Inland Fisheries Ireland

Corporate Plan

2021 - 2025

Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

17th June 2021

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025

Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

Document Stage	Document Version	Prepared by
Final	1	Pat Doherty MSc, MCIEEM

Contents

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) have prepared a corporate plan for the period 2021-2025. Doherty Environmental Consultants Limited. have been appointed by IFI to prepare a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment for the corporate plan (hereafter referred to as "the plan")..

The function of this report is to identify whether or not the plan has the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites and to provide information so that Inland Fisheries Ireland can determine whether a Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment is required for the IFI Corporate Plan.

1.2 HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of the potential effects of a land use plan or project on one or more Natura 2000 (N2K) Sites. It is noted that a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) is commonly referred to as an "Appropriate Assessment" (Dodd *et al*, 2007). However, "Appropriate Assessment" forms only one stage of the HDA process (all stages making up the assessment process are outlined in detail below). The EU Habitats Directive provides the legislative framework for the protection of habitats and species throughout Europe through the establishment of a network of designated conservation areas known as the N2K network. The N2K network includes sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the EU Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive. Under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011, as amended) SACs and SPAs are referred to as European Sites. SACs are designated in areas that support habitats listed on Annex I and/or species listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. SPAs are designated in areas that support: 1% or more of the all-Ireland population of bird species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive; 1% or more of the population of a migratory species; and more than 20,000 waterfowl.

Articles 6(1) & (2) of the Habitats Directive set out provisions for the conservation management of European Sites. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive set out a series of procedural steps to test whether or not a plan or project is likely to affect a European Sites. Article 6(3) also establishes the requirement for a HDA:

"*any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (European) site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public*".

Therefore, the objective of this Screening is to identify whether or not any land use measures that may be supported by the Plan will have the potential to negatively affect the Conservation Objectives of European Sites. Such a conclusion will be arrived at by assessing the implications of future land use activities that could be implemented or supported by the Plan on each European Site occurring within its zone of influence.

The HDA is underpinned by the precautionary principle. Therefore, if the risk of negative impacts to the conservation objectives of a European Site cannot be ruled out it is assumed that the potential for an adverse impact will exist. Where such uncertainties are identified during the assessment, measures will be proposed to avoid or mitigate the risk of adverse impacts occurring.

The Screening was undertaken with reference to the following guidance documents on Habitats Directive Assessments:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009). DEHLG.

- Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats directive 92/43/EEC. European commission (2018).

- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2001).

1.3 STAGES OF THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT

The European Commission (2001) Guidance has outlined a staged process for the completion of a HDA.

- Stage 1 – Screening: This stage defines the proposed plan, establishes whether the proposed plan is necessary for the conservation management of the European Site and assesses the likelihood of the plan to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, upon a European Site.

- Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment: If a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken. In this stage the impact of the plan or project to the Conservation Objectives of the European Site is assessed. The outcome of this assessment will establish whether the plan will have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the European Site.

- Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions: If it is concluded that, subsequent to the implementation of mitigation measures, a plan has an adverse impact upon the integrity of a European Site it must be objectively concluded that no alternative solutions exist before the plan can proceed.

- Stage 4 – Where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain but imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist for the implementation of a plan or project an assessment of compensatory measures that will effectively offset the damage to the Natura site 2000 will be necessary.

2.0 SCREENING METHODOLOGY

The function of the Screening Assessment is to identify whether the Plan will have a likely significant effect on European Sites. In this context "likely" means a risk or possibility of effects occurring that **cannot** be ruled out based on objective information and "significant" means an effect that would undermine the conservation objectives of the European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects (Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), 2021) .

The nature of the likely interactions between the Plan and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites will depend upon the:

- the ecological characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change; *and/or*
- the character, magnitude, duration, consequences and probability of the impacts arising from land use activities associated with the plan, in combination with other plans and projects.

The European Commission Guidelines (2001) outline the stages involved in undertaking a Screening assessment of a plan or project that has the potential to have likely significant effects on European Sites. The methodology adopted for the Screening of the Plan is informed by these guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

- A brief description of the Plan is provided and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
- Identification of European Sites occurring within the zone of influence of the Plan;
- Identification of potential likely significant effects to European Sites; and
- Identification of other plans or projects that, in combination with the Plan, have the potential to affect European Sites.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPORATE PLAN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The IFI have prepared a draft Corporate Plan for the period 2021-2025. This will supersede the current Corporate Plan which covered the period 2015-2020. An overview of the new IFI Corporate Plan 2021-2025 is provided below and a detailed presentation on key elements of the plan is provided in Annex A to this SEA Screening Report.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF IFI CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2025

Seven High Level Objectives are identified and will form the basis of this plan for the next five years, these are as follows:

HLO 1: HABITAT- To sustainably develop and improve fish habitats.

HLO 2: FISH- To protect, maintain and enhance Ireland's wild fish populations

HLO 3: STAKEHOLDERS- To actively engage with stakeholders in the continued stewardship of our shared resource

HLO 4: SUSTAINABILITY- To play a leadership role in achieving our climate action and biodiversity goals

HLO 5: OUR PEOPLE- To value our people and support their development and performance

HLO 6: CORPORATE MANAGEMENT- To foster a culture of value for money and evaluation of performance in a measurable, transparent and accountable manner

HLO 7: INNOVATION- Harness the power of innovation to continue to deliver a modern fisheries service

Objectives, outcomes and key activities are grouped around the Priorities above. These are detailed in Section 7 (Table 7.1) of this report and are accompanied by a commentary in relation to potential environmental effects.

The second element is the IFI Environmental Charter. The aim of this is to ensure IFI's statutory remit and compliance requirements are embedded through all projects (physical and non physical) that may arise from the plan implementation. The environmental charter underpins the plan and will be utilised, as appropriate, throughout its implementation. Two measures are identified as potentially giving rise to landuse effects (HLO 1: Habitat: *Creation of appropriate organisational structures and/or restoration works and maintenance* and HLO 2: Fish: *Potential aquaculture to provide stocks in response to disasters.).* Should physical infrastructure proposals arise from these activities, Proposals will be only progressed in line with the IFI Environmental Charter. The Charter is attached as an annex to this AA Screening report for information. Key elements include:

- decision trees for helping to identify if projects or programmes would require SEA, AA or at project level EIA and /or AA,
- reference to key issues and measures relating to works close to watercourses,
- reference to relevant legislation and IFI best practice guidelines.

Given the fact that the majority of the coastline, rivers and lakes are covered by designations, frequently under the EU Habitats Directive, assessing this impact of proposals will be a critical consideration; however, it must also be recognised that the maintenance and enhancements of the fisheries resource is dependent on a high-quality freshwater or coastal habitat and environment.

4.0 EUROPEAN SITES

4.1 IDENTIFICATION OF EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE OF THE PLAN

Current guidance on undertaking EU Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessments recommends that all European Sites that could be connected to a plan or project via pathways should be included within a Screening Assessment. The DEHLG (2010) guidelines go on to state that for certain plans or projects the distance determining the zone of influence of the Plan could be much more or less than 15km, depending on the likely impacts of the plan and the sensitivities of ecological receptors. The example of water dependent habitats and species is provided in the guidelines to highlight the need for considering the full extent of upstream and/or downstream catchments at significant distances from a plan or project area. In light of such pathways and all European Sites occurring within the island of Ireland are considered to occur within the zone of influence of the Plan.

Table 4.1 lists the number of SACs and SPAs occurring in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the number of Annex 1 habitats and Annex 2 species listed as qualifying interests of these SACs and the number of bird species listed as special conservation interests for these SPAs. Figure 4.1 and 4.2 shows the distribution of SACs and SPAs occurring on the island of Ireland.

Table 4.2 enlists the Annex 1 habitats and Table 4.3 lists out the Annex 2 species along with their conservation status for Republic of Ireland.

Table 4.1: Number of European Sites, Annex 1 Habitats & Annex 2 Species

Republic of Ireland	**Northern Ireland**
433 SACs + 6 offshore SACs	58 SACs
165 SPAs	16 SPAs
59 Annex 1 Habitats, of which 16 are Priority Annex 1 Habitats	49 Annex 1 Habitats
25 Annex 2 Species	14 Annex 2 species

Table 4.2: Annex 1 Habitats & their conservation status

Habitat	**Conservation status**
Sandbanks	Stable
Estuaries	Deteriorating
Tidal mudflats and sandflats	Deteriorating

Habitat	Conservation status
Coastal lagoons	Deteriorating
Large shallow inlets and bays	Deteriorating
Reefs	Stable
Submarine structures made by leaking gases	Stable
Annual vegetation of drift lines	Deteriorating
Perennial vegetation of stony banks	Stable
Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts	Stable
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	Stable
Atlantic salt meadows	Deteriorating
Mediterranean salt meadows	Deteriorating
Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetea fruticosi*)	Deteriorating
Embryonic shifting dunes	Stable
Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes)	Stable
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation	Deteriorating
Decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*	Stable
Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (*Calluno-Ulicetea*)	Stable
Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *Argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*)	Stable
Humid dune slacks	Deteriorating
Machairs	Stable
Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorellatalia uniflorae*)	Stable
Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*	Deteriorating

Habitat	Conservation status
Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara* spp.	Deteriorating
Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*-type vegetation	Stable
Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds	Stable
Turloughs	Stable
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation	Deteriorating
Rivers with muddy banks with *Chenopodion rubri* p.p. and *Bidention* p.p. vegetation	Stable
Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*	Deteriorating
European dry heaths	Stable
Alpine and Boreal heaths	Improving
Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcerous grasslands	stable
Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae*	Deteriorating
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcerous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (*important orchid sites)	Deteriorating
Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)*	Stable
Molinia meadows on calcerous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)	Deteriorating
Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels	Deteriorating
Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis*)	Deteriorating
Active raised bogs	Deteriorating

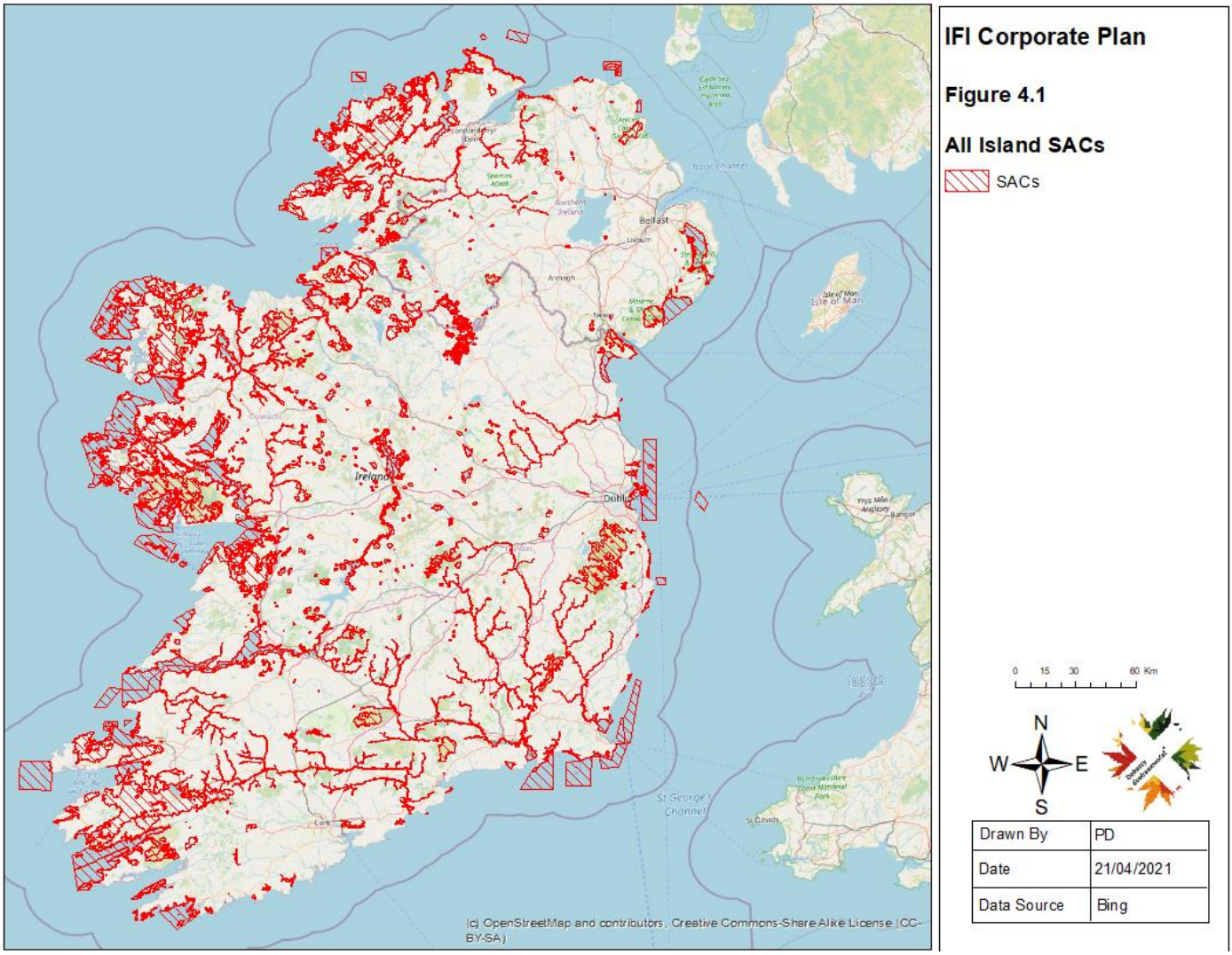
Habitat	Conservation status
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	Deteriorating
Blanket bogs (*if active bog)	Deteriorating
Transition mires	Stable
Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*	Deteriorating
Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae**	Stable
Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*)*	Deteriorating
Alkaline fens	Deteriorating
Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (*Androsacetalia alpinae* and *Galeopsietalia ladani*)	Stable
Calcereous and clacshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (*Thlaspietea rotundifolii*)	Stable
Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	Stable
Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	Stable
Limestone pavements	Stable
Caves not open to public	Stable
Submerged or partially submerged sea caves	Stable
Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles	Deteriorating
Bog woodland	Stable
Alluvial forest with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*)*	Deteriorating
Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles*	Stable

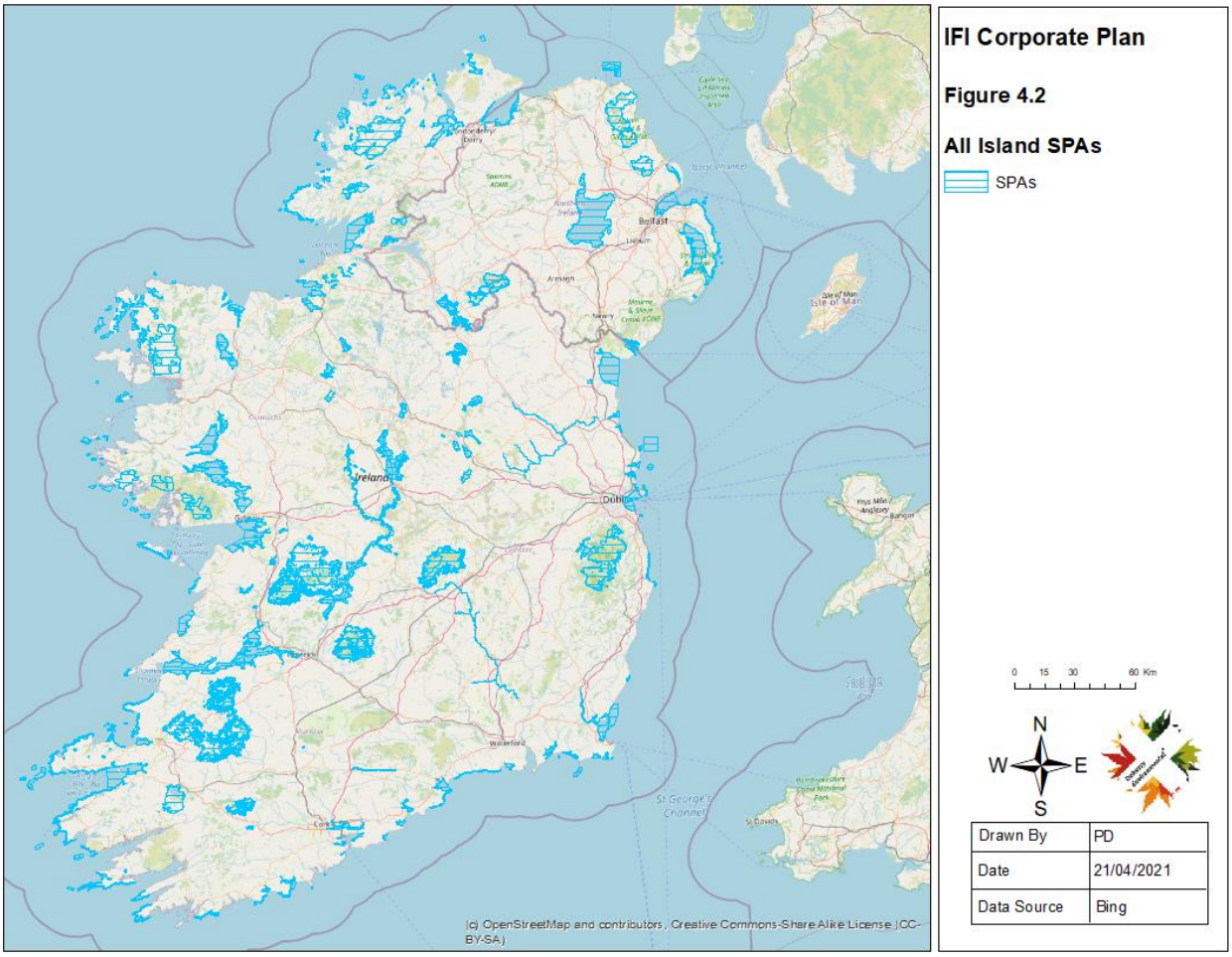
Table 4.3: Annex 2 Species & their conservation status

Species	Conservation status
Killarney fern (*Vandenboschia speciosa*)	Stable
Marsh saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*)	Stable
Slender naiad (*Najas flexilis*)	Deteriorating
Slender Green Feather-moss(*Hamatocaulis vernicosus*)	Stable
Petalwort (*Petalophyllumralfsii*)	Stable
Maërl (*Lithothamnion corallioides/ Phymatolithon calcareum*)	Deteriorating
White Cushion Moss (*Leucobryum glaucum*)	Stable
Sphagnum genus	Stable
Lycopodium group	Stable
Cladonia subgenus Cladina	Stable
Geyer's whorl snail (*Vertigo geyeri*)	Deteriorating
Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo angustior*)	Deteriorating
Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*)	Deteriorating
Kerry slug (Geomalacus maculosus)	Improving
Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)	Deteriorating
White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)	Deteriorating
Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*)	Improving
Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*)	Stable
Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*)	Stable
River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*)	N/A
Killarney Shad (*Alosa killarnensis*)	Stable
Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax*)	Stable
Pollan (Coregonus pollan)	Stable
Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)	Stable

Species	Conservation status
Natterjack Toad (*Epidalea calamita*)	Stable
Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*)	Stable
Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)	N/A
Lesser horshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)	Deteriorating
Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)	Improving
Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)	Improving
Nathusius' Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)	N/A
Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*)	Stable
Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)	Improving
Whiskered Bat (*Myotis mystacinus*)	Stable
Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*)	Improving
Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*)	Improving
Mountain/Irish Hare (*Lepus timidus*)	Stable
Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	Improving
Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)	Improving
Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*)	Improving
Harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*)	Stable
Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)	N/A
Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)	Stable
Short-beaked Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*)	Stable
Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)	Stable
Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*)	N/A
Long-finned Pilot Whale (*Globicephala melas*)	Stable
Risso's Dolphin (*Grampus griseus*)	Stable

Species	Conservation status
Atlantic White-sided Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*)	Stable
White-beaked Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*)	Stable
Striped Dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*)	Stable
Cuvier's Beaked Whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*)	Stable
Sowerby's Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*)	Stable
Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)	Stable
Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*)	Stable
Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)	N/A
Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*)	Stable
Northern Bottlenose Whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*)	N/A
Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*)	N/A
Northern Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*)	N/A
False Killer Whale (*Pseudorca crassidens*)	N/A
True's Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon mirus*)	N/A
Pygmy Sperm Whale (*Kogia breviceps*)	N/A
Beluga Whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*)	N/A
Gervais' Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon europaeus*)	N/A
Allis shad (*Alosa alosa*)	N/A
Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*)	N/A


IFI Corporate Plan
Figure 4.1
All Island SACs
SACs
Belfast
Dublin
Ireland
St George's Channel
(c) OpenStreetMap and contributors, Creative Commons-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA)
0 15 30 60 Km
N
W
E
S
Drawn By
PD
Date
21/04/2021
Data Source
Bing


IFI Corporate Plan
Figure 4.2
All Island SPAs
SPAs
0 15 30 60 Km
N
W
E
S
Drawn By
PD
Date
21/04/2021
Data Source
Bing
Ireland
Dublin
Belfast
Isle of Man
St George's Channel
(c) OpenStreetMap and contributors, Creative Commons-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA)

4.2 CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site. The maintenance of habitats and species within European Sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level. Site-specific conservation objectives have been published by the NPWS for 356 SACs and 37 SPAs in the Republic of Ireland. Given the number of European Sites occurring within the zone of influence of the Plan and the level of detail outlined in the site-specific conservation objectives for each European Sites it is not practical to reproduces the site-specific conservation objectives for each site within this screening report. Instead the generic conservation objectives for European Sites, which represent the overarching aims of site-specific conservation objectives, that is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation condition of qualifying habitats and species are presented below.

The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

5.0 IDENTIFICATION OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Key threats to fisheries are identified in the IFI Corporate Plan and are reflected through the main objectives. These key threats are as follows:

- Failure to manage stock
- Spread of invasive species
- Climate change, global and local environmental practices
- Commercial fishing practices
- Increased urbanisation
- Lack of facilities or expertise in case of ecological crisis
- Land use implications pertaining to infrastructure development

The principal function of IFI is the protection, management and conservation of the inland fisheries resource. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the statutory authority tasked under section 7(1) of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010 (No. 10 of 2010) with responsibility for the conservation, protection and development of the inland fisheries resource and recreational sea angling. "Fisheries" includes all inland fisheries recreational and commercial, sea angling and mollusc fisheries stipulated under the Fisheries Acts, the physical habitat upon which the fishery relies, the facilities and access, the quantity and quality of the water and the plant and animal life on which fish depend for shelter and food and the spawning areas where in fish deposit their eggs.

The statutory function of the IFI will underpin the approach to the plan and address and respond to the above threats where appropriate.

6.0 IS THE PLAN NECESSARY FOR THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT OF EUROPEAN SITES?

The roles and responsibility of the IFI with regard to the protection of inland fisheries and their habitat is also critical for the conservation management of freshwater SACs and SPAs and the achievement of the conservation objectives of these SACs. As such the implementation of the corporate plan will contribute to the conservation management of European Sites. This will subsequently improve the status of the habitats such as natural dystrophic lakes, turloughs and lowland rivers and species like Shads, Salmon and Lampreys.

7.0 SCREENING OF IFI CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES

The next step of this report is to identify whether or not the plan has the potential to damage, disturb or result in the loss of qualifying habitat or qualifying species of European Site and undermine the conservation objectives of the European Sites.

Table 7.1 identifies the aims, objectives and actions of the plan and evaluates the potential for each to result in likely significant effects to European Sites. Where objectives and actions have the potential to result in positive implications for European Sites, such implications are recognised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Screening of IFI Corporate Plan Objectives

HLO 1 Habitat **Objective: To sustainably develop and improve fish habitats.**		
Actions	Outcome	Measures
Action 1.1 IFI will focus on maintaining and restoring fish habitats (through creating appropriate organisational structures and resourcing) and will use and comply with all relevant legislative power to facilitate this	An increase in the amount of optimal fish habitat conserved and maintained over the lifetime of this corporate plan.	- Instream maintenance/restoration works (Km) - Riparian maintenance/restoration works (Km) - Fish passage improvement: - No. barriers assessed/no. mitigated - Area/length of Habitat restored or reconnected - Design of evidence based restoration works - Invasive species audit & control (e.g. Lagarosiphon/other plants) - Stock management - Number of fish rescued - number of planning applications
Action 1.2: Further develop an evidence base to support this work taking account of environmental factors such as water quality, urbanisation, intensive farming, afforestation and the possible long-term impact of climate change	An increase in the amount of sub optimal fish habitat conserved and maintained over the lifetime of this corporate plan.	Level of contribution at national, regional and catchment levels to support the implementation of the third Water Framework Directive Plan and other associated plans

Action 1.3 IFI will connect and collaborate with other relevant agencies to capture and share insights, knowledge and lessons learned in order to support the protection and improvement of fish habitats and access through the removal of barriers where possible, in conjunction with other stakeholders	An increase in the amount of sub optimal fish habitat conserved and maintained over the lifetime of this corporate plan.	Measures: Level of contribution at national, regional and catchment levels to support the implementation of the third Water Framework Directive Plan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation

The implementation of Action 1.1 will have the potential to result in land use activities that represent positive implications for the European Sites and qualifying features of interest. This will contribute towards addressing long-standing threats and pressures (see NPWS, 2019) to the conservation status of Annex 2 freshwater fish species such as Atlantic salmon and lamprey species.

The land use activity pertaining to the infrastructure development or restoration works will have the potential to alter the hydromorphology of the water bodies. This may result in the disruption of sensitive habitats such as those supporting the freshwater pearl mussel. Therefore, it is noted that individual projects that will arise on foot of this action will be subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment and where necessary Appropriate Assessment at the project level. This will ensure that localised short-term impacts associated with the implementation of projects supported by the is action will not undermine the conservation status of qualifying features of interest/special conservation interests and that the overall positive implications of this action to contribute to the overall favourable conservation condition of qualifying features of interest is achieved.

HLO 2 FISH

Objective: To protect, maintain and enhance Ireland's wild fish populations

Actions	Outcomes	Measures
Action 2.1: Develop resourced 5 year plans and annual risk based fisheries protection programme including protection and conservation for protected, vulnerable and endangered species	Resources are targeted based on risk assessment leading to increased fish stocks in improved fresh water and marine environments.	- Prioritisation of 'action' species - Development of protection plans - Number of risk based targeted interventions focussing on specific stocks/species - Utilisation of new technologies

Action 2.2: Implement Evidence Based Species Protection Policies & programmes with a focus on mitigation and adaptation in an era of climate change	Maintained and where possible improved current populations of native, threatened or vulnerable species (in both freshwater & marine environments).	Development of risk maps to identify climate related pressures on our inland fish species - Monitoring Reporting as required under relevant EU legislation
Action 2.3: Develop modelling tools to support scientific evaluation of candidate fisheries management actions. In the first instance to assist in the management of wild brown trout fisheries.	Science based policy supporting the rationale for managing 'managed wild brown trout fisheries' in a sustainable manner.	Measures: Development of an evidence based wild brown trout policy for specific water body types,(i.e. rivers, large lakes, managed lakes; small lakes; other water bodies etc)
Action 2.4: IFI will improve existing, and investigate the feasibility of new, aquaculture facilities.	The aim will be to supply (non wild) fish for stakeholders as well as having facilities to respond to ecological disasters or to intervene where fish are in danger of expiration.	-Liaise with other state agencies to achieve these aims in a best value scenario. -Maintain and enhance our relationship with angling clubs through this measure. - Redeveloped aquaculture facilities at specific locations

Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation

Actions 2.1 to 2.3 have the potential to contribute towards the future conservation management of SACs and SPAs and the favourable conservation condition of freshwater dependent habitats and species that are listed as qualifying features of interest/special conservation interests of SACs and SPAs

Action 2.4 has the potential to result in land use activities. Should land use or physical infrastructural projects arise from this, IFI will undertake the planning and work in line with the IFI Environmental Charter. In addition, the Novice Angling Strategy has been subject to full SEA and Appropriate Assessment and detailed mitigation measures as relevant will be applied in relation to any potential new facilities.

The overall objective is positive across environmental parameters particularly in relation to biodiversity, water quality and population.

HLO 3 Stakeholders

Objective: To actively engage with stakeholders in the continued stewardship of our shared resource

Actions	Outcomes	Measures

Action 3.1: Create a stakeholder engagement strategy that promotes and delivers meaningful engagement, communication and collaboration with all our stakeholders	Enhanced communication and collaboration with stakeholders in the delivery of our habitat and species protection objectives.	- Survey of stakeholders - Omnibus survey (general public)). - Number of engagement fora established and ongoing. - Number of collaborative projects undertaken - IFI engagement with National Inland Fisheries Forum on implementation of the corporate plan - Level of public outreach
Action 3.2: Manage IFI owned fisheries sustainably for the benefit of all stakeholders	Efficiently and sustainably managed state fisheries	Review Salmon Management Policy - Review state fisheries policy
Action 3.3: Upgrade and modernise IFI's angling infrastructure and collateral in line with angling demand	Ensure angling access infrastructure is safe and fit for purpose and information is up to date	- Number of structures audited, replaced, repaired or removed -Information/signage provided
Action 3.4: Support management, development and restoration of other (non-IFI owned) private/public fisheries	Efficiently and sustainably managed private/public/other fisheries	- Number and value of projects delivered
Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation No land use effects or likely significant effects are identified for HLO 3 as the activities relate to capacity building, collaborations and management of fisheries except for the modernisation of infrastructure in line with angling demand. Should land use or physical infrastructural projects arise from this, IFI will undertake the planning and work in line with the IFI Environmental Charter and mitigation measures reflected in the SEA and AA of the Novice Angling Strategy.		
HLO 4 Sustainability **Objective: To play a leadership role in achieving our climate action and biodiversity goals**		
Actions	Outcomes	Measures

Action 4.1: Achieve our current CO2 reduction targets in line with legislation : 7 % year on year (50% by 2030), maximise energy efficiency and minimise the ecological footprint of IFI activity	At least a 7% overall reduction in energy consumption and emissions (CO2) associated with IFI activities and maximum contribution to Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2021 onwards	Achievement of annual energy performance targets and overall energy consumption and emissions (CO2) reduction targets - 7% reductions year on year
Action 4.2: Ensure the sustainability of native fish and maintaining biodiversity through the introduction of a climate change adaptation and mitigation programme	We will have developed and implemented evidence-based strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change on fish habitat and populations	-Provision of guidance to support the sustainability of fish populations in an era of climate change - Instream climate mitigation works (Km) - Riparian climate mitigation works (Km) - Km of Habitat assessments completed
Action 4.3: Promote sustainable stewardship of fisheries in line with legislation	Sustainable management of fisheries in line with current legislation	- Greater awareness of fisheries as measured by targeted survey(s)/focus groups
Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation *No land-use implications or likely significant effects are identified for this objective as it relates to awareness and actions towards climate change adaptation and mitigation.*		
HLO 5 Our People **Objective: To value our people and support their development and performance**		
Actions	Outcomes	Measures
Action 5.1: Develop and implement a HR strategy to support IFI's Corporate plan 2021 to 2025	A fit for purpose organisational structure and a motivated, skilled, adaptable and productive workforce capable of successfully delivering the corporate plan in line with our Mission, Vision and Values whilst utilising efficient and innovative internal communications whilst	'- Employee satisfaction (RRR) and engagement as measured by survey (create baseline) - Increase in required skills and capability (measures to be defined in HR strategy)

	being cognisant of staff wellbeing.	

Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation

No land-use implications or likely significant effects are identified for this objective as it relates to the development and support of a workforce to support the plan

HLO 6 Corporate Management

To foster a culture of value for money and evaluation of performance in a measurable, transparent and accountable manner

Actions	Outcomes	Measures
Action 6.1: Ensure business process excellence through the development of appropriate strategies and processes incorporating value for money and sustainability	Improved business processes to deliver consistency and efficiency and improved quality of service delivery.	- Resources saved and available for other activities - Increase quality of service (introducing new streamlined processes, post project implementation surveys (staff and citizen)
Action 6.2: Seek to ensure best practice Corporate and Environmental Governance is adopted across all of IFI	All governance guidelines and circulars are implemented in a timely manner and monitored on an ongoing basis, to ensure high levels of Corporate and Environmental Governance.	- Deadlines met - Compliance demonstrated - Favourable audit(s)- Support Assurance

Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation

No land-use implications or likely significant effects are identified for this objective as it relates to corporate practices and management.

HLO 7 Innovation

Objective: Harness the power of innovation to continue to deliver a modern fisheries service

Actions	Outcomes	Measures
Action 7.1: Develop an innovation strategy to increase organisational agility, improve efficiency, communication and public service	Implementation of the innovation Strategy	- Innovation strategy will outline measures: - citizen centric delivery

delivery to sustainably develop improve and protect fish habitats		- innovation in delivering CP - business process improvement
Action 7.2: Develop and implement an ICT strategy to support the implementation of the corporate plan	Implementation of the ICT strategy	- Project implementation - Service delivery measured against defined baseline (maturity model)
Appropriate Assessment Screening Evaluation *No land-use implications or likely significant effects are identified for this objective as it relates to the development of innovation and implementation strategies.*		

7.1 EXAMINATION OF THE PLAN'S POTENTIAL TO RESULT IN NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN 15KM OF THE PLAN AREA

European Sites and their associated qualifying features and associated conservation objectives are likely to be compromised by the plan only where the actions of the plan have the potential to result in land use activities than could result in damage or disturbance to qualifying habitat and qualifying species and the processes that they rely upon to maintain their favourable conservation status. As identified in Section 7.1 above the Plan will not result in the implementation of land use activities that will have the potential to result in negative impacts to European Sites, their interest features and their conservation objectives. On the contrary all aims, objectives and actions of the Plan's objectives have been identified as having the potential to result in positive implications for European Sites and their conservation status.

7.2 IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS WITH OTHER PLANS & PROJECTS

As part of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3) assessment process consideration must be given to the potential for the Plan to combine with other plans or projects to result in cumulative negative effects to European Sites. The non-statutory IFI Corporate Plan runs over five years, and sets out key deliverables for the organisation over this period. The dynamic nature of environmental processes operating within the rivers, lakes and coastal waters is both complex and not easily assessed for potential cumulative impacts. This can be particularly onerous in relation to the multiple potential diffuse sources of pollution, range of disturbance activities and also the numerous agencies and stakeholders that can impact on water quality and have a range of different remits.

Notwithstanding this, the examination of the corporate plan objectives have not identified any elements in the Plan that have the potential to contribute to likely significant effects to the conservation status of qualifying features of interest/special conservation interests, while several actions associated with objectives such as HLO 1, HLO 2 and HLO 4 are positive in relation to achieving favourable conservation condition for these interest features, which will in turn contribute to the future conservation management of freshwater-dependent SACs and SPAs and their associated conservation objectives.

Furthermore, it is noted that should projects arise from the IFI Corporate Plan, these will be subject to full planning and environmental assessment consent and in line with requirements of the IFI Environmental Charter. At this strategic, national scale no potential for negative cumulative effects to European Sites are identified.

8.0 SCREENING CONCLUSION

The Screening of the IFI Corporate Plan as set out above shows that the plan will not result in land use activities that have the potential to result in negative impacts to the qualifying features of interest of European Sites and will not have the potential to compromise the achievement of the conservation objective of European Sites. The examination of the plan has found that the plan will have the potential to contribute to the conservation management of European Sites within and surrounding the plan area and will thus have positive implications for the conservation objectives of these European Site.

In light of the findings of this report it is the considered view of the authors of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment that it can be concluded by IFI that the Plan is not likely, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites in view of their Conservation Objectives and on the basis of best scientific evidence and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to that conclusion.

REFERENCES

Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) (2010). *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Second Edition, February, 2010.

European Commission (2002). *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Luxembourg.

European Commission (2006). *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for the Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive*. Luxembourg.

OPR (2021). Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01. Office of the Planning Regulator.