



Screening Determination for Strategic Environmental Assessment under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under S.I. 435/2004, as amended

Concerning the proposed Inland Fisheries Ireland Statement of Strategy 2026-2030.

Inland Fisheries Ireland as the Competent Authority for the **Inland Fisheries Ireland Statement of Strategy 2026-2030** has undertaken screening for SEA under Directive 2001/42/EC. The screening assessment was carried out using the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects as set out in Schedule 1 of S.I. 435/2004, as amended.

Following assessment of the criteria and having regard to the nature of the Strategy and the potential for likely significant environmental effects from implementation of the Strategy, Inland Fisheries Ireland has determined that the Strategy will not give rise to likely significant effects on the environment.

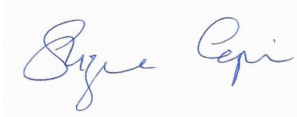
This determination has been made following consideration of the information contained in the SEA Screening Report (attached to this determination), the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to S.I. 435/2004 as amended, and consultation feedback from The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine as statutory Environmental Authorities for SEA.

The principal reasons the Strategy does not require an SEA are as follows:

The Strategy does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent for projects. In order to be realised, potential projects or proposals arising from the Strategy will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework, of which the plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

The Strategy was screened for Appropriate Assessment. The screening concluded that the Strategy 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 screening concluded that the Strategy 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.

Signed on behalf of Inland Fisheries Ireland:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Campion', is displayed on a light grey rectangular background.

Suzanne Campion, Head of Corporate Services

Dated: 5/12/2025

Attached:

Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030

SEA Screening Report dated 5 November 2025

Correspondence from statutory consultees

Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030

Working Document Version 3 – for Consultation



Iascach Iníre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Purpose of this document

This document sets out the following sections of the working draft of IFI's Statement of Strategy for 2026-2030:

- Vision, Mission and Values
- Four Strategic Priorities, and accompanying initiatives and outcomes:
 - Conserve
 - Enforce
 - Restore
 - Advocate
- Four Strategic Enablers

We request feedback from our stakeholders on the following topics:

- Provide your perspective on the proposed Vision, Mission, and Values for IFI over the next 5 years
- Are the proposed 4 Strategic Priorities and accompanying Initiatives and Outcomes appropriate?
- Are the proposed 4 Strategic Enablers with Key Priorities appropriate?
- In your view are there any areas or issues not represented in the strategy that should be?
- Provide any further general comments on the draft Statement of Strategy



Vision

Our rivers, lakes, and coastal ecosystems support abundant fish populations for future generations.

Mission

We will conserve, protect, restore, and advocate for our fisheries, fish, habitats and biodiversity.

Values

1. We are committed to a healthy environment and sustainability.
2. We work collaboratively and with professionalism.
3. We communicate openly and transparently.
4. We act with respect, integrity, and accountability.

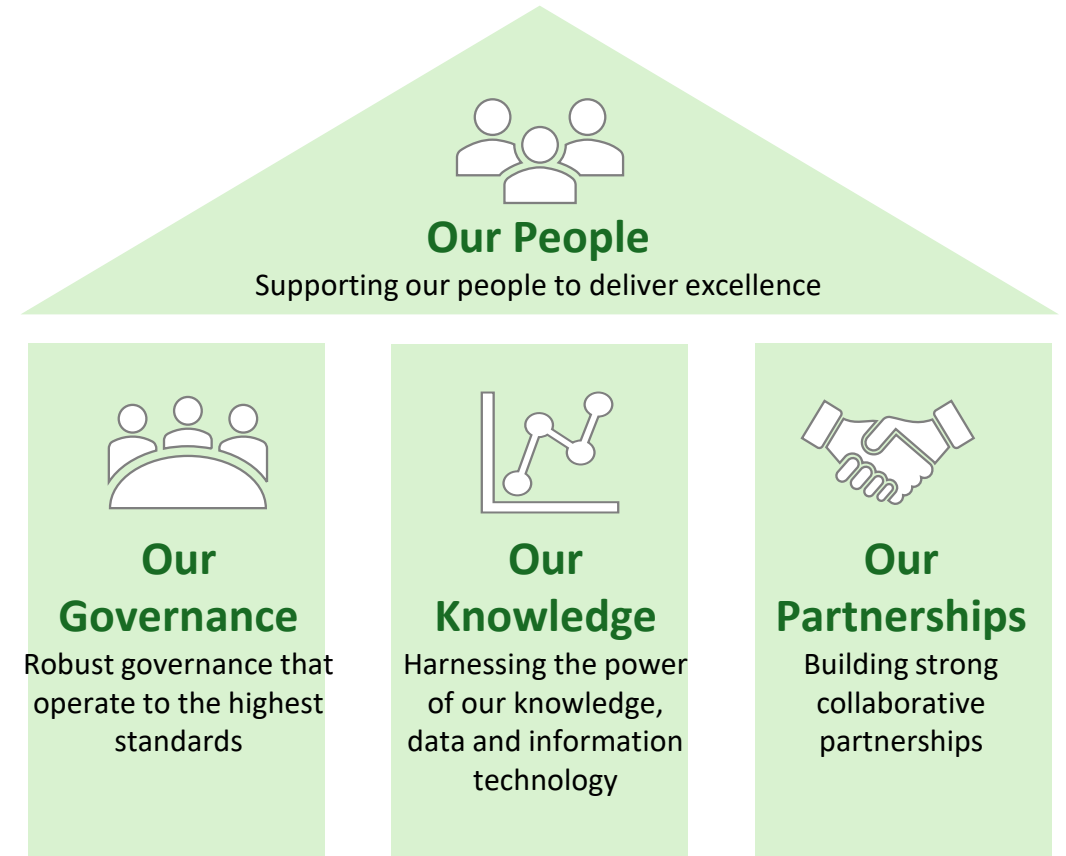


Strategic Framework

Our Strategic Priorities will guide our focus for the next 5 years. Each priority is made up of supporting initiatives and expected outcomes.



Our Strategic Enablers are the foundation to everything we do, to achieve our strategic priorities. We have set out commitments to strengthen each enabler.



Our Governance

Our Governance - Context



Our Governance

Robust governance
that operate to the
highest standards

In recent years, the need for a more robust governance framework became apparent, leading to comprehensive reviews and assessments. The EY Review Report, conducted in Nov 2023, highlighted several areas for improvement with eleven recommendations, including the clarity of roles and responsibilities, the effectiveness of board and committee structures, and the necessity for ongoing training and development.

As a result, the IFI has undertaken a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing governance practices including the realignment of board structures, the establishment of sub-committees, and the development of a governance assessment framework. The latest progress report from IFI (Dec 2024) indicates positive progress in implementing governance recommendations.

There are further efforts planned to strengthen governance structures throughout 2025 and the working draft of the Corporate Plan 2026-2030 establishes 'Our Governance' as a critical strategic enabler. These ongoing efforts reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and the integration of best practices in governance.

PRIORITY A: CONSERVE

We will protect and maintain Ireland’s fish populations through evidence-based policies and projects to conserve fish biodiversity in Ireland.

Context

Our conservation work is underpinned by legislation, such as the Inland Fisheries 2010 Act, the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive. The imminent Nature Restoration Law and Article 55 (of Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009) will also shape our work. This legislation provides the mandate for our commitment to protecting and maintaining fish populations, particularly those species that are at risk.

Over recent decades, fish habitats have faced growing threats, leading to a significant decline in fish stocks. This alarming trend has necessitated a strategic shift in our work efforts, focusing on developing new expertise in next-generation conservation practices. Our multifaceted approach includes research and development, managing angling access, invasive species management, and delivering the Western Lakes Management Plan, all aimed at restoring and preserving aquatic ecosystems. We also administer funds to support conservation projects throughout Ireland, ensuring a collaborative effort to safeguard our fisheries resource and promote sustainable fisheries for future generations.

Under our new Plan, we will continue our conservation work with salmon and brown trout, as well as widening our efforts to more at-risk species. We also seek to enhance our data capabilities to inform evidence-based adaptive management practices, and to fund targeted conservation projects aligned to our strategic priorities.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

1. Develop and implement a dynamic research strategy.
2. Use our applied research and innovative development capabilities to establish a baseline, and assess and monitor the conservation status of Ireland’s fish species.
3. Increase investment in the conservation efforts of at-risk fish species, including but not limited to salmon and brown trout.
4. Improve and modernise our data gathering processes around our conservation processes, so we can use evidence-based approaches like adaptive management to drive new ways of working.
5. Continue to support defined conservation projects that align to our strategic priorities, and demonstrate impact through our monitoring and evaluation processes.
6. Advise the Minister on matters related to conservation to inform policymaking and outline the potential impacts of national and international policies on conservation efforts.
7. Explore and enhance our capabilities in innovative restoration solutions e.g. eDNA.
8. Deliver on the commitments of the Western Lakes Management Plan.

Outcomes

- We will deliver on our statutory remit and commitments required by national and EU legislation.
- We can demonstrate successful execution of initiatives that aim to halt the decline of at-risk species e.g. salmon, lamprey
- We can measure improvements in fish habitats in alignment to our plans.
- We will conserve fish stocks to deliver sustainable angling for economic and social benefits.
- We will demonstrate the natural capital value of inland fisheries and sea angling resources.
- We are collaborating with our wider stakeholders as a conservation leader and expert in Ireland.

PRIORITY B: ENFORCE

We will focus our enforcement activity on instances of water pollution, habitat destruction and illegal fishing making full use of the legislative powers available to us.

Context

We are the primary fisheries agency in Ireland with the statutory authority to enforce and prosecute violations related to fish kills, habitat destruction, illegal fishing, and discharges that impact water quality and harm fish populations. This critical responsibility not only supports the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity but also helps safeguard public health and deter breaches of environmental law nationwide.

Under our previous strategic plan, we successfully pursued 460 prosecutions, demonstrating our firm commitment to enforcing regulations that protect aquatic ecosystems. Looking ahead, our new plan prioritises increasing capacity, support, training and upskilling for our enforcement remit in the areas of habitat protection and water quality. This enhancement will enable us to address emerging environmental challenges more effectively and build compliance into our routine everyday activity.

By strengthening and modernising our enforcement capabilities and working collaboratively with other enforcement agencies, we aim to promote and advocate for a more sustainable environment, one that values and nurtures respect for our natural resources and encourages responsible environmental practices in an era of climate change. In doing so, we support both the long-term health of our ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

1. Implement current legislation in full to maximise good outcomes for fish and freshwater ecosystems through enforcement and prosecution activities.
2. Advocate for strengthened legislation and penalties for the protection of fisheries ecosystems.
3. Upskill our protection officers in best-practice water quality enforcement and habitat protection capabilities in order to support our overall environmental enforcement capacity.
4. Collaborate and co-deliver with other environmental enforcement agencies to maximise outcomes for habitats and biodiversity in an era of climate change.
5. Communicate regularly with the public and our stakeholders about the important outcomes and impact of our enforcement work for the environment.
6. Invest in our capacity and flexibility to respond to enforcement priorities.
7. Develop an adaptive resourcing and implementation plan to deliver our new responsibilities, including Blue Fin Tuna and Sea Bass protection and all other fish species under IFI's statutory remit, Article 55 compliance and the Western Lakes Management Plan.
8. Grow our capacity to meet the increased pressures arising from noncompliance with environmental legislation, agriculture, housing, energy, transport, water and wastewater infrastructure development.

Outcomes

- Increasing compliance with legislation.
- We have increased all forms of enforcement activities and our capacity.
- We have supported the introduction of enhanced legislation and increased penalties.
- Improved water quality enforcement and habitat protection outcomes.
- We can demonstrate successful collaborative working with other enforcement agencies that has resulted in increased compliance and greater deterrence of illegal activity.
- Achieve cross-warranting with other environmental enforcement organisations.

PRIORITY C: RESTORE

We will lead on restoration efforts for the benefit of inland fisheries through the rehabilitation and enhancement of aquatic habitats.

Context

The recent approval of the Nature Restoration Law in 2024, alongside the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the Water Action Plan, underscores the critical need to reverse the decline of biodiversity and restore our ecosystems. At IFI, we are already at the forefront of various transformational restorative initiatives underpinned by technology and data, which are aimed at enhancing fish habitats, populations, and the broader ecosystems they inhabit. We will continue to prioritise this important work under our new plan.

We recognise that addressing sustainability challenges and ecosystem degradation requires a systemic approach and we will continue to focus on collaboration with our stakeholders, including Government departments and other environmental agencies, to implement impactful restoration efforts. We have an ongoing commitment to driving positive, future-focused change in ecosystem restoration and free flowing rivers. Our work through the National Barriers Programmes is one critical example that demonstrates this commitment.

We also recognise that each locality has unique restoration needs which requires careful planning, and we are dedicated to expanding and enhancing our specialised capabilities to address these specific challenges effectively under our new plan. By fostering collaboration and embracing leading-edge solutions, we aim to restore our fisheries ecosystems for the environmental, social economic benefits of Ireland today and in the future.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

1. Identify and co-deliver transformative restoration projects and initiatives for the benefit of fish populations at scale, such as Integrated Catchment Management Programmes, with our partners, to help maximise environmental outcomes. Projects will be prioritised by the degree of strategic importance, potential benefits, and feasibility of the restoration.
2. Implement programmes that support free-flowing rivers, including the National Barriers Programme, our flagship restoration programme that we are delivering within the context of the Water Framework Directive.
3. Continue to develop our innovative capabilities and expertise to become the leader in hydromorphology research, standards and methods in Ireland.
4. Identify new sources of funding for restoration programmes.
5. Advise the Minister on matters related to habitat restoration to inform policymaking and outline the potential impacts of national and international policies on restoration efforts.

Outcomes

- We can demonstrate improved aquatic habitat as a result of our work.
- We deliver the restoration objectives of the National Barriers Mitigation Programme.
- We are recognised as a national and international leader in aquatic habitat restoration in Ireland.
- We can evidence successful co-delivery with our partners and local communities on integrated restorative projects.
- We have contributed to the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law in Ireland in relation to aquatic habitats and fish.

PRIORITY D: ADVOCATE

We will proactively advocate, using an evidence-based narrative, for conservation and restoration of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource.

Context

Since its formation, the external environment IFI operates within has changed dramatically. The inland fisheries resource has experienced pressures, and we are being faced with new climate and environmental challenges that we must continually adapt to and mitigate against. In addition, new legislation, such as the Nature Restoration Law, is anticipated.

In this context of environmental crisis, there is a need for strong advocacy to drive climate change adaptation and mitigation. IFI needs to be a strong voice in maintaining and improving our local resources for future generations.

We need to be an active and evidence-based advocate to define the narrative and influence change in environmental, conservation and restoration matters. By fostering a culture of governance, underpinned by transparency and stakeholder engagement, we can ensure that our advocacy is grounded in accountability and integrity.

We will continue our important role in advising the Minister and government on conservation and restoration efforts, using our specialist and future-fit research expertise and data analysis. We will continue to lead public education initiatives to raise awareness of our transformative conservation and restoration efforts. We will use opportunities available to us, such as the Irish EU presidency, to advocate for our strategic priorities.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

1. Advocate to government on conservation, restoration, and evidence-based management of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource to inform policymaking.
2. Advocate for strengthened legislation and penalties for the protection of the fisheries ecosystem.
3. Communicate regularly with the public and our stakeholders about the important outcomes and impact of our work for the environment, including sharing good news stories and innovative initiatives through our public channels.
4. Lead public education, outreach initiatives and events, and encourage citizen science, to support stewardship and raise awareness of the conservation and restoration work needed to protect our aquatic habitats, water quality and fish biodiversity.
5. Develop a stakeholder engagement plan, including mapping stakeholders and engagement approaches (e.g. events of national and international significance).
6. Further develop our strategy for high-impact outreach and education activities, e.g. Novice Anglers Strategy.
7. Advocate for inclusive sustainable angling participation.

Outcomes

- We are recognised as a leading voice in conservation, restoration, and evidence-based management, nationally and internationally by our stakeholders, including the wider public, policy makers and other state agencies.
- We interact and influence at policy-making level with government and other state and international/EU agencies.
- We have fostered greater awareness and support among the public for our strategic priorities.
- We have cultivated effective partnerships and a network of advocates that align with our strategic priorities.
- Legislation change has occurred to better support IFI to fulfil its remit.

Strategic Enablers

Our People

*Supporting our **people** to deliver excellence*

We will define a culture of openness, communication and collaboration, and foster an environment where our people are highly motivated to deliver our vision and mission. Our high-performing teams will be recognised as experts in their field, and will have sufficient capacity, support and training to deliver their roles efficiently and to the highest standards. We will develop a skilled and resilient workforce with the right capabilities and connectivity across our organisation to deliver our strategic priorities.

Key initiative:

Develop an HR strategy to support the delivery of the strategic priorities.

Our Governance

*Robust **governance** that operate to the highest standards*

We will build a reputation for strong governance aligned to the highest standards, which supports our high-quality performance and delivers measurable results. Our enhanced governance systems will be maintained to ensure their robustness and to support transparent decision-making and accountability.

Key initiative:

We will maintain a robust governance framework, through streamlined digitised processes, that support effective decision-making and risk management, in the delivery of our strategic priorities.

Strategic Enablers

Our Knowledge

Harnessing the power of our knowledge, data and information technology

We will harness the power of data, information technology (IT) and our collective knowledge to inform and support our people, strategies, policies, and projects.

We will enhance the data collection, data storage and data integration capabilities of our people, to ensure data quality, governance and best practice. We will ensure there are structured processes for sharing data knowledge, insights and data across the organisation. Our knowledge and data capabilities will support our role as a trusted advisor to government, stakeholders and the public.

We will use technology and integrate our systems and streamline our processes to deliver better public services. We will ensure that we have robust cybersecurity processes in place that are fit-for-purpose.

Key initiatives:

- Develop a research and knowledge strategy
- An external review will be conducted of our data storage, data sharing and data integration capabilities and of our current IT systems and practices. The report will make clear recommendations on how improved data and IT capabilities can support the delivery of our strategic priorities in a rapidly changing digital world.

Our Partnerships

Building strong collaborative partnerships

We will actively collaborate with external stakeholders and forge strong partnerships to enhance our collective capacity. We will establish Memorandums of Understanding that deliver effective partnerships and improve reporting at national and EU level. We will drive innovative environmental projects that deliver shared outcomes for the benefit of our ecosystems and communities.

Key initiative:

Develop, maintain and monitor our partnerships to ensure they enhance delivery of our strategic priorities.

STRATEGIC
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
SCREENING
REPORT Inland
Fisheries Ireland
CORPORATE PLAN
2025

Prepared for Inland Fisheries Ireland under SI 435 of 2004

2025

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This report has been prepared by Minogue Environmental Consulting Ltd with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid. This report is prepared for Inland Fisheries Ireland and we accept no responsibility to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans that are prepared for certain specified sectors, including fisheries of which the proposed **Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030** (the plan) relates. The following Regulations transpose this Directive into Irish law:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004),
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) and further amended by
- S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011) and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 (as amended) state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. The purpose of this screening report is to determine whether the making and implementation of the plan will or will not, lead to significant environmental effects for the plan area and if it will require a full Strategic Environment Assessment.

In deciding whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive - which is reproduced in the Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as inserted by article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. The approach to this screening assessment is to assess the Objectives, Actions, Outcomes and Measures contained in the plan against the criteria contained in Schedule 2a of the Regulations; this is presented in Section Three of this report and Annex A presents a more detailed commentary of each element.

Under S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended, SEA may be required for all sectoral plans, including land use plans (except for those specific land use plans covered by SI 436 of 2004, as amended)

The following environmental authorities must be consulted, where appropriate:

- Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) - all cases
- Development Applications Unit, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage - where there might be significant effects on architectural or archaeological heritage or nature conservation
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications - where there might be significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment.

An assessment under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive has also been undertaken in conjunction with this SEA Screening report and should be read in tandem with this and the *Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030*.

1.1 Background and context

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) was formally established in 2010 as the agency responsible for the conservation, protection, management, marketing, development and improvement of inland fisheries and sea angling resources.

IFI operates under the aegis of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE). The principal function of Inland Fisheries Ireland is set out under Section 7 (2) of the Inland Fisheries Act of 2010. This is the protection, management and conservation of the inland fisheries resource. The general functions of IFI are to:

- (a) Promote, support, facilitate and advise the Minister on the conservation, protection, management, marketing, development and improvement of inland fisheries, including sea angling
- (b) Develop and advise the Minister on policy and national strategies relating to inland fisheries including sea angling, and
- (c) To ensure implementation and delivery of policy and strategies developed under (b) as agreed with the Minister.

Ireland's 74,000 kilometres of rivers and streams, 128,000 hectares of lakes and 5000 kilometres of coastline all fall under the jurisdiction of IFI which has a remit to facilitate the following:

- More efficient and effective management of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource;
- Streamlined, coherent and integrated policy formulation on a national basis;
- Optimum use and allocation of financial resources;
- Development and empowerment of staff to deliver the goals of IFI;
- Formalising of stakeholder input into policy formulation through the creation of the new National Inland Fisheries Forum;
- An improved national perspective in delivering inland fisheries policy;
- A clear and well communicated single national identity for IFI.

In recent years, the need for a more robust governance framework became apparent, leading to comprehensive reviews and assessments. The EY Review Report, conducted in Nov 2023, highlighted several areas for improvement with eleven recommendations, including the clarity of roles and responsibilities, the effectiveness of board and committee structures, and the necessity for ongoing training and development. As a result, the IFI has undertaken a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing governance practices including the realignment of board structures, the establishment of sub-committees, and the development of a governance assessment framework. The latest progress report from IFI (Dec 2024) indicates positive progress in implementing governance recommendations. There are further efforts planned to strengthen governance structures throughout 2025 and

the working draft of the Corporate Plan 2026-2030 establishes 'Our Governance' as a critical strategic enabler. These ongoing efforts reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and the integration of best practices in governance

2 The Plan and its purpose

2.1 Introduction

The IFI have prepared a draft consultation plan, Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030 which is a consultation document.

An overview of the new Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030 is provided below and a detailed presentation on key elements of the plan is provided in Annex A to this SEA Screening Report.

2.2 Overview of Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030

The plan covers the following:

- Vision, Mission and Values
- Four Strategic Priorities, and accompanying initiatives and outcomes:
 - Conserve
 - Enforce
 - Restore
 - Advocate
- Four Strategic Enablers

The four strategic priorities, presented below in Figure 2.1 will guide IFI for the next four years.

Figure 2--2-1 Strategic Priorities



Initiatives and outcomes and key activities are grouped around the Strategic Priorities above. These are detailed in Annex A to 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 SEA 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.

3 Environmental resources summary

3.1 Introduction

This section provides a short summary of key environmental resources relevant to the plan. Given the statutory remit of IFI, the nature conservation sites at national scale and the current status of water quality are particularly relevant to the plan.

The EPA State of Ireland’s Environment 2024 (EPA 2025) provides a national overview of the key environmental challenges and issues facing the environment of Ireland. Of particular relevance to this plan is the themes of water quality, nature and policy. The key messages from the above report under each of these themes are presented below and a series of maps showing water quality and designated sites under the EU Habitats Directive are provided at the end of this section.

Figure 3-1 Key Messages on water – EPA

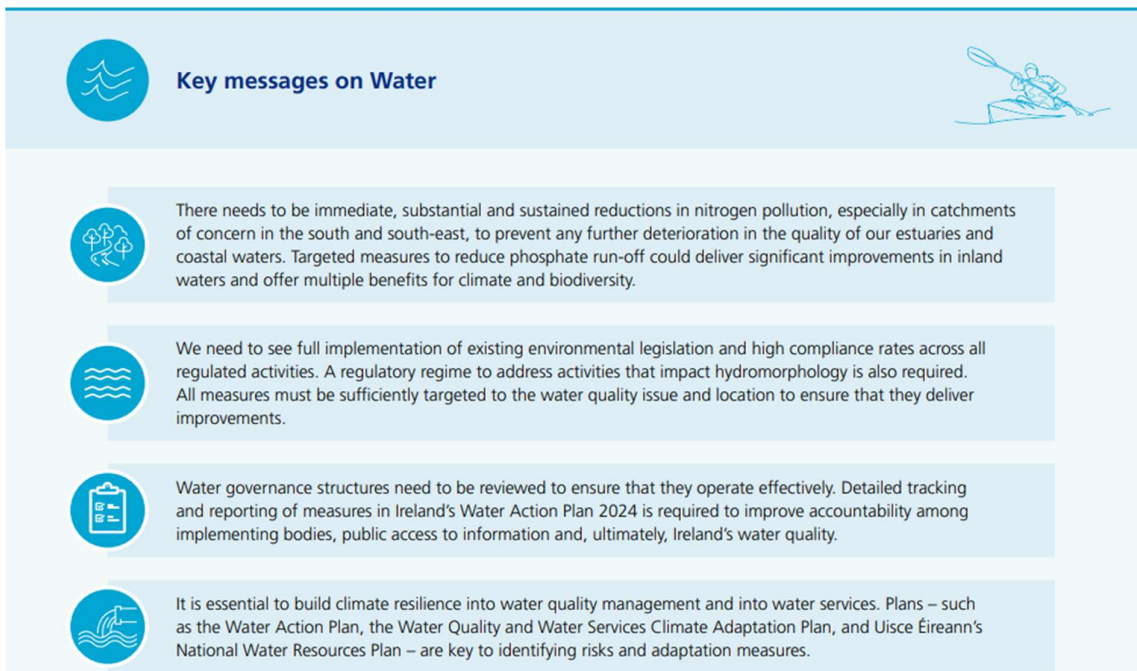


Figure 3-2 Key messages on Nature -EPA

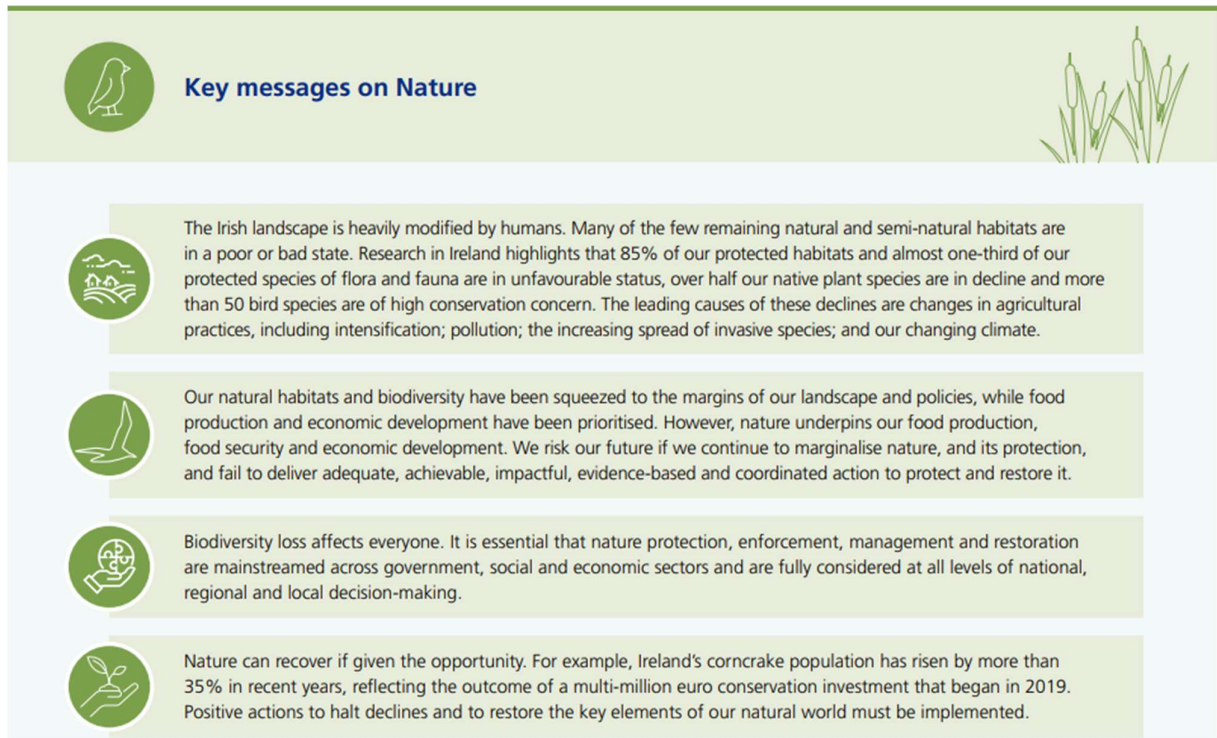


Figure 3-3 Key messages on Environmental Policy - EPA

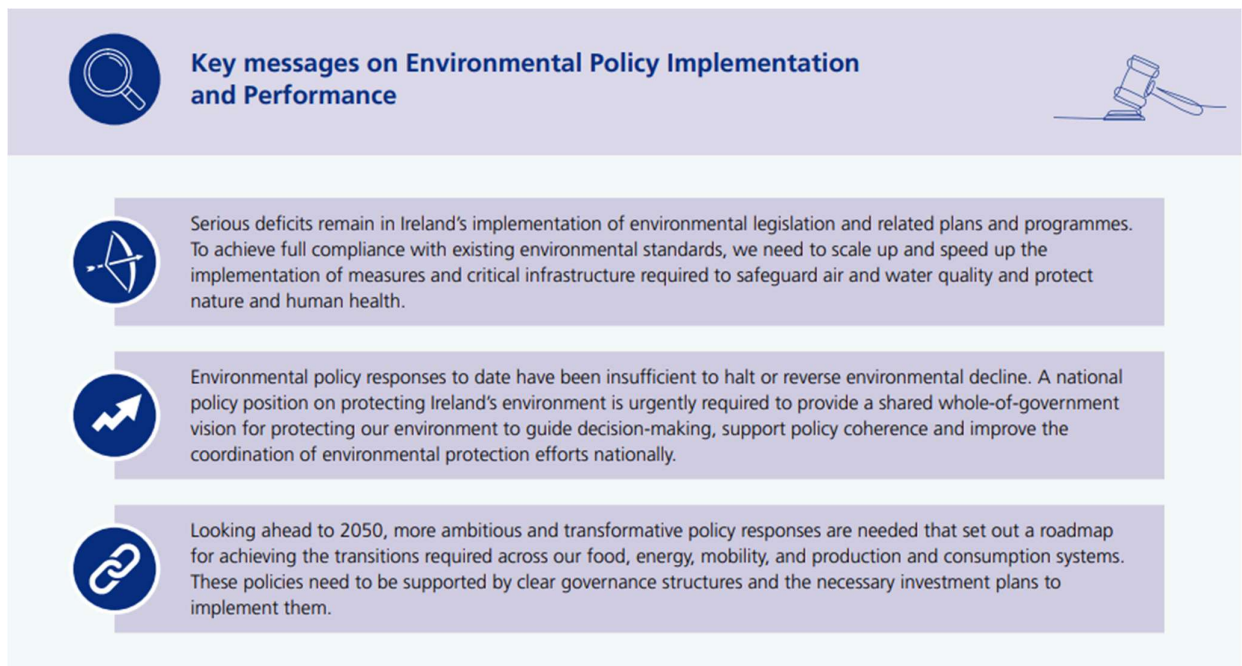


Figure 3-4 Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas -all island

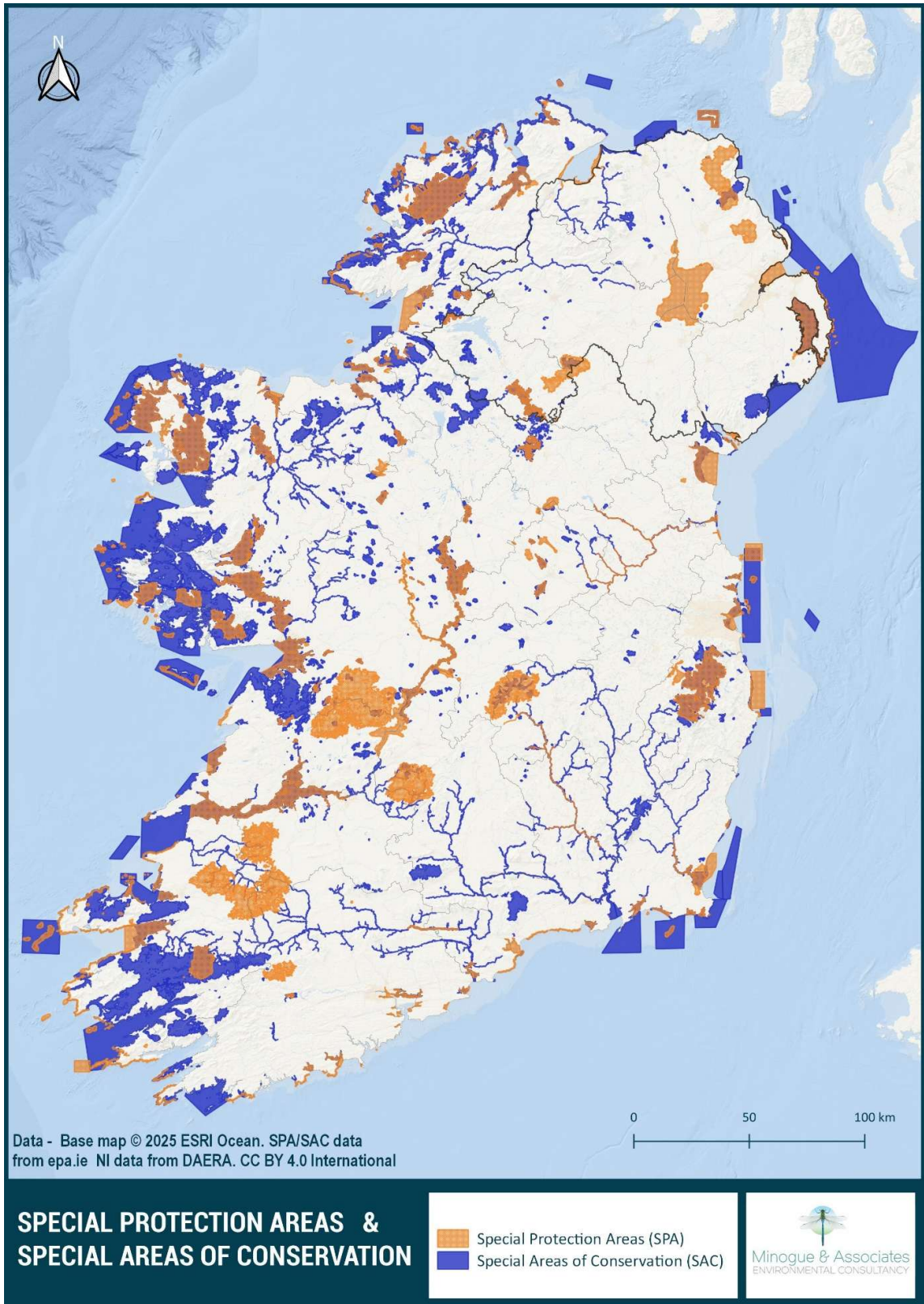
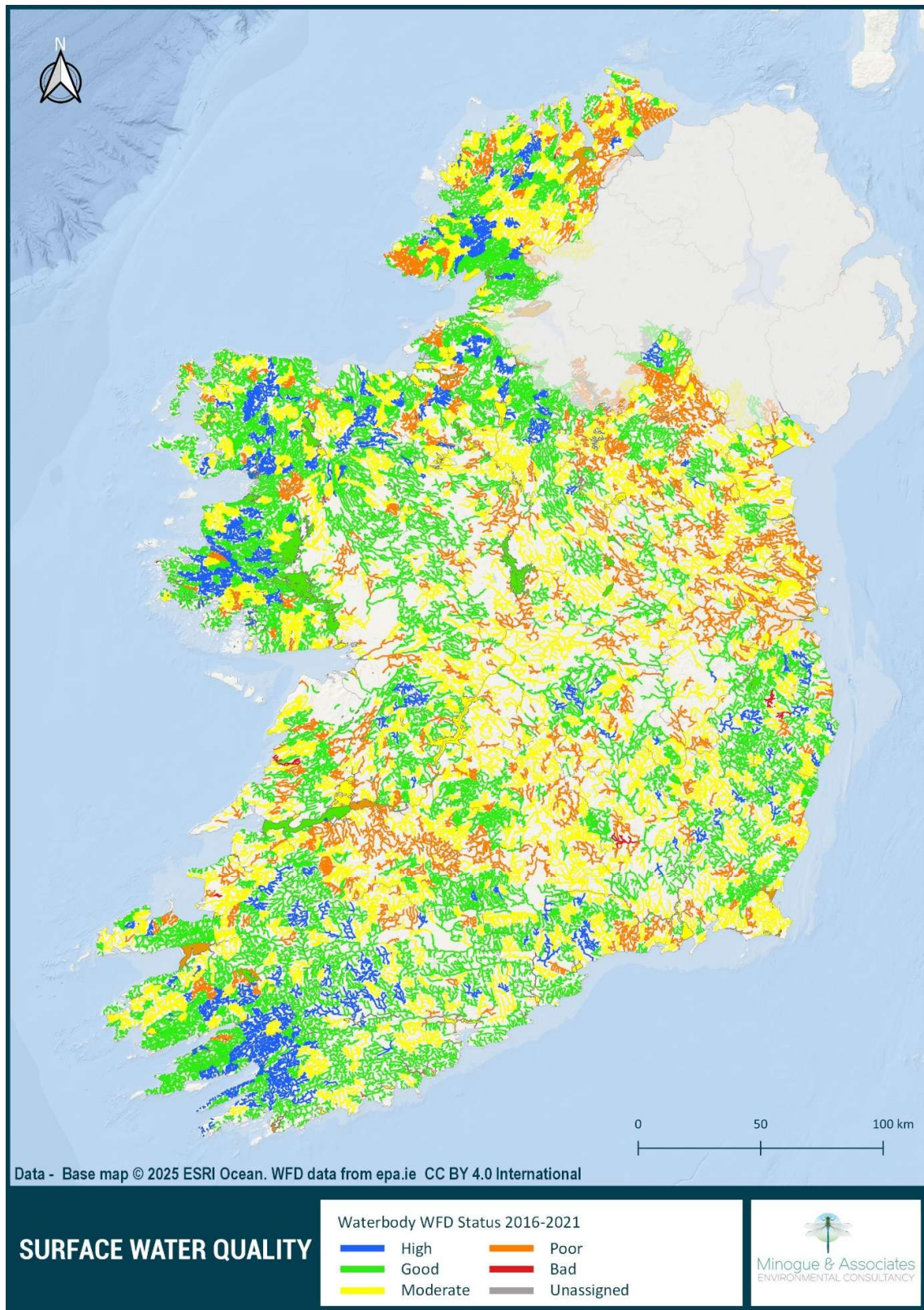


Figure 3-5 Surface Water Quality 2016-2021



4 Schedule 2a Screening Assessment

4.1 Introduction

The following section and table below present the SEA Screening assessment of the *Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030* against the criteria provided in Schedule 2a of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2001-2011 which details the criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment. More detailed commentary on the action measures and supporting sub-measures as well as the Environmental Charter are provided in Annexes A and B to this report.

The Screening assessment should be read in conjunction with the draft plan, supporting baseline documentation available on the IFI website, and the accompanying Habitats Directive Screening report.

Table 4.1 SEA Screening

Criteria for determining whether the proposed <i>Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030</i> is likely to have significant effects on the environment
<p>1. The characteristics of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:</p>
<p><i>the degree to which the Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,</i></p> <p>The draft Plan s is supported by the following Vision <i>Our rivers, lakes, and coastal ecosystems support abundant fish populations for future generations</i>. It is further underpinned by the following Mission <i>We will conserve, protect, restore, and advocate for our fisheries, fish, habitats and biodiversity</i>.</p> <p>These are augmented by strategic priorities, initiatives and outcomes.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The characteristics of the Plan does not set a framework for projects with a land use effect such as location, nature, size or operating conditions. The plan is non statutory and does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.</p> <p>The Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework, of which the draft plan is not part and does not contribute towards.</p>
<p><i>the degree to which the Plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,</i></p>

The Plan seeks to set out the key deliverables for the organisation over the next five years with focus on the Vision and Mission as articulated above and underpinned by the strategic priorities.

The Plan will have no influence on other plans either above or below in a hierarchy.

the relevance of the Plan in the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

The Plan aims to provide an ambitious environmental and ecosystem services approach to achieving the strategic priorities identified in the plan and in response to the need to improve governance.

The Strategic Priorities are positive across key relevant environmental parameters such as water quality, fish populations, conservation and restoration. Therefore, the Plan is relevant in relation to contributing to and promoting sustainable development.

Environmental problems relevant to the Plan

Key threats to water quality and fisheries are reflected in the EPA State of Ireland’s Environment Report (2024). These key threats are cross cutting and relate to current outlooks and trends for nature and water as follows:

	POLICY AREA	CURRENT		NOTES
		ASSESSMENT	OUTLOOK	
NATURE	Nature			
	Protected habitats	●	▼	Ireland has protected almost 14% of its land area as Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs). The latest Article 17 report found that 85% of Ireland’s protected habitats have inadequate or bad status, with only 15% having favourable conservation status. In terms of trends, 46% of habitats demonstrate ongoing declining trends, while only 2% are improving. Of ten countries assessed by the Commission, Ireland scored lowest across planning, implementation, site management, monitoring and conservation outcomes at SPAs.
	Protected species	●	▼	The latest Article 17 report found that 57% of protected species have favourable status and 30% have inadequate or bad status. In terms of trends, 55% of species are stable, 17% are improving and 15% are declining.
	Bird populations	●	▼	Populations of 54 (26%) of Ireland’s regularly occurring bird species are in severe decline while a further 79 (37%) are showing moderate declines. In all, 63% of Ireland’s bird species are in serious trouble.
	Marine protected areas	●	—	Ireland significantly increased the area covered by marine protected areas, from 2.3% to 9.2%, in 2022-2023. However, the legislation to protect these areas is still not in place. Significant further progress will be needed to reach the target of 30% of Ireland’s maritime area protected by 2030, as well as to implement and enforce their protection.
	Overall nature assessment	●	▼	The overall current assessment for nature is ‘very poor’ (the same as in 2020). Deteriorating trends dominate, especially for protected habitats and bird populations, and Ireland is not on track to achieve policy objectives for nature. While the recent expansion of marine protected areas is welcome, additional far-reaching measures are needed to address the declines in nature and biodiversity.

	POLICY AREA	CURRENT ASSESSMENT	OUTLOOK	NOTES
WATER	Water			
	River water quality			Only half (50%) of Ireland's rivers are in satisfactory ecological condition. There has been no net improvement in river biological quality in recent years. Moreover, 42% of river sites, mostly in the south and south-east of the country, have unsatisfactory nitrate concentrations, while over a quarter of river sites (27%) have unsatisfactory phosphorous concentrations.
	Lake water quality			Some 69% of Ireland's lakes are in satisfactory ecological condition. There has been a slight (2.7%) decrease in the proportion of lakes in satisfactory biological condition in recent years, with over one-third (35%) of lakes having high phosphorous concentrations, particularly in the north-east of the country.
	Transitional water quality			Only 36% of Ireland's transitional waters (estuaries) are in satisfactory ecological condition. In recent years there has been a sharp decline (15.7%) in the number of monitored estuaries in satisfactory condition. The transitional waters in less than good ecological status are located primarily in the south and southeast of the country.
	Coastal water quality			Most (81%) of Ireland's coastal waters are in satisfactory ecological condition. However, in recent years there has been a significant decline (9.5%) in the number of monitored coastal water bodies in satisfactory ecological condition.
	Marine environment			Five of the 11 Marine Strategy Framework Directive descriptors are compatible with good ecological status, indicating partial compliance. Three descriptors have partially achieved good ecological status but some information is still lacking, and one descriptor has insufficient information to assess its status. Challenges remain for achieving full compliance.
Groundwater quality			Some 468 (91%) of groundwater bodies are in good chemical and good quantitative status. In recent years there has been a very slight decline (0.8%; four water bodies) in the number of groundwater bodies assessed as having good status.	

The enablers identified in the draft plan relate to governance, people, knowledge and partnerships which are all essential in order to deliver the listed priorities.

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 seek to improve across the strategic priorities under the themes of Conserve, Restore, Enforce and Advocate.

the relevance of the Plan in the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).

As its' primary statutory remit is to protect, manage and conserve inland fisheries, the IFI implements a range of European Union legislation and associated national regulations. No specific land use effects are identified in the plan and should development arise, the application of appropriate legislation such as the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats Directive, the SEA directive and the EIA Directive, IFI Environmental Charter as appropriate.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,

The non statutory Plan runs from 2026 to 2030, 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. No specific land use effects are identified through the Strategic Priorities at this juncture other than the support for implementation of the Great Western Lakes Plan which has been subject to full SEA and Stage II Appropriate Assessment and includes relevant specific mitigation measures for the Great Western Lakes.

The National barriers programme deals with issues related to barriers and works to reduce their impact, within the context of the Water Framework Directive. There are five main aims of this programme:

- Developing a barriers assessment tool
- Barrier surveys and risk assessment
- Creating a national barriers database
- Focusing our efforts
- Guidance for planning and construction

This is ongoing work at national level and reduces the impact of barriers to fish in the national river network.

Should projects arise from the 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 cumulative effects are identified as a result.

the cumulative nature of the effects,

At this point the action measures are somewhat generic and no specific land use effects are identified notwithstanding the comment above in relation to the Great Western Lakes and the early stages of the National Barriers Programme. Should projects arise from the Plan they will be subject to more detailed project level assessment and in compliance with the statutory planning and environmental consenting regime.

the trans boundary nature of the effects

IFI's statutory responsibility is for the waters in the Republic of Ireland, however there are numerous water bodies including the Erne catchment and Derg catchments and many smaller streams and watercourses that flow in and out of Northern Ireland. The potential for trans boundary effects could arise in the absence of appropriate safeguards for land use effects. However, given the non statutory nature of this plan, and provision for planning consent and environmental assessment should lower level projects arise, no transboundary effects are identified for the Plan.

the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),

No such risks are identified as arising from the plan. Objectives relating to IFI staff and support for same to deliver excellence and be recognised as experts in their field are

positive in relation to human health and wellbeing, whilst achieving other strategic priorities around restoration, enforcement and advocacy.

the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).

The draft Plan is national in scale but is non statutory and does not set the framework for lower levels plans or projects. Should projects arise from the plan these would be subject to planning and environmental consent as appropriate. At this scale, no such effects are identified.

the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

Many of the inland and coastal watercourses under the remit of IFI are either designated under the EU Habitats Directive or are hydrologically connected to these water bodies. IFI's statutory remit extends to the physical habitat of the fisheries as well as quantity and quality of water and supporting plant and animal species;

Archaeological or built heritage sites may also be associated with the rivers, lakes and coastal waters and are afforded protection for cultural heritage namely through the record of protected structures or sites and monuments record.

A screening statement in support of Appropriate Assessment has also been prepared for this plan in line with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). A finding no likely significant effects has been determined to inform IFI, the competent authority in their decision making.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

IFI monitors development activities during construction activities, forestry and agricultural operations, and is a prescribed body under the Planning and Development Act. Water samples are also taken by IFI from many lakes and rivers and as such the agency monitors and addresses any breaches in water quality standards. This Plan does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

In order to be realised, potential projects or proposals arising from this plan will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework, of which the plan is not part and does not contribute towards. Such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include lower tier environmental assessment including Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. Should projects arise from the plan, the statutory consent process as outlined above will apply. However, given the variable status of water quality in Ireland, particularly rivers, projects would require to ensure that they contribute to achieving Water Framework Directive objectives.

(c) intensive land-use,

No specific areas are identified for landuse effects or development activities in the plan and at national level the intensity of landuse would also vary from remote extensively farmed upland areas to remote unfarmed lands to more intensively managed lowland agricultural lands. The Great Western Lakes Management Plan and the Barrier Removal programme are all positive in terms of actions to address environmental quality at strategic scale. At this juncture no such effects are identified.

(d) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

AA Conclusion:

The Screening of this 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 the Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment that it can be concluded by IFI that this 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.

4.2 SEA Screening Determination

Section 9 (1) of the (2004) Regulations (S.I. No. 435) (as amended) states "*subject to sub-article (2), an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes*

(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or "

(b) which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site."

The Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030 aims to deliver key deliverables of the organisation with a focus on conservation and protection of inland fisheries and sea angling resource over a five-year period whilst ensuring the statutory remit of IFI is fulfilled and the angling resource is protected and conserved in an environmentally sustainable manner for future generations to enjoy. Enhanced governance and strategic priorities and initiatives articulate the overall vision and mission of this plan.

The Strategic Priorities and initiatives relate to measures to increase investment in the conservation efforts of at-risk fish species, including but not limited to salmon and brown trout and continue to support defined conservation projects that align to our strategic priorities, and demonstrate impact through our monitoring and evaluation processes. Other initiatives under the Enforce Strategic Priority include to advocate for strengthened legislation and penalties for the protection of fisheries ecosystems; Upskill our protection officers in best-practice water quality enforcement and habitat protection capabilities in order to support our overall environmental enforcement capacity.

The Plan does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent. In order to be realised, potential projects or proposals arising from the Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework, of which the plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

The AA Screening of the *Developing the IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030* as set out in the accompanying Screening Statement in support of Appropriate Assessment 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 the AA Screening report it is the considered view of the authors of the 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.

4.3 Consultation on Plan.

The plan and accompanying SEA Screening reports will be issued to the statutory consultees for a three week period and upon receipt of submissions, the SEA Screening Determination and final SEA Screening report will be prepared.

5 Annex A: SEA and AA comment on the plan

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
<p>Priority A: Conserve</p> <p>We will protect and maintain Ireland’s fish populations through evidence-based policies and projects to conserve fish biodiversity in Ireland</p>	<p>To support this priority, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a dynamic research strategy. 2. Use our applied research and innovative development capabilities to establish a baseline, and assess and monitor the conservation status of Ireland’s fish species. 3. Increase investment in the conservation efforts of at-risk fish species, including but not limited to salmon and brown trout. 4. Improve and modernise our data gathering processes around our conservation processes, so we can use evidence-based approaches like adaptive management to drive new ways of working. 5. Continue to support defined conservation projects that align to our strategic priorities and demonstrate impact through our monitoring and evaluation processes. 6. Advise the Minister on matters related to conservation to inform policymaking and outline the potential impacts of national and international policies on conservation efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will deliver on our statutory remit and commitments required by national and EU legislation. • We can demonstrate successful execution of initiatives that aim to halt the decline of at-risk species e.g. salmon, lamprey • We can measure improvements in fish habitats in alignment to our plans. • We will conserve fish stocks to deliver sustainable angling for economic and social benefits. • We will demonstrate the natural capital value of inland fisheries and sea angling resources. • We are collaborating with our wider stakeholders as a conservation leader and expert in Ireland.

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	7. Explore and enhance our capabilities in innovative restoration solutions e.g. eDNA. 8. Deliver on the commitments of the Western Lakes Management Plan.	
<p>SEA comment: The initiatives and outcomes all support current and future conservation efforts from research, data gathering, innovative restoration solutions and implementation of conservation plans such as the Western Lakes Management Plan that has been subject to full SEA and AA. In terms of outcomes, the delivery of statutory remit of IFI, conservation of fish stocks and collaboration are all positive in terms of achieving positive environmental outcomes.</p> <p>AA comment: The implementation of Strategic Priorities under the Conserve theme and accompanying outcomes will have the potential to result in land use activities that represent positive implications for the European Sites and qualifying features of interest. The implementation of Initiative no 3 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.</p> <p>The land use activity pertaining to the restoration works (No. 5) 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. Should land use or physical infrastructural projects arise from this, IFI will undertake the planning and work in line with the IFI Environmental Charter. 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.</p>		

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
<p>Other initiatives and outcomes are not identified as giving rise to landuse activities as they relate to research, advice and policy. The Western Lakes Management Plan has been subject to Stage II Appropriate Assessment and mitigation measures within that Natura Impact Statement will apply as appropriate.</p> <p>The implementation of Strategic Priority Conserve does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		
<p>Priority B: Enforce</p> <p>We will focus our enforcement activity on instances of water pollution, habitat destruction and illegal fishing making full use of the legislative powers available to us.</p>	<p>To support this priority, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement current legislation in full to maximise good outcomes for fish and freshwater ecosystems through enforcement and prosecution activities. 2. Advocate for strengthened legislation and penalties for the protection of fisheries ecosystems. 3. Upskill our protection officers in best-practice water quality enforcement and habitat protection capabilities in order to support our overall environmental enforcement capacity. 4. Collaborate and co-deliver with other environmental enforcement agencies to maximise outcomes for habitats and biodiversity in an era of climate change. 5. Communicate regularly with the public and our stakeholders about the important outcomes and impact of our enforcement work for the environment. 6. Invest in our capacity and flexibility to respond to enforcement priorities. 7. Develop an adaptive resourcing and implementation plan to deliver our new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing compliance with legislation. • We have increased all forms of enforcement activities and our capacity. • We have supported the introduction of enhanced legislation and increased penalties. • Improved water quality enforcement and habitat protection outcomes. • We can demonstrate successful collaborative working with other enforcement agencies that has resulted in increased compliance

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	<p>responsibilities, including Blue Fin Tuna and Sea Bass protection and all other fish species under IFI's statutory remit, Article 55 compliance and the Western Lakes Management Plan.</p> <p>8. Grow our capacity to meet the increased pressures arising from noncompliance with environmental legislation, agriculture, housing, energy, transport, water and wastewater infrastructure development.</p>	<p>and greater deterrence of illegal activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve cross-warranting with other environmental enforcement organisations
<p>SEA comment: No landuse effects are directly identified for this Strategic Priority as they relate to capacity building, addressing pressures on water arising from non compliance with environmental legislation and overall improved enforcement around environmental policy and legislation. This creates indirect positive impacts on water and biodiversity in particular.</p> <p>AA comment: The strategic priorities have the potential to indirectly 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 through improved enforcement of environmental legislation and addressing pressures arising from other landuse activities. 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 lamprey.</p> <p>The implementation of Strategic Priority Enforce does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		
Priority C		
<p>Priority C: Restore</p> <p>We will lead on restoration efforts for</p>	<p>To support this priority, we will:</p> <p>1. Identify and co-deliver transformative restoration projects and initiatives for the benefit of fish populations at scale, such as Integrated Catchment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can demonstrate improved aquatic habitat as a result of our work.

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
<p>the benefit of inland fisheries through the rehabilitation and enhancement of aquatic habitats.</p>	<p>Management Programmes, with our partners, to help maximise environmental outcomes. Projects will be prioritised by the degree of strategic importance, potential benefits, and feasibility of the restoration.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Implement programmes that support free-flowing rivers, including the National Barriers Programme, our flagship restoration programme that we are delivering within the context of the Water Framework Directive. 3. Continue to develop our innovative capabilities and expertise to become the leader in hydromorphology research, standards and methods in Ireland. 4. Identify new sources of funding for restoration programmes. 5. Advise the Minister on matters related to habitat restoration to inform policymaking and outline the potential impacts of national and international policies on restoration efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We deliver the restoration objectives of the National Barriers Mitigation Programme. • We are recognised as a national and international leader in aquatic habitat restoration in Ireland. • We can evidence successful co-delivery with our partners and local communities on integrated restorative projects. • We have contributed to the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law in Ireland in relation to aquatic habitats and fish.
<p>SEA comment: Actions 1 and 2 are positive in particular for water quality, and biodiversity, flora and fauna. Other actions relate to research, capabilities, funding and advice and would indirectly contribute positively to wider environmental parameters, with water resources and biodiversity positively impacted.</p> <p>AA comment: Actions number 1 and 2 under the Strategic Priority Restore 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. Addressing barriers to fish movements (2) and restoration at catchment scale are means of addressing long</p>		

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	<p>standing threats to Annex 2 species including Salmon (NPWS, 2019) such activities aim to support EC Habitats Directive conservation objectives which are “to restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon” in Irish SACs</p> <p>The land use activity pertaining to the restoration works (1 and 2) 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. Should land use or physical infrastructural projects arise from this, IFI will undertake the planning and work in line with the IFI Environmental Charter 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.</p> <p>Other initiatives and outcomes are not identified as giving rise to landuse activities as they relate to funding, research and advice.</p> <p>The implementation of Strategic Priority Restore does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>	
<p>Priority D: Advocate</p> <p>We will proactively advocate, using an evidence-based narrative, for conservation and restoration of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource.</p>	<p>To support this priority, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocate to government on conservation, restoration, and evidence-based management of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource to inform policymaking. 2. Advocate for strengthened legislation and penalties for the protection of the fisheries ecosystem. 3. Communicate regularly with the public and our stakeholders about the important outcomes and impact of our work for the environment, including sharing good news stories and innovative initiatives through our public channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are recognised as a leading voice in conservation, restoration, and evidence-based management, nationally and internationally by our stakeholders, including the wider public, policy makers and other state agencies. • We interact and influence at policy-making level with

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	<p>4. Lead public education, outreach initiatives and events, and encourage citizen science, to support stewardship and raise awareness of the conservation and restoration work needed to protect our aquatic habitats, water quality and fish biodiversity.</p> <p>5. Develop a stakeholder engagement plan, including mapping stakeholders and engagement approaches (e.g. events of national and international significance).</p> <p>6. Further develop our strategy for high-impact outreach and education activities, e.g. Novice Anglers Strategy.</p> <p>7. Advocate for inclusive sustainable angling participation.</p>	<p>government and other state and international/EU agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have fostered greater awareness and support among the public for our strategic priorities. • We have cultivated effective partnerships and a network of advocates that align with our strategic priorities. • Legislation change has occurred to better support IFI to fulfil its remit.
<p>SEA comment: these are not identified as giving rise to landuse activities relating to advocacy, policy and partnership amongst others. Indirect positive impacts on water and biodiversity, flora and fauna parameters.</p> <p>AA comment: These initiatives and outcomes are not identified as giving rise to landuse activities as they relate to advocacy, communication, outreach. The implementation of Strategic Priority Advocate does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		
Strategic Enablers	Our people	Key initiative
	<p>Supporting our people to deliver excellence</p> <p>We will define a culture of openness, communication and collaboration, and foster an environment where our people are highly motivated to deliver our vision and mission. Our high-performing teams will be</p>	<p>Develop an HR strategy to support the delivery of the strategic priorities.</p>

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	<p>recognised as experts in their field, and will have sufficient capacity, support and training to deliver their roles efficiently and to the highest standards. We will develop a skilled and resilient workforce with the right capabilities and connectivity across our organisation to deliver our strategic priorities.</p>	
<p>SEA comment: indirect positive effects relating to support for teams and their expertise within the organisation and support in delivery of the above Strategic priorities. AA comment No land use effects or likely significant effects are identified for Strategic Enablers Our People as the activities relate to support for organisation, skills, support and governance. The implementation of Strategic Enablers Our People does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		
	Our Governance	Key initiative
	<p>Robust governance that operate to the highest standards</p> <p>We will build a reputation for strong governance aligned to the highest standards, which supports our high-quality performance and delivers measurable results. Our enhanced governance systems will be maintained to ensure their robustness and to support transparent decision-making and accountability.</p>	<p>We will maintain a robust governance framework, through streamlined digitised processes, that support effective decision-making and risk management, in the delivery of our strategic priorities.</p>
<p>SEA comment: no landuse effects or adverse effects identified as this relates to strong governance and decision making. AA comment No land use effects or likely significant effects are identified for Strategic Enablers Our Governance as the activities relates to governance and governance framework. The implementation of Strategic Enablers Our Governance does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		
	Our knowledge	Key initiative

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	<p>Harnessing the power of our knowledge, data and information technology</p> <p>We will harness the power of data, information technology (IT) and our collective knowledge to inform and support our people, strategies, policies, and projects.</p> <p>We will enhance the data collection, data storage and data integration capabilities of our people, to ensure data quality, governance and best practice. We will ensure there are structured processes for sharing data knowledge, insights and data across the organisation. Our knowledge and data capabilities will support our role as a trusted advisor to government, stakeholders and the public.</p> <p>We will use technology and integrate our systems and streamline our processes to deliver better public services. We will ensure that we have robust cybersecurity processes in place that are fit-for-purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a research and knowledge strategy • An external review will be conducted of our data storage, data sharing and data integration capabilities and of our current IT systems and practices. The report will make clear recommendations on how improved data and IT capabilities can support the delivery of our strategic priorities in a rapidly changing digital world.
<p>SEA comment: no landuse effects or adverse effects identified as this relates to digital technology, data capabilities and best practice.</p> <p>AA comment: No land use effects or likely significant effects are identified for Strategic Enablers Our Knowledge as the activities relate to data collection, data storage and integration and aligned with governance and best practice. The implementation of Strategic Enablers Our Knowledge does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		
	Our partnerships	Key initiative
	Building strong collaborative partnerships	Develop, maintain and monitor our partnerships to ensure they

Priority	Initiatives	Outcomes
	<p>We will actively collaborate with external stakeholders and forge strong partnerships to enhance our collective capacity. We will establish Memorandums of Understanding that deliver effective partnerships and improve reporting at national and EU level. We will drive innovative environmental projects that deliver shared outcomes for the benefit of our ecosystems and communities.</p>	<p>enhance delivery of our strategic priorities</p>
<p>SEA comment: Positive indirectly through partnership and collaboration to deliver strategic priorities on water, biodiversity, flora and fauna and population at strategic scale.</p> <p>AA comment: No land use effects or likely significant effects are identified for Strategic Enablers Our Partnership as the activities relate to capacity, partnership that will improve both national and EU reporting. This is taken to be reporting under environmental directives of relevance and under the IFI remit.</p> <p>Relating to actions to drive innovative environmental projects, the location, and type of such projects are not determined at this juncture. Should projects results in landuse activities, 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 element will be subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment and where necessary Appropriate Assessment at the project level. Should land use or physical infrastructural projects arise from this, IFI will undertake the planning and work in line with the IFI Environmental Charter. 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</p> <p>As such, the implementation of Strategic Enablers Our Partnership does not have any foreseeable adverse impacts on the Conservation Objectives of any Natura 2000 site or their Features of interest.</p>		

ANNEX B: Inland Fisheries Ireland Environmental Charter

Please follow the link to access this Charter.

<https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/sites/default/files/migrated/docman/2015/nsad/EnvironmentalCharter.pdf>



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Barry O'Connor
Development Programme
Inland Fisheries Ireland
Sunnyside House
Macroom
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2nd December 2025

Our Ref: 251107.1

Re: SEA Screening for Inland Fisheries Ireland Statement of Strategy 2026-2030

Dear Mr O' Connor,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 6th November 2025, in relation to **Inland Fisheries Ireland Statement of Strategy 2026-2030** and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening.

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

Where we provide specific comments on plans and programmes, our comments will focus on the EPA's remit and areas of expertise (in particular water, air, climate change, waste, resource efficiency, noise, radon and the inter-relationships between these and other relevant topics e.g. biodiversity), as appropriate and relevant to the particular Plan.

Proposed SEA Determination

If a proposed determination hasn't been made, you should determine whether the implementation of the proposed Plan or Programme would be likely to have significant



effects on the environment. The criteria to consider are set out in Annex II of Directive 2001/ 42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (The SEA Directive) and in *Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I No. 435 of 2004, as amended)*.

You should take into account the relevant criteria set out in *Schedule 1* into account in making its determination as to whether the Plan or Programme would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

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

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

EPA SEA Screening Guidance

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

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities

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

Sustainable Development

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

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

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

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

Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024

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

Available Guidance & Resources

Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:

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

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

EPA SEA WebGIS Tool

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

Catchments.ie

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

EPA AA GeoTool

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

Future amendments to the Plan

Where changes to the plan or programme are made prior to finalisation, or where modifications to the plan or programme are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 1 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended) of the SEA Regulations, as appropriate.

Appropriate Assessment

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

Environmental Authorities

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

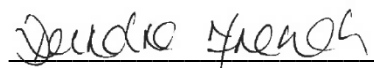
- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment; and,
- Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.

SEA Determination

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

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Deirdre French'.

Deirdre French

SEA Section

Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring

Barry O'Connor

From: Environmental Co-ordination (Inbox) <Environmental_Co-ordination@agriculture.gov.ie>
Sent: Friday 5 December 2025 10:23
To: Barry O'Connor
Subject: FW: SEA Screening IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030
Attachments: IFI suggested response.docx

Good morning Barry,

Please see below comments and attached in respect of **Developing the IFI statement of Strategy 2026-2030 and the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment:**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030.

It is important to stress that commercial sea fishing and aquaculture is a long standing, pre-existing and traditional activity in the marine environment.

It is imperative that engagement should be sought with the fishing and aquaculture industries and other relevant seafood stakeholders, where relevant, at as early a stage as possible to discuss any changes that may affect them and to afford a chance for their input to help avoid, minimise, and mitigate impacts, as set out under the National Marine Planning Framework.

The principles in the [National Marine Planning Framework](#) (NMPF) of avoiding, minimising, or mitigating impacts on access to existing activities includes specific policies on Fisheries and Aquaculture. These should be followed and any proposed activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas.

The seafood and aquaculture industries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of water quality changes, so it is relevant to highlight the importance of maintaining and improving water quality to avoid potential seafood safety issues. Any measures that minimise or eliminate impacts on fisheries, aquaculture, and the marine environment are to be encouraged.

Food Vision 2030 recognises and values the role of primary food producers. The contribution of the seafood sector to food security is of high importance. Seafood key production is primarily made up of capture fisheries and aquaculture production.

Please find attached expert observations provided by Bord Iascaigh Mhara who provide further comments on this topic, in particular, regarding molluscs.

Regards,

Environmental Co-ordination Unit

From: Barry O'Connor <Barry.OConnor@fisheriesireland.ie>
Sent: Thursday 6 November 2025 12:07
To: Environmental Co-ordination (Inbox) <Environmental_Co-ordination@agriculture.gov.ie>
Subject: SEA Screening IFI Statement of Strategy 2026-2030

CAUTION: This Email originated from Outside of this department. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe. Otherwise Please Forward any suspicious Emails to Notify.Cyber@agriculture.gov.ie .

Dear Sirs,

Inland Fisheries Ireland has prepared a draft Statement of Strategy for 2026-2030 (attached). In accordance with S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, Inland Fisheries must decide whether the Statement of Strategy would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. In doing this Inland Fisheries must take account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

Inland Fisheries Ireland have screened the Statement of Strategy for Strategic Environmental Assessment. The report outlining this screening is attached.

A submission or observation in relation to whether the Statement of Strategy would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment may be made to Inland Fisheries Ireland via email to barry.oconnor@fisheriesireland.ie from 6/11/2025 to 4/12/2025

Upon receipt of observations within the above time period Inland Fisheries Ireland will finalise the SEA Screening and publish an SEA determination.

Your faithfully,

Barry O'Connor, CEng, MIEI
Director, Development Programme



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Mobile +353(0)87 3448689

Email barry.oconnor@fisheriesireland.ie

Web www.fisheriesireland.ie

Sunnyside House, Macroom, Co. Cork. P12 X602.

In IFI we are proud to protect, conserve, develop & promote Ireland's natural inland fisheries and sea angling resources.

Our Vision

To place the inland fisheries resource in the best sustainable position possible for the benefit of future generations.

Our Mission

To protect, manage and conserve Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources and to maximise their sustainability and natural biodiversity.

Our Values

We work collaboratively with professionalism. We are open, transparent and accountable. We act with respect and integrity. We are committed to stewardship and sustainability.

Help Protect Ireland's Inland Fisheries - Call 1890 34 74 24 to report illegal fishing, water pollution or invasive species.

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D'fhéadfaí go bhfuil an ríomhphost seo agus ceangaltáin ar bith atá in éineacht leis faoi rún agus iad beartaithe d'úsáid an duine a bhfuil a s(h)eoladh air amháin. Dearcthaí nó tuairimí ar bith atá curtha in iúl ann, baineann siad leis an údar amháin, agus ní chaithfidh

go n-aontaíonn lascaigh Iníre Éireann leo. Mura tusa faighteoir beartaithe an ríomhphost seo, ná déan rud ar bith mar gheall ar an méid atá ann, ná é a chóipeáil ná é a thaispeáint do dhuine ar bith eile. Déan teagmháil leis an seoltóir, le do thoil, má chreideann tú go bhfuair tú an ríomhphost seo trí earráid.

Barry O'Connor
Director, Development Programme

✉ Barry.OConnor@fisheriesireland.ie • ☎ +353 (0)52 6113030 • 🌐 www.fisheriesireland.ie • 🏠 P12 X602



Help us protect Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastlines by reporting illegal fishing, water pollution or invasive species. Our confidential phone number is 0818 34 74 24, which is open 24 hours a day / 7 days a week.

To read our Privacy Policy and Email Disclaimer Notice, Please visit www.fisheriesireland.ie

Disclaimer:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara

Tá an t-eolas sa ríomhphost seo, agus in aon cheangaltáin leis, faoi rún agus tá sé dírithe ar an bhfaighteoir/na faighteoirí beartaithe amháin agus níor cheart ach dóibh siúd é a úsáid. D'fhéadfadh an t-eolas seo a bheith faoi réir pribhléid dhlíthiúil agus ghairmiúil. Mura tusa faighteoir beartaithe an ríomhphost seo, níor cheart duit an teachtaireacht seo, nó aon chuid di, a úsáid, a nochtadh, a chóipeáil, a dháileadh nó a choinneáil. Má fuair tú an ríomhphost seo go hearráideach, cuir an seoltóir ar an eolas láithreach agus scríos gach cóip den ríomhphost seo ó chóra(i)s do ríomhaire, le do thoil.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) response the Consultation on Developing the IFI statement of Strategy 2026-2030 and the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment

BIM welcome the opportunity to comment on the IFI Statement of Strategy and have organised of response to reflect the proposed strategic framework and enablers

Priority A: Conserve

We welcome the initiative “to protect and maintain Ireland’s fish populations through evidence-based policies and projects to conserve fish biodiversity in Ireland”, however we feel that as stated this fails to reflect the IFI role in relation to mollusc fisheries, indeed we note that there is only a single reference to molluscs in both documents and that solely relates to a definition of Inland Fisheries.

We note that in the IFI Procedure for Issuing Oyster Dredge Licences that “IFI have engaged in a process of updating the Appropriate Assessments for oyster harvest in SAC/SPA areas and in strengthening any proposed mitigations for harvest activity to ensure that the protected habitats and species in Natura 2000 sites achieve their conservation objectives” however we have not seen any outputs to date from this process despite oyster co-ops calling for AA’s of management plans.

Priority B: Enforce

Aquaculture and fisheries rely on good water quality as stocks are constantly immersed in their environment, which serves as their source of oxygen, food, and waste disposal. Poor water quality leads to stress, increased disease susceptibility, and reduced yields, making it a critical factor for both the biological and economic success of aquaculture and fishery operations.

Given this, BIM welcome initiatives to focus enforcement activity on instances of water pollution and to upskill protection officers in best-practice water quality enforcement. Allied to this we further welcome the intention to grow IFI’s capacity to meet the increased pressures arising from noncompliance with environmental legislation, agriculture, housing, energy, transport, water and wastewater infrastructure development.

Priority C: Restore

We note the initiative to Identify and co-deliver transformative restoration projects and initiatives for the benefit of fish populations at scale; however, we suggest that this initiative should be extended to include reference to molluscs. This is particularly important given the range of threats faced by native oyster populations in Ireland

Priority D: Advocate

BIM further welcome the initiative to develop a stakeholder engagement plan, including mapping stakeholders and engagement approaches (e.g. events of national and international significance) and feel that such structured engagement would be beneficial to native oyster and salmon draft net fishermen

Strategic Enablers

BIM further welcome the initiative to actively collaborate with external stakeholders and forge strong partnerships to enhance our collective capacity. We note the intention to establish

Memorandums of Understanding that deliver effective partnership and feel this provides an opportunity to place the relationship of our agencies on a more formal footing. This will serve to identify areas where we can work in partnership to the benefit of the environment, fish and shellfish stocks and our common stakeholders.