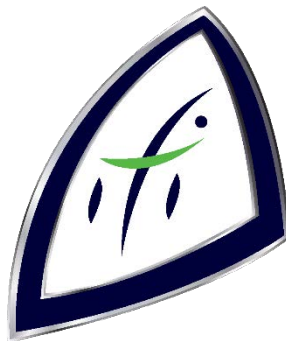


Statement of Strategy

2026-2030

December 9, 2025



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Chairman's Foreword

On behalf of the board of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) I am pleased to introduce the organisation's Statement of Strategy :2026-2030. The document is the culmination of significant endeavour, engagement and iterations which will focus our activities over the next 5 years.

Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastal waters are vital national assets shaping our landscapes, supporting communities and sustaining unique biodiversity. As the statutory body responsible for inland fisheries and sea angling, IFI is committed to protecting, conserving and enhancing this resource for current and future generations. Our geographical area of operation includes 74,000 km of rivers: 128,000 hectares of lakes and, over 5500 km of coastline and inshore waters within 12 nautical miles from baselines.

Ongoing ecological pressures such as climate change, habitat fragmentation, invasive species and changing land use demand a broad, integrated response. The evolving legislative landscape continues to shape and refine our responsibilities, requiring us to remain responsive, forward-looking and aligned with national policy direction.

Our strategy centres on four priorities:

- Safeguarding and **conserving** fish biodiversity.
- **Enforcing** legislative powers and strengthening inter-agency cooperation; Scaling up nature-based solutions and programmes that **restore** habitats and remove river barriers.
- Leading the **restoration** efforts through the rehabilitation of aquatic habitats.
- Provide an authoritative, evidence-led voice **advocating** for inland fisheries and aquatic biodiversity.

These strategic goals are underpinned by core organisational enablers: investing in **our people** and culture, strengthening **our governance**, modernising **our knowledge** and technology systems, and building robust **partnerships** with communities, landowners, NGOs, academia and other agencies.

By 2030, IFI aims to demonstrate tangible improvements in fish habitats and population status within priority catchments; stronger compliance with environmental law; increased scale of restoration efforts and a major uplift in how data informs planning and impact tracking. Annual reporting, transparency and accountability will remain central to maintaining public trust.

This strategy has been shaped through extensive internal and external consultation that affirmed broad support for the strategic direction, while also recognising and valuing the perspectives of those who expressed concerns. All these contributions have been welcomed and have informed our approach.

Of course, our values must be more than words on a page- they must be consistently lived through how we work with one another, with our stakeholders, and with the communities who rely on healthy fisheries every day.

We continue to make significant strides in strengthening our governance framework by updating our policies, clarifying decision-making processes, and embedding more streamlined digital and risk-management systems to ensure transparent, accountable and timely decisions across the organisation.

The success of this strategy relies on collective effort. I recognise the dedication of IFI's staff, the stewardship of anglers and community groups, and the valuable contributions of our research and enforcement partners. Together, we face a challenging task—but one with a significant opportunity. Through successful implementation of this strategy, IFI aims to ensure our fisheries and aquatic ecosystems thrive ecologically, socially and economically—for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Henry O'Leary".

Chairperson

Deputy Chief Executive Officer's Introduction

Inland Fisheries Ireland safeguards one of the State's most valuable natural assets: the network of rivers, streams, lakes and coastal ecosystems that sustain fish, biodiversity and thriving aquatic communities. As the national agency with statutory responsibility for the protection, development and management of these resources, we operate within a robust legislative framework including the Inland Fisheries Act 2010, the Fisheries (Consolidation) Act 1959 and the Water Pollution Acts. Our work is anchored in the Water Framework and Habitats Directives, with alignment to emerging instruments such as the Nature Restoration Law.

Our Statement of Strategy 2026 - 2030 sets a clear and ambitious direction, reflecting our evolution as an agile, outward-looking and evidence-driven environmental agency operating in an era of significant ecological stress. Climate impacts are accelerating, water quality is declining in many catchments, and native fish species are increasingly vulnerable. These challenges demand faster adaptation, stronger advocacy and a more integrated technology enabled approach across our remit.

Our strategy places conservation and protection at the core of our mission, using all statutory powers, evidence-based decision-making, expanded capacity, specialist training, and smart enforcement technologies to deter illegal activity and safeguard habitats. As climate impacts intensify, we will adapt our research and protection models to ensure resilient fisheries, while taking decisive, evidence-led action to halt and reverse declines in at-risk species. We will lead bold, systems-scale restoration efforts, improving water quality, rehabilitating habitats, and delivering high-impact initiatives such as the National Barrier Mitigation Programme to restore ecological function and secure lasting biodiversity gains. We will champion the growth of Ireland's recreational angling sector by promoting participation, enhancing access and infrastructure, and working with stakeholders to ensure angling remains an accessible, sustainable, and culturally vital activity that fosters long-term stewardship of our fisheries.

Education and outreach will remain central to our mission as we expand engagement with schools and the public, empowering young people with the knowledge, skills and values needed to understand the biodiversity crisis and advocate for environmental protection. Through curriculum-aligned learning, field experiences and citizen science, we will build ecological literacy and inspire responsibility for Ireland's aquatic ecosystems. Underpinning all our work is a commitment to robust knowledge and evidence. We will modernise digital and data systems, use technology to enhance enforcement and

conservation actions, monitor real-time environmental change, and ensure transparent, evidence-based decisions. A dedicated research team will drive new insights and methods, ensuring technology and science amplify our impact across all areas of our strategy.

We will deliver our mission through skilled, committed teams supported by strong capability, safety, well-being and leadership, fostering a collaborative culture grounded in our values and trusted by stakeholders. Upholding exemplar public-sector governance, we will ensure high standards of ethics, accountability, risk management and performance, enabled by streamlined digital processes and continuous improvement for informed, transparent and effective decision-making. Recognising the systemic and multi-agency nature of environmental challenges, we will strengthen collaboration with State bodies, local authorities, communities, NGOs and anglers. We will formalise partnerships where appropriate and co-deliver measurable outcomes aligned with national biodiversity, climate and water objectives.

Success will be measured by healthier habitats, improved water quality, recovering fish populations, stronger compliance, broader and more diverse angling participation, increased public confidence, and clear socio-economic benefits from sustainable angling and ecosystem restoration. These commitments will be tracked through robust metrics embedded in IFI's annual planning cycle to ensure transparent and accountable delivery. Climate action will remain integral to our mission, with targeted investment to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency, and the full integration of climate adaptation and resilience across our conservation, enforcement, restoration and angling programmes, recognising that protecting fisheries is inseparable from safeguarding Ireland's climate, water and natural heritage.

With a clear mandate, a focused strategy and a united team, we will protect today's resources and pass on a richer natural environment to the next generation.



Deputy Chief Executive Officer

How our Statement of Strategy was developed

This Statement of Strategy will support, guide, and shape the next five years for IFI.

It was developed during the course of 2025 through a comprehensive consultation and review process. This included a review of the previous 2021 – 2025 Corporate Plan, the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment’s Le Chéile strategies, horizon scanning exercises, a series of strategic planning sessions with staff members, consultation with the Board of Directors and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, the establishment of a staff strategy group, a workshop with the National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF) and a public consultation process.

We appreciate the valuable insights of those involved throughout the process, and we look forward to collaborating with them to implement the plan successfully.

This Statement of Strategy addresses the statutory requirement of a ‘Corporate Plan’ as set out in Section 41 of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010.



Our Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision:

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

Our Mission:

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

Our Values:

- We are committed to the environment and sustainability.
- We work collaboratively and with professionalism.
- We communicate openly and transparently.
- We act with respect, integrity, and accountability.

Our values underpin our decision-making and influence how we behave every day when we come to work. Through these values, we seek to have a positive impact on each other, our stakeholders, the public and our environment. We are committed to ensuring these values are lived and translate into everyday experience.



Our Strategic Framework

As we prepared our new strategic plan, we engaged in meaningful conversations with our staff, reflecting on our achievements while looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges that lie before us.

Through this process, four core themes emerged consistently: our commitment to **conservation**, our unique role in protection through **enforcement**, our dedication to ecosystem **restoration**, and our role as **advocates** for inland fisheries. The following pages outline our efforts in these important areas.

However, we recognise that none of our work in these areas would be possible without the unique skillsets, expertise, experience, and passion of our **people**. They are supported by the strengthening of our **governance** systems, which will

ensure accountability, effective oversight and transparent decision-making.

Additionally, we must elevate the importance of sharing **knowledge** within our organisation and beyond and enhance our capabilities in its collation, analysis and communication accordingly, to better inform our decision-making processes and improve the efficiency of our services.

Finally, we recognise the importance of **partnerships** with our stakeholders and fellow environmental agencies as we embark on our new plan and seek to address systemic, wide-ranging environmental issues.

Together, these important areas set out the strategic framework for our new plan.

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

Our Strategic Enablers are the foundation to everything we do. We have set out commitments to strengthen each enabler.



CONSERVE

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

Context

Our conservation work is underpinned by legislation such as the Inland Fisheries Act 2010, the Water Framework Directive, and the Habitats Directive. New legislation, including the Nature Restoration Law and Article 55 (of Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009), will further shape our work. These laws provide the mandate for our commitment to protecting, monitoring and maintaining fish populations, particularly those species that are at risk. Understanding the natural capital value of our inland fisheries and sea angling resource will be important to this work.

In recent decades, fish habitats have faced increasing threats, leading to significantly declining stocks. In response, we have shifted our strategic approach and focussed on developing new expertise in next-generation conservation practices and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Our work includes research and development, managing angling access, managing invasive species, and delivering initiatives like the Great Western Lakes Management Plan, all aimed at restoring and preserving aquatic ecosystems. We also fund conservation projects nationwide, in a collaborative approach to safeguard our fisheries resource and promote sustainable fisheries for future generations.

Under our new strategy, we will continue our conservation work with salmon and brown trout and expand efforts to more at-risk species. We will also improve our data capabilities to support evidence-based adaptive management practices, and fund targeted conservation projects aligned with our priorities.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

- 1.1** Develop and implement a dynamic research strategy.
- 1.2** Use our innovative research and development capabilities to establish a baseline, assess and monitor the conservation status of Ireland's fish species.
- 1.3** Invest more in conservation efforts for at-risk species, including (but not limited to) salmon, eel and brown trout.

- 1.4 Enhance and modernise conservation data-collection processes to strengthen decision-making, enable evidence-based conservation practices such as adaptive management, and drive more efficient and effective ways of working.
- 1.5 Continue to support strategically aligned conservation projects and monitor and evaluate projects to demonstrate their impacts.
- 1.6 Advise the Minister on conservation matters and the impacts of national and international policies on conservation efforts.
- 1.7 Explore and build our capabilities in innovative restoration solutions.
- 1.8 Deliver on the commitments of the Great Western Lakes Management Plan .

Outcomes

- We will deliver on our statutory remit and commitments under national and EU legislation.
- We can demonstrate successful execution of initiatives that aim to mitigate the decline of at-risk species e.g. salmon, eel, lamprey
- We can measure improvements in fish habitats in line with 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 have established a strong reputation among stakeholders as a conservation leader in Ireland, demonstrated through effective collaboration, shared programmes of work, and collective progress on environmental goals.



ENFORCE

We will focus our enforcement activity on water pollution, habitat destruction, and illegal fishing, using every legislative power we have

Context

We are Ireland's inland fisheries agency with statutory authority for enforcing laws against fish kills, habitat damage, illegal fishing, and discharges that harm water quality and fish populations. This vital role protects ecosystems and biodiversity and also protects public health and deters environmental law breaches nationwide.

Under our previous corporate plan, we completed 460 prosecutions, reflecting our commitment to enforcing regulations that protect aquatic environments. Our new strategy focuses on increasing our capacity, support, training and upskilling for our enforcement remit in the areas of habitat protection and water quality. This will enable us to address emerging environmental challenges more effectively.

By strengthening our enforcement capabilities, increasing our use of technology, and working collaboratively with other enforcement agencies and our partners, we aim to foster a shared responsibility for fisheries protection. Through this, we will encourage responsible environmental practices and respect for natural resources 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:

- 2.1** Fully implement existing legislation to protect fish and freshwater ecosystems through enforcement and prosecution activities.
- 2.2** Advocate for strengthened legislation and penalties to protect fisheries ecosystems.
- 2.3** Upskill our protection officers in best-practice water quality enforcement and habitat protection capabilities, to support our overall environmental enforcement capacity.
- 2.4** Partner with other environmental enforcement agencies, strengthening multi-agency co-operation to enhance biodiversity and habitat outcomes.
- 2.5** Communicate the environmental impact of our enforcement work to the public and our stakeholders.
- 2.6** Invest in our capacity, technology and flexibility to respond to enforcement priorities.

- 2.7 Develop a 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 Great Western Lakes Management Plan.
- 2.8 Grow our capacity to meet the increased pressures arising from noncompliance with environmental legislation, agriculture, housing, energy, transport, water and wastewater infrastructure development.

Outcomes

- Strengthen compliance with environmental laws.
- Increased enforcement activities and build greater capacity, maximising the usage of technology, within the team.
- Supported new legislation with stronger penalties to improve accountability.
- Improved enforcement of water quality standards and protection of habitats.
- Worked successfully with other state agencies, resulting in the establishment of formal joint protocols with State bodies to support coordinated environmental incident responses, leading to higher compliance and reduced illegal activity.
- Aiming to establish joint enforcement powers with other environmental organisations.



RESTORE

We will take the lead on restoring aquatic habitats to support healthy inland fisheries

Context

The Nature Restoration Law (2024), along with the National Biodiversity and Water Action Plans, underscores the urgent need to restore ecosystems and reverse biodiversity loss. IFI is leading technology and data-driven restoration initiatives and nature-based solutions to enhance fish habitats, populations, and their ecosystems—work that will remain a key priority under our new strategy.

We are taking a systemic approach to addressing sustainability challenges and ecosystem degradation, and we are continuing to collaborate with Government departments and environmental agencies on impactful restoration efforts and nature-based solutions. We have an ongoing commitment to driving future-focused change at scale in ecosystem restoration and free flowing rivers, demonstrated through examples such as the National Barrier Mitigation Programme.

We recognise that each area has unique restoration needs that require careful planning, and we will strengthen our specialised capabilities to address these in our new strategy. By fostering collaboration and using innovative solutions, we aim to restore fisheries ecosystems and deliver lasting environmental, social, and economic benefits for Ireland.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

- 3.1** Identify and co-deliver with our partners transformative restoration projects and ongoing maintenance programmes that enhance fish populations and ecosystems at scale, such as Integrated Catchment Management Programmes. Restoration projects will be prioritised by strategic importance, potential benefits, and feasibility.
- 3.2** Implement programmes that support free-flowing rivers, including the National Barrier Mitigation Programme, our flagship restoration programme that we are delivering within the context of the Water Framework Directive.
- 3.3** Continue to develop our innovative capabilities and expertise to become the leader in hydromorphology research, standards and methods in Ireland.
- 3.4** Identify new sources of funding for restoration programmes.
- 3.5** Advise the Minister on habitat restoration matters and the 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 Barrier 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.
- Our initiatives will be delivered in accordance with the highest environmental standards.



ADVOCATE

We will actively speak up for and promote the protection and restoration of inland fisheries and sea angling, using clear facts and evidence to support our message

Context

Since IFI was established, its operating environment has changed significantly. Ireland's inland fisheries resources are under increasing pressure, and new climate and environmental challenges continue to emerge. We are 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 in effect.

Given today's environmental challenges, this new strategic priority recognises that IFI must take an active role in advocating for climate action. IFI will be a strong voice for the protection of water, and habitats and the maintenance and improvement of angling resources to support recreational angling for social and economic benefits for future generations. We also recognise anglers as key partners in our conservation and restoration efforts.

We need to be an active & evidence-based advocate to define the narrative & influence change in environmental, conservation and restoration matters. By fostering a culture of research and science 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 research expertise and data analysis. We will continue leading public education efforts to raise awareness of this work and use opportunities such as the Irish EU Presidency to promote our key priorities.

Initiatives

To support this priority, we will:

- 4.1** Advise government on, and advocate for, conservation, restoration, and evidence-based management of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource to inform better decision and policy making.
- 4.2** Advocate for stronger legislation and penalties to protect fisheries ecosystems.
- 4.3** Communicate regularly with the public and stakeholders about the outcomes and impact of our conservation and restoration work, sharing success stories and innovative initiatives through public channels.

- 4.4 Lead public education initiatives, outreach, and events and encourage citizen science to support stewardship and raise awareness of conservation and restoration needs, while furthering our strategy for high-impact outreach and educational activities.
- 4.5 Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan, mapping all stakeholders and identifying suitable engagement approaches (e.g. events of national and international significance).
- 4.6 Promote inclusive and 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 including habitats and recreational angling.
- We have cultivated effective partnerships and a network of advocates that align with our strategic priorities, demonstrated through jointly delivered projects, formalised collaboration frameworks, shared stewardship initiatives, and measurable improvements achieved through coordinated action.



Our Strategic Enablers



In the development of this plan, we reflected upon the four key enablers that underpin the effective delivery of our plan and our desired outcomes. Based on a solid and continually improving governance framework, our success will be driven by the expertise, skills and passion of our people, the effective use of technology and data, and our collaborative partnerships. They drive our success and shape the work we do every day.

Our plan will rest on strengthening our foundations, meaning these enablers will require their own dedicated initiatives and outcomes to deliver. We have set out our ambition statements for each enabler below, which will guide our actions in our annual planning process.

Our Governance

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

The ongoing implementation of recommendations from the EY Review and establishing **governance** as a critical enabler demonstrates IFI's dedication to strengthening its governance framework, ensuring that it is well-equipped to address current challenges and effectively manage Ireland's aquatic resources for the future.

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, such as our newly revised Code of Conduct, will be maintained to ensure their robustness and to support transparent decision-making and accountability.

Key initiatives:

- We will maintain a robust governance framework with streamlined digital processes that support effective decision-making and risk management in delivering our strategic priorities.

- We will facilitate and support the independent review of IFI, ensuring that IFI's Governance Assurance Framework is reflective of best practice in public administration and is in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Our People

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

We will build a culture of openness, enhanced communication, and collaboration, where our people are motivated and empowered to deliver our vision and mission.

Our high-performing teams will be recognised as experts, supported with the right capacity, training, and resources to work efficiently and to the highest standards. We will ensure we have strong engagement connectivity across our organisation.

We will develop a skilled and resilient workforce with the capabilities needed to deliver our strategic priorities.

Key initiative:

- Develop a People & Culture strategy to support the delivery of the strategic priorities.

Our Knowledge

*Harnessing the power of **Knowledge**, data and information technology*

We will use high-quality data, modern technology, and our collective knowledge to inform our people, strategies, policies, and projects. We will strengthen our data collection, storage, and integration capabilities, ensuring robust governance and clear processes for sharing insights across the organisation.

We will expand the use of emerging technologies—such as remote sensing, drones, AI-enabled analytics, and digital field-capture tools—to enhance the effectiveness of our scientific and operational work. We will also deepen knowledge-sharing and collaboration with national partners to build a stronger, shared evidence base for environmental decision-making.

Our enhanced digital and knowledge capabilities will support our role as a trusted advisor to Government, stakeholders, and the public. By integrating systems, streamlining processes, and maintaining strong cybersecurity, we will deliver more accessible and modern public services.

Key initiatives:

- Develop a research strategy and a knowledge strategy.
- Review our data systems and IT practices to ensure digital tools fully support our strategic priorities.
- Increase the use of emerging technologies and strengthen knowledge collaboration with national partners.

Our Partnerships

Building strong collaborative partnerships

Our work depends on effective partnerships across state agencies, local authorities, national bodies, communities, angling organisations, environmental groups, and international partners. We will actively collaborate and share knowledge with these stakeholders, strengthening joint capacity and aligning efforts around shared environmental and community outcomes. We will establish Memorandums of Understanding and other formal partnership frameworks that support coordinated delivery, enhance transparency, and improve reporting at national and EU levels. Through these partnerships, we will drive innovative environmental and community-led projects, co-designed with anglers, local communities, and environmental organisations, to improve aquatic ecosystems and support sustainable recreational and socio-economic benefits.

Key initiatives: Develop, maintain and monitor our partnerships to ensure they enhance delivery of our strategic priorities and those of our stakeholders.

- Strengthen engagement with angling bodies, local community groups, and environmental NGOs to co-deliver restoration, stewardship, and conservation initiatives.
- Formalise partnership structures (e.g., MoUs) that support consistent collaboration, coordinated reporting, and shared project delivery at local, national, and EU levels.



Implementing the Strategy

This Statement of Strategy sets out IFI's overarching areas of focus for the next five years. While it provides a high-level vision and direction, detailed implementation plans for each initiative and service plans will be developed through our annual business planning process. These plans will clearly define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure accountability and measurable outcomes.

The implementation of this strategy will be monitored and reviewed by the IFI Board and its Executive Leadership Team. Our year-on-year progress against the strategy will be reported and published through our Annual Reports. These are available on our website.

In addition, IFI's performance delivery agreement with our parent Department, DCEE, will continue to underpin our commitment to transparency and delivery.



**Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland**