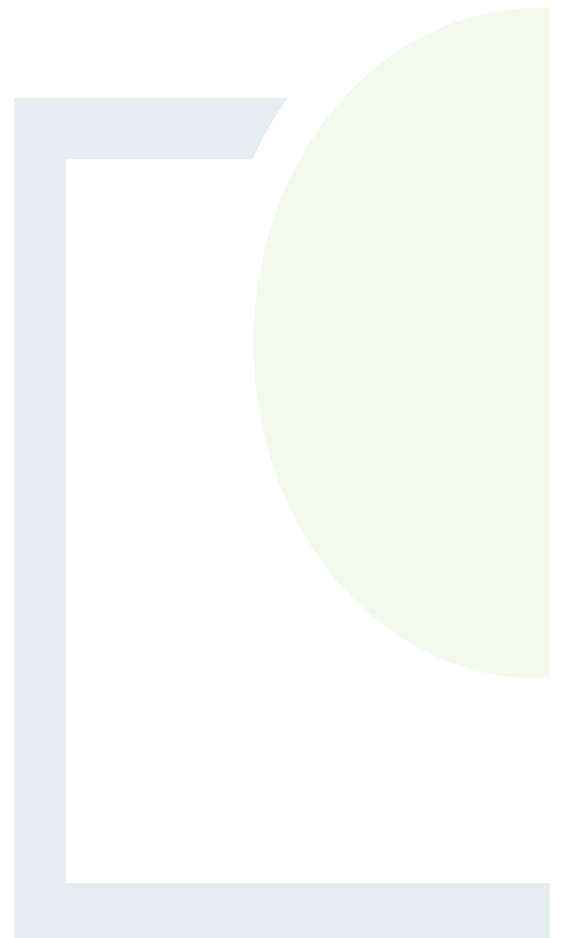
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SEA Screening Report of the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this SEA Screening Report to Clare County Council for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Clare County Council (CCC) is in the process of preparing a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for its functional area (the Plan Area) for the years 2025-2031. The aim of the LABAP is to promote biodiversity conservation at local authority level.

CCC appointed Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) to conduct SEA and AA Screening of the LABAP.

This report documents the SEA Screening undertaken to identify the need for full SEA for the LABAP. This Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the corresponding AA Screening Report 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 EPAs 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. Nature 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 AA Screening Report 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 overarching aim of the LABAP is to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.

The following Strategic Pillars have been defined in the LABAP, within underpinning objectives and actions:

1. **Pillar 1: Developing and Researching the County's Ecological Network** - Pillar 1 includes actions that aim to carry out research and data collection through undertaking ecological baseline surveys, habitat mapping and scientific studies to protect and enhance sites of ecological importance, strengthen connectivity and our understanding of ecosystem services, inform decision making in CCC and inform the development of the County's Ecological Network Map.
 - Objective: *Support and strengthen our database to conserve, manage and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services within the county through data collection, mapping and research.*
2. **Pillar 2: Integrating Biodiversity into Our Work Practices** - Pillar 2 includes actions which aim to integrate biodiversity into our work practices and decision-making processes through best practice. They are primarily aimed at conserving and enhancing biodiversity through the Council's operations and procedures.
 - Objective: *Promote and integrate biodiversity conservation into decision-making processes and operations through policy, best practice, and procedures.*
3. **Pillar 3: Restoring, Enhancing and Conserving our Biodiversity Assets** - Pillar 3 covers actions aimed at practical restoration, conservation and enhancement measures for biodiversity. This also extends to commissioning baseline surveys to inform approach to halt biodiversity loss.
 - Objective: *Deliver actions which aim to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and to reverse biodiversity loss at a county wide level by 2031.*
4. **Pillar 4: Raising Biodiversity Awareness and Education for Future Generations** - Pillar 4 includes actions aimed at promoting biodiversity awareness through various training, educational, creative, and outreach engagement initiatives encompassing a wide range of stakeholder groups across the county. These actions aim to educate and encourage stakeholders to take conservation actions for biodiversity.
 - Objective: *Raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity within the county through education, training and outreach initiatives.*
5. **Pillar 5: Building Collaborative Partnerships for Nature** - Pillar 5 includes actions that foster strong support and collaborative partnerships with local communities and other stakeholders to promote actions that deliver for nature and identify new opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
 - Objective: *Enhance collaboration among all people adopting a whole of society approach to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity within the county.*

These objectives and actions are presented in Table 3-1.



Table 3-1: LABAP Strategic Objectives and Actions

Objective	Action Code	Action
Objective 1: Support and strengthen knowledge repositories to conserve, manage and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services within the country through data collection, mapping and research.	1.1	Develop an Ecological Network Map (ENM) of Clare to inform landscape connectivity for wildlife and protect the county's Green Infrastructure assets taking cognisance of ecological corridors, stepping stones and pinch points.
	1.2	Strengthen understanding of natural capital and ecosystem services.
	1.3	Undertake a study to identify, map and enhance 'Locally Important Biodiversity Sites' (LIBS) and ecological corridors to inform Green Infrastructure Strategies with a view to protecting this ecological resource.
	1.4	Continue to undertake county wide habitat surveys and mapping, building on previous baseline inventory surveys to inform data collection and the ongoing development of the Ecological Network Map.
	1.5	Carry out a biodiversity audit of the Council's landbank with a view to implementing enhancement actions.
	1.6	Engage with third level institutions and other research bodies to support scientific research in the field of biodiversity in collaboration with CCC.
	1.7	Research sites of natural conservation value along the Clare coastline to fully understand the implications of climate change and sea level rise and the potential approaches to mitigation, adaptation and building resilience.
Objective 2: Promote and integrate biodiversity conservation into decision-making processes and operations through policy, best practice and procedures.	2.1	Promote best practice in the use of pesticides in Clare County Council's operations in adherence with <i>Clare County Council's Biodiversity Manual: Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines</i> for herbicide use.
	2.2	Deliver biodiversity training courses to council staff and external contractors and implement the <i>Clare County Council's Biodiversity Manual: Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines</i> into Council operations.
	2.3	Deliver hedgerow training courses to council staff and hedge cutting contractors.
	2.4	Retain natural features and promote and incorporate biodiversity enhancement in the design of new buildings, housing, public realm projects and other proposals as appropriate (e.g. swift nest boxes/swift bricks, native tree planting, rain gardens (SuDS), street scapes, pollinator friendly measures).
	2.5	Incorporate and promote Biodiversity Net Gain and nature-based solutions into practice and decision-making in CCC



Objective	Action Code	Action
	2.6	Protect all designated European sites (SACs and SPAs) in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive; and separately NHA sites ensuring all proposed development are subject to ecological assessment requirements.
	2.7	Adopt 'bat friendly' lighting for new public lighting proposals and upgrade/retrofit existing lighting infrastructure wherever possible to strengthen dark corridors for bats and nocturnal mammals.
	2.8	Protect bat roosts sites and ensure development proposals are subject to appropriate ecological assessments; and identify biodiversity enhancement opportunities.
	2.9	Align projects delivered under the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2031 with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) using the Accelerator Action Tool
	2.10	Engage with the Council led visitor attractions that Visitor Management Plans are completed which include the management of visitor impacts and reduction of threats such as disturbance and habitat degradation to sensitive ecological receptors.
Objective 3: Deliver actions which aim to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and reserve biodiversity loss at a county wide level by 2031.	3.1	Identify potential biodiversity opportunities for tree planting and woodland creation.
	3.2	Undertake a woodland inventory survey to identify and map native woodland habitats in the county.
	3.3	Undertake a tree survey for identified locations in the county
	3.4	Where possible, support local nurseries specialising in the conservation of native trees, plants, seeds and genetic food crops that are of provenance to County Clare.
	3.5	Support and promote local organisations that develop and implement biodiversity initiatives working with farmers, landowners and local communities to establish native woodlands, native tree planting, traditional orchards, pond creation, and other biodiversity enhancement measures.
	3.6	Undertake a hedgerow and treeline audit at sites of ecological importance for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat and other species working in partnership with key organisations.
	3.7	Undertake a county-wide wetland inventory survey to identify and map the wetland resource in County Clare.



Objective	Action Code	Action
	3.8	Support and work with landowners in the county to carry out restoration and biodiversity enhancement projects (e.g. peatlands, grassland conservation, marsh fritillary butterfly)
	3.9	Continue to support rare flora surveys including both terrestrial and aquatic environments working in partnership with BSBI, NPWS, IFI and other relevant agencies.
	3.10	Continue to support the work of the Shannon Dolphin Project including monitoring surveys of bottlenose dolphins, mapping habitats of the Shannon Estuary, habitat restoration, outreach communication and education programmes; and ongoing scientific research.
	3.11	Upon publication of the National Invasive Species Management Plan, explore the feasibility of developing an Invasive Species Management Strategy for the county
	3.12	Support targeted surveys and eradication programmes for the treatment and control of invasive alien species in partnership with the relevant agencies and stakeholder groups.
	3.13	Engage with communities, state agencies and organisations to carry out conservation and restoration of biodiversity sites through the provision of technical advice and where possible funding supports (e.g. sand dunes, native woodlands, hedgerows, marine habitats, semi-natural grasslands)
	3.14	Work with LAWPRO, IFI and other bodies to develop strategies for safeguarding and improving river corridors for wildlife to enhance aquatic biodiversity.
	3.15	Complete the actions for councils outlined in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, promote the initiative, and identify new sites for the management of pollinators.
	3.16	Develop and implement initiatives that build on and support the protection of birds of conservation concern (e.g. red-listed bird species and Annex I birds (EU Birds Directive)), commission surveys and identify enhancement opportunities in partnership with key stakeholders.
	3.17	Support collaboration and sharing of ecological studies (where possible) between organisations that deliver practical measures for the conservation of habitats and species in the county.
3.18	Develop and implement Biodiversity Conservation Management Plans/Management Strategies for sites of ecological importance within Clare County Council's landbank.	



Objective	Action Code	Action
Objective 4: Raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity within the county through education, training and outreach initiatives.	4.1	Collaborate with cross functional departments within Clare County Council (e.g. Tourism, Clare Libraries and the Environmental Awareness Officer) to raise awareness of biodiversity during National Biodiversity Week and National Heritage Week and participate in citizen science initiatives.
	4.2	Promote and raise awareness of biodiversity and climate adaptation during Climate Action Week and National Tree Week.
	4.3	Support and promote active participation in the An Taisce Green Schools programme through the Clare Schools Biodiversity Programme, forest schools initiatives and engage with students in third level institutions.
	4.4	Support the implementation of the Heritage in Schools Scheme as it relates to biodiversity.
	4.5	Promote and raise awareness of biodiversity through the arts in partnership with Clare Libraries, the Arts Office, Creative Ireland and other organisations.
	4.6	Develop interventions that address Invasive Alien Species through education and awareness; and promote recording of invasive species in the county.
	4.7	Raise awareness of the biodiversity work programme to the public through the media, online digital platforms including CCC's website, publications, social media e.g. 'Greener Clare' and install wildlife signage in public spaces.
	4.8	Profile and raise awareness of habitats and species of the Shannon Estuary, Galway Bay and other sites in the County.
	4.9	Continue to work with LAWPRO, IFI and other bodies to promote awareness of aquatic ecosystems (e.g. natural watercourses, riparian corridors and lakes).
	4.10	Promote and raise awareness of the county's flora and fauna and nature positive initiatives (e.g. dark skies) to community groups, educational institutions, landowners and other stakeholders working in partnership with key organisations.
	4.11	Raise awareness and promote the conservation importance of bird species (e.g. White-tailed sea eagle, chough, raptors, seabirds) of County Clare.
	4.12	Promote recording of species groups and support studies that inform species conservation status and ecosystem health



Objective	Action Code	Action
	4.13	Implement biodiversity awareness and conservation training within the Council's county-wide 'Code of Practice' for sustainable tourism in Clare tourism businesses to encourage engagement in biodiversity conservation and enhancement actions.
	4.14	Produce ecological guidelines and publication of resource material (e.g. booklets)
Objective 5: Enhance collaboration among all stakeholders adopting a whole of society approach to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity within the county.	5.1	Develop and implement an initiative to work with faith communities to carry out biodiversity actions on church grounds, graveyards and parish lands.
	5.2	Collaborate with recreational sports clubs, businesses and schools to carry out biodiversity actions and promote citizen science.
	5.3	Work with key stakeholders (landowners, NGOs, local communities and other relevant groups) in the conservation of semi-natural habitats (e.g. native trees, hedgerows) and promote uptake of schemes that benefit biodiversity (e.g. DAFM Native Woodland Schemes).
	5.4	Support marine and coastal organisations to build strategic alliances in marine areas working in partnership with local communities and key stakeholders to promote marine biodiversity, data collection and management actions.
	5.5	Collaborate and support organisations in the county to provide biodiversity training to local communities, landowners and farmers and where possible, support biodiversity themed festivals and events.
	5.6	Promote and engage local communities (e.g. Tidy Towns, local interest groups) to develop Community Biodiversity Action Plans, biodiversity initiatives, advise on funding streams, and encourage citizen science initiatives at a local level.
	5.7	Engage and support local communities, landowners, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and other relevant stakeholders to protect the Burren National Park, all wildlife sanctuaries, proposed NHAs, nature reserves and natural watercourses, and that their educational and conservation values are enhanced and promoted.
	5.8	Where feasible, support and engage with locally and nationally led European Innovation Partnership (EIP), LIFE Programmes and Priority Action Areas projects wherever possible.
	5.9	Continue to collaborate and partner with members of the Clare Biodiversity Forum to advise and deliver actions under the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2031 working in partnership with the Heritage Forum.

3.2 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).
- 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 (2024).

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the region.
- The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.
- Clare Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.
- Clare County Heritage Plan 2024-2030.

3.2.1 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 to Local Biodiversity 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 Green and Blue Urban Environments (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	

SEA Applicability Analysis	
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

To inform the Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis, an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of LABAP Actions has been undertaken. This evaluation is presented in Table 4-3.

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

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 1: Support and strengthen knowledge repositories to conserve, manage and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services within the country through data collection, mapping and research.	1.1	Develop an Ecological Network Map (ENM) of Clare to inform landscape connectivity for wildlife and protect the county's Green Infrastructure assets taking cognisance of ecological corridors, stepping stones and pinch points.	This action proposes the development of an Ecological Network Map of Clare. This will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.2	Strengthen understanding of natural capital and ecosystem services.	This action promotes better biodiversity baseline understanding. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related knowledge and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within Clare. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.3	Undertake a study to identify, map and enhance 'Locally Important Biodiversity Sites' (LIBS) and ecological corridors to inform Green Infrastructure Strategies with a view to protecting this ecological resource.	This action aims to study and enhance LIBS and ecological corridors in Clare to better protect this resource. This will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.4	Continue to undertake county wide habitat surveys and mapping, building on previous baseline inventory surveys to inform data collection and the ongoing development of the Ecological Network Map.	This action proposes the carrying out of county wide habitat surveying and mapping in Clare. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.5	Carry out a biodiversity audit of the Council's landbank with a view to implementing enhancement actions.	This action proposes a biodiversity audit of the Clare County Council landbank. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.6	Engage with third level institutions and other research bodies to support scientific research in the field of biodiversity in collaboration with CCC.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Clare. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and enhance biodiversity knowledge. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.7	Research sites of natural conservation value along the Clare coastline to fully understand the implications of climate change and sea level rise and the potential approaches to mitigation, adaptation and building resilience.	This action proposes research of climate impacts on sites of natural conservation value along Clare's coastline. This will better inform climate change mitigation and adaption and support effective implementation of the plan, potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
Objective 2: Promote and integrate biodiversity conservation into decision-making processes and operations through policy, best practice and procedures.	2.1	Promote best practice in the use of pesticides in Clare County Council's operations in adherence with <i>Clare County Council's Biodiversity Manual: Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines</i> for herbicide use.	This action supports the prevention and reduction of pesticide pollution that may affect biodiversity components in Clare. It is inherently positive in nature. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.2	Deliver biodiversity training courses to council staff and external contractors and implement the <i>Clare County Council's Biodiversity Manual: Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines</i> into Council operations.	This action promotes biodiversity related training and available guidelines for council staff and external contractors. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.3	Deliver hedgerow training courses to council staff and hedge cutting contractors.	This action promotes biodiversity related hedgerow training. It has the potential to improve the protection and management of hedgerows in Clare. Hedgerows are an integral biodiversity feature and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.4	Retain natural features and promote and incorporate biodiversity enhancement in the design of new buildings, housing, public realm projects and other proposals as appropriate (e.g. swift nest boxes/swift bricks, native tree planting, rain gardens (SuDS), street scapes, pollinator friendly measures).	This action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within the land use framework and Clare county council projects. It has the potential to contribute to the realization of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects, outside of what has already been considered and mitigated under land use planning framework SEA and AA processes.
	2.5	Incorporate and promote Biodiversity Net Gain and nature-based solutions into practice and decision-making in CCC	This action supports the development and integration of policy where biodiversity consideration and improvements within the development planning process are taken into account. This includes the use of nature-based solutions into practice and decision-making within the Local Authority. It has the potential to contribute to the realization of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.6	Protect all designated European sites (SACs and SPAs) in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive; and separately NHA sites ensuring all proposed development are subject to ecological assessment requirements.	This action will support the conservation of key species and habitats in European and NHA sites present in Clare and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for these sites and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.7	Adopt 'bat friendly' lighting for new public lighting proposals and upgrade/retrofit existing lighting infrastructure wherever possible to strengthen dark corridors for bats and nocturnal mammals.	This action supports the control and management of public lighting in Clare. It will contribute to preventing and reducing the impact of lighting on light sensitive species, such as bat species, whilst also ensuring adequate lighting for population safety. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.8	Protect bat roosts sites and ensure development proposals are subject to appropriate ecological assessments; and identify biodiversity enhancement opportunities.	This action will support the conservation of bats present in Clare and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.9	Align projects delivered under the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2031 with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) using the Accelerator Action Tool	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach between biodiversity and sustainable development by taking into account the SDGs in any biodiversity initiatives and projects in Clare. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan while also promoting other sustainable practices. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	2.10	Engage with the Council led visitor attractions that Visitor Management Plans are completed which include the management of visitor impacts and reduction of threats such as disturbance and habitat degradation to sensitive ecological receptors.	This action will aim to protect and enhance biodiversity at council led visitor attractions. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.1	Identify potential biodiversity opportunities for tree planting and woodland creation.	This action is aimed at using tree planting to enhance biodiversity within the Plan Area. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 3: Deliver actions which aim to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and reserve biodiversity loss at a county wide level by 2031.	3.2	Undertake a woodland inventory survey to identify and map native woodland habitats in the county.	This action proposes the carrying out of a woodland inventory survey in the county. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.3	Undertake a tree survey for identified locations in the county	This action proposes the carrying out of a tree survey in the county. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.4	Where possible, support local nurseries specialising in the conservation of native trees, plants, seeds and genetic food crops that are of provenance to County Clare.	This action promotes the use of native species in Clare. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential contribute to ecological diversity within the Plan Area. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.5	Support and promote local organisations that develop and implement biodiversity initiatives working with farmers, landowners and local communities to establish native woodlands, native tree planting, traditional orchards, pond creation, and other biodiversity enhancement measures.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing native species biodiversity initiatives and improving native species biodiversity in Clare. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential to contribute to ecological diversity and sustainability. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	3.6	Undertake a hedgerow and treeline audit at sites of ecological importance for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat and other species working in partnership with key organisations.	This action proposes the undertaking of a treeline and hedgerow audit at sites of ecological importance. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements, particularly in the case of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. Hedgerows and treelines are an integral biodiversity feature and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.7	Undertake a county-wide wetland inventory survey to identify and map the wetland resource in County Clare.	This action proposes the carrying out of a county-wide wetland inventory survey. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements in County Clare's wetland areas. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.8	Support and work with landowners in the county to carry out restoration and biodiversity enhancement projects (e.g. peatlands, grassland conservation, marsh fritillary butterfly)	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to carrying out restoration and biodiversity enhancement projects in Clare. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and has the potential to generate a positive effects for a range of key species and for biodiversity generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.9	Continue to support rare flora surveys including both terrestrial and aquatic environments working in partnership with BSBI, NPWS, IFI and other relevant agencies.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to improving biodiversity in Clare through increased biodiversity knowledge by surveys. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	3.10	Continue to support the work of the Shannon Dolphin Project including monitoring surveys of bottlenose dolphins, mapping habitats of the Shannon Estuary, habitat restoration, outreach communication and education programmes; and ongoing scientific research.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to bottlenose dolphin conservation in The Shannon Estuary. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and has the potential to generate a positive effects for this key species and for biodiversity generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.11	Upon publication of the National Invasive Species Management Plan, explore the feasibility of developing an Invasive Species Management Strategy for the county	This action will prevent and minimise the spread of invasive species in Clare by having management strategy resources available. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, such as native species and habitats, that are at risk due to invasive species spread. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.12	Support targeted surveys and eradication programmes for the treatment and control of invasive alien species in partnership with the relevant agencies and stakeholder groups.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to invasive species control in Clare. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, such as native species and habitats, that are at risk due to invasive species spread. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.13	Engage with communities, state agencies and organisations to carry out conservation and restoration of biodiversity sites through the provision of technical advice and where possible funding supports (e.g. sand dunes, native woodlands, hedgerows, marine habitats, semi-natural grasslands)	The action is engagement-based with the intention to support restoration and conservation of biodiversity sites through the provision of technical advice and funding supports. The action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity (native species and habitats). It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.14	Work with LAWPRO, IFI and other bodies to develop strategies for safeguarding and improving river corridors for wildlife to enhance aquatic biodiversity.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Clare's aquatic ecosystems. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	3.15	Complete the actions for councils outlined in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, promote the initiative, and identify new sites for the management of pollinators.	This action will support the conservation of pollinator species present in Clare and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for pollinators and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.16	Develop and implement initiatives that build on and support the protection of birds of conservation concern (e.g. red-listed bird species and Annex I birds (EU Birds Directive)), commission surveys and identify enhancement opportunities in partnership with key stakeholders.	This action will support the conservation of protected bird species present in Clare and connected areas through a collaborative approach. This has the potential to generate positive effects for these key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.17	Support collaboration and sharing of ecological studies (where possible) between organisations that deliver practical measures for the conservation of habitats and species in the county.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Clare. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.18	Develop and implement Biodiversity Conservation Management Plans/Management Strategies for sites of ecological importance within Clare County Council's landbank.	This action proposes the development and implementation of Biodiversity Conservation Management Strategies for sites of ecological Clare County Council's landbank. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.1	Collaborate with cross functional departments within Clare County Council (e.g. Tourism, Clare Libraries and the Environmental Awareness Officer) to raise awareness of biodiversity during National Biodiversity Week and National Heritage Week and participate in citizen science initiatives.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 4: Raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity within the county through education, training and outreach initiatives.	4.2	Promote and raise awareness of biodiversity and climate adaptation during Climate Action Week and National Tree Week.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.3	Support and promote active participation in the An Taisce Green Schools programme through the Clare Schools Biodiversity Programme, forest schools initiatives and engage with students in third level institutions.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity through Clare education initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.4	Support the implementation of the Heritage in Schools Scheme as it relates to biodiversity.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity through the scope of the Heritage in Schools Scheme. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement in younger children which can have implications on wider community biodiversity improvement. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.5	Promote and raise awareness of biodiversity through the arts in partnership with Clare Libraries, the Arts Office, Creative Ireland and other organisations.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity through arts-based initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.6	Develop interventions that address Invasive Alien Species through education and awareness; and promote recording of invasive species in the county.	This action will inhibit and minimise the spread of invasive species in Clare through increased education and awareness in the community. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, such as native species and habitats, that are at risk due to invasive species spread. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.7	Raise awareness of the biodiversity work programme to the public through the media, online digital platforms including CCC's website, publications, social media e.g. 'Greener Clare' and install wildlife signage in public spaces.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.8	Profile and raise awareness of habitats and species of the Shannon Estuary, Galway Bay and other sites in the County.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives relating to prominent harbours and estuaries, including Shannon Estuary and Galway Bay. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement of this area throughout the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.9	Continue to work with LAWPRO, IFI and other bodies to promote awareness of aquatic ecosystems (e.g. natural watercourses, riparian corridors and lakes).	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives relating to Clare's aquatic ecosystems. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.10	Promote and raise awareness of the county's flora and fauna and nature positive initiatives (e.g. dark skies) to community groups, educational institutions, landowners and other stakeholders working in partnership with key organisations.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives relating to Clare's wetlands. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.11	Raise awareness and promote the conservation importance of bird species (e.g. White-tailed sea eagle, chough, raptors, seabirds) of County Clare.	This action will support the conservation of the bird species of significance present within the Plan Area. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for these key species and for biodiversity generally through increased community interest in their biological protection. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.12	Promote recording of species groups and support studies that inform species conservation status and ecosystem health	This action will support the studies for keystone species that can inform species conservation status and ecosystem health. It has the potential to generate positive effects for the receiving natural environment. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	4.13	Implement biodiversity awareness and conservation training within the Council's county-wide 'Code of Practice' for sustainable tourism in Clare tourism businesses to encourage engagement in biodiversity conservation and enhancement actions.	This action promotes biodiversity related training within Clare's tourism sector . It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements, helping to pave the way to more sustainable tourism within the county. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.14	Produce ecological guidelines and publication of resource material (e.g. booklets)	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and increase resources available to aid in improving biodiversity. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.1	Develop and implement an initiative to work with faith communities to carry out biodiversity actions on church grounds, graveyards and parish lands.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach between the council and community to improve biodiversity in areas associated with the faith community. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.2	Collaborate with recreational sports clubs, businesses and schools to carry out biodiversity actions and promote citizen science.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach between the council and community to improve biodiversity. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 5: Enhance collaboration among all stakeholders adopting a whole of society approach to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity within the county.	5.3	Work with key stakeholders (landowners, NGOs, local communities and other relevant groups) in the conservation of semi-natural habitats (e.g. native trees, hedgerows) and promote uptake of schemes that benefit biodiversity (e.g. DAFM Native Woodland Schemes).	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach between the council and community to improve biodiversity related to semi-natural habitats. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential contribute to ecological diversity and sustainability. Hedgerows are an integral biodiversity feature in the plan area and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.4	Support marine and coastal organisations to build strategic alliances in marine areas working in partnership with local communities and key stakeholders to promote marine biodiversity, data collection and management actions.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Clare's marine and coastal environments. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.5	Collaborate and support organisations in the county to provide biodiversity training to local communities, landowners and farmers and where possible, support biodiversity themed festivals and events.	This action promotes biodiversity related training and events. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within Clare. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.6	Promote and engage local communities (e.g. Tidy Towns, local interest groups) to develop Community Biodiversity Action Plans, biodiversity initiatives, advise on funding streams, and encourage citizen science initiatives at a local level.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in local communities. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the community. This action will not result in the occurrence of any adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	5.7	Engage and support local communities, landowners, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and other relevant stakeholders to protect the Burren National Park, all wildlife sanctuaries, proposed NHAs, nature reserves and natural watercourses, and that their educational and conservation values are enhanced and promoted.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in areas of natural importance in Clare. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the community. This action will not result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.8	Where feasible, support and engage with locally and nationally led European Innovation Partnership (EIP), LIFE Programmes and Priority Action Areas projects wherever possible.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effect in and of itself.
	5.9	Continue to collaborate and partner with members of the Clare Biodiversity Forum to advise and deliver actions under the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2031 working in partnership with the Heritage Forum.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity under Clare's biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2031. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effect in and of itself.



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 strategic objectives, aims and targets for achieving this vision. The LABAP proposes a number of biodiversity management related projects and activities, including projects and activities within Clare County. These projects and activities all relate to biodiversity protection and enhancement, however.</p> <p>The LABAP does not support any intensive land use or development projects and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. 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>



Potential Significant Effects

Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:

<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, • Urbanization, • Land reclamation and restructuring of land holdings • 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 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'),



Potential Significant Effects

Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:

- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'),
- 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.



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, as well as awareness/education, 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. • 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.).



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 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 LABCAP 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>
<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 LABCAP is local action plan. These effects have the potential to be transmitted to areas surrounding and outside the local authority functional area via environmental pathways. It is unlikely most of these effects will be transmitted 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 these 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>



Potential for Significant Effects

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

	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.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents)	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. The implementation of LABAP has the potential to improve human health. Blue and green spaces have high potential for providing activities that nurture connectedness (with self, others and nature), reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance wellbeing, as well as promoting an ethic of care (as found in the EPA 2020 study 'The NEAR Health Project').
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	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.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; 	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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive land-use 	
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, community or international protection status	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. 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 contribute to landscape character, scenic value and visual amenity.

Table 4-6: Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

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.

5. CONCLUSIONS

An SEA Screening Assessment was undertaken to determine the need for an SEA for the Clare 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 impacts that have potential for interactions with the receiving environment.
- 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 likely 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.

Therefore, a full SEA of the Clare LABAP is not required.

The local authority is now required to consult with the Environmental Authorities on the above conclusion.



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