

LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

Report to Inform Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

Prepared for:
Leitrim County Council



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

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Leitrim County Council (LCC) is in the process of preparing a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for its functional area (the Plan Area) for the years 2025-2030. The aim of the LABAP is to promote biodiversity conservation at local authority level.

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

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

1.2 Background to Biodiversity Action Plans

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

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

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

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



2. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview of SEA

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

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

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

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

2.2 Overview of the SEA Process

The SEA process comprises the following steps:

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

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

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



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

2.3 Legislative Context

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

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

2.4 Overview of the SEA Screening Process

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

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

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

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



Figure 2-1: SEA Screening steps as per the EPAs Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening

2.5 Relevant SEA Guidance

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

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

2.6 Appropriate Assessment and Relationship to SEA Screening

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

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



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

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

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

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



3. LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

3.1 Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan

The overarching aim of the LABAP is to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of biodiversity among the people of the area.

The following Objectives are defined in the LABAP:

- Raise awareness of biodiversity through education and community engagement.
- Protect and restore natural habitats and native species.
- Tackle and raise awareness of Invasive Alien Species (IAS).
- Promote and celebrate sustainable land use practices.
- Track progress through monitoring and evaluation.

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



Table 3-1: LABAP Strategic Objectives, Themes and Actions

Objective	Theme	Action Code	Action
Objective 1: Raise awareness of biodiversity through education and community engagement	Community Engagement	1.1	Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan
		1.2	Establish partnerships with community groups to promote, support and implement local biodiversity initiatives
		1.3	Work with faith communities to identify lands & buildings to implement biodiversity measures in collaboration with local communities.
		1.4	Support local communities with the creation and implementation of Community Biodiversity Action Plans
	Education, Training & Resources	1.5	Share field resources for use by community groups, schools and individuals for biodiversity projects and monitoring programmes
		1.6	Facilitate and support workshops, field trips, public events and public awareness campaigns to foster biodiversity awareness and connection to nature
		1.7	Create a central information hub to provide the public with environmental organisational responsibilities and contact information
		1.8	Celebrate Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week with public events to raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity
		1.9	Deliver climate-themed events and ensure sustainability and climate action are integrated into all events through the development of local authority-wide policy on events
		1.10	Promote and expand the delivery of the Heritage in Schools Programme to Primary schools



Objective	Theme	Action Code	Action
Objective 2: Protect and restore natural habitats and native species	Population of Habitats and Native Species	2.1	Identify wetland habitats of local and national importance using Wetlands Surveys Ireland data for potential conservation and restoration projects
		2.2	Identify, protect and restore areas of native ancient woodlands
		2.3	Support initiatives under the WFD that contribute to the restoration of ecology in water bodies, and the blue dot catchments programme
		2.4	Develop an ecological network map of the county to identify wildlife corridors and develop a plan to increase connectivity across the network and collaborate with neighbouring LA's
		2.5	Investigate feasibility of implementing recommendations from hedgerow appraisal survey where appropriate
		2.6	Identify and map County Biodiversity Areas (CBA) according to Heritage Council Guidance and support initiatives to protect these sites.
		2.7	Undertake County grassland surveys and identify potential grassland sites for conservation and restoration
		2.8	Support the creation of ponds and restoration of wetland habitats on public and private lands
	Biodiversity on public land	2.9	Identify Local Authority land that may require ecological surveys and highlight areas that may be at risk and require protection
		2.10	Implement the AIPP as a Council partner and manage public land in line with AIPP guidelines
		2.11	Investigate opportunities for planting native forestry on public land through the Forestry Programme 2023 - 2027 (e.g. FT3 Forests on Public Lands)
		2.12	Develop an artificial lighting policy to incorporate environmentally friendly lighting practices in rural and urban areas where possible



Objective	Theme	Action Code	Action
		2.13	Explore the potential for the development of a new wetland ecology park off the Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon as a hub for nature-based tourism whilst ensuring that the biodiversity of the wetlands is both maintained and protected.
Objective 3: Tackle and raise awareness of Invasive Alien Species (IAS)	IAS Outreach & Education	3.1	Develop an integrated programme to raise awareness of invasive alien species to help identify, prevent, manage and eradicate invasive species
		3.2	Promote Irish provenance native trees and plants to community groups, landowners and all stakeholders
	Action for IAS	3.3	Survey and map the presence of IAS throughout the county
		3.4	Organise and support the removal of IAS by community volunteers and landowners
		3.5	Work with other stakeholders to map the presence of Japanese Knotweed on public sites and implement management plan to eradicate it
Objective 4: Promote and celebrate sustainable land use practices	Pesticides	4.1	Develop and adopt a pesticide reduction strategy for Leitrim County Council
		4.2	Deliver a public awareness raising campaign about pesticide use and the effects of pesticides on the environment and on human health
	Hedgerows, Trees & Forestry	4.3	Promote Forestry schemes that encourage planting native trees and community ownership of forestry
		4.4	Work with farmers and landowners to promote good practices for hedgerow management
	Agriculture	4.5	Encourage low-intensity farming practices that enhance biodiversity, organic farming and support farmers in protecting high nature value farmland
		4.6	Promote agricultural practices that implement actions to prevent agricultural run off, protect riparian buffer zones and improve water quality
	Peatland	4.7	Promote and support projects and landowners that are restoring peatlands to store carbon and to protect biodiversity



Objective	Theme	Action Code	Action
	Management of Urban Green Spaces	4.8	Support the creation of public and connected green spaces and wildlife corridors in Carrick on Shannon (DZ) and in other urban areas to enhance biodiversity, health and wellbeing.
		4.9	Provide advice on incorporating biodiversity measures and nature based solutions where appropriate in capital projects
		4.10	Promote and celebrate biodiversity friendly practices in residential areas, community spaces and council properties.
Objective 5: Track progress through monitoring and evaluation	Ecological data	5.1	Compile and incorporate ecological data from previous surveys into internal GIS systems and provide access to GIS mapping and data for relevant staff
		5.2	Carry out ecological surveys to ground truth non-designated sites that have been identified as County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)
		5.3	Identify gaps in the surveying and monitoring of species and support surveys and studies to fill knowledge gaps
		5.4	Collaborate with other biodiversity organisations to share and publish data
		5.5	Undertake barn owl survey in Co. Leitrim and raise awareness of barn owls to the public and landowners in areas where they are likely to re-establish
		5.6	Continue wetlands surveys on ecologically important sites that have been identified
		5.7	Encourage and support local communities, schools and citizen scientists to participate in biodiversity monitoring programmes to record ecological data
	Monitoring & Evaluation	5.8	Facilitate the Biodiversity Working Group which is made up of key stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the BAP
		5.9	Conduct biodiversity surveys & audits to monitor progress and adapt management practices as necessary
		5.10	Report biodiversity measures adopted and progress made towards objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan



Objective	Theme	Action Code	Action
Objective 6: Provide funding, resources and support for Biodiversity Actions	Financial resources Capacity building	6.1	Apply for relevant funding for biodiversity projects and actions in the LABAP
		6.2	Support community groups to apply for funding to develop community biodiversity projects
		6.3	Establish partnerships with local organisations and stakeholders to leverage additional resources and expertise
		6.4	Advocate for adequate staff and financial resources within the Local Authority to implement actions from the LABAP
		6.5	Investigate opportunities to offer placements for 3rd level students and graduates
		6.6	Develop and deliver a biodiversity training programme for Leitrim County Council staff & elected members
	Policy	6.7	All relevant policies developed or updated within the council will consider biodiversity at the policy development stage
		6.8	Incorporate biodiversity priorities into the next County Development Plan
		6.9	Promote best practice guidance and policies for biodiversity to relevant LA staff



3.1 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

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

National Level

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

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern & Western Regional Assembly 2020 - 2032.
- Leitrim County Development Plan 2023 - 2029.
- Leitrim County Council Local Authority Climate Action 2024 – 2029.
- Leitrim County Heritage Plan 2020 - 2025.

Given the transboundary linkages between biodiversity in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the LABAPs in Ireland also generally have the potential to support biodiversity protection and enhancement-related plans for Northern Ireland, including:

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

3.1.1 The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

This section of the report documents the SEA Screening undertaken.

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

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

4.1 Stage 1 - SEA Applicability Analysis

Table 4-1: SEA Applicability Analysis

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



SEA Applicability Analysis	
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No.

Table 4-2: Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis

Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis	
Applicability Analysis Criterion	Outcome (Yes or No)
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	Yes
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	Yes
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No
Conclusion	
Having regard to the SEA Screening Process defined in Section 2.4, it has been concluded that Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis is required to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and whether a full SEA of the plan is needed.	



4.1 Stage 2 - SEA Screening Analysis

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

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

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 1: Raise awareness of biodiversity through education and community engagement	1.1	Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan	The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a cross-sectoral framework to create landscapes and environmental conditions where pollinator species can survive and thrive. The action is centred around supporting the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, which will then inform and support focused and target pollinator-friendly biodiversity initiatives in County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.2	Establish partnerships with community groups to promote, support and implement local biodiversity initiatives	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim, which in turn will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.3	Work with faith communities to identify lands & buildings to implement biodiversity measures in collaboration with local communities.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			Faith communities can often own large areas of land such as churchyards and burial grounds, which serves as an opportunity to enhance biodiversity at these sites. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.4	Support local communities with the creation and implementation of Community Biodiversity Action Plans	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will also increase stakeholder engagement, environmental interest and stewardship within the local community. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.5	Share field resources for use by community groups, schools and individuals for biodiversity projects and monitoring programmes	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.6	Facilitate and support workshops, field trips, public events and public awareness campaigns to foster biodiversity awareness and connection to nature	This action will foster increased stakeholder engagement in the Plan area, thus supporting implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim. This action will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.7	Create a central information hub to provide the public with environmental organisational responsibilities and contact information	This action will foster increased stakeholder engagement in the Plan area, thus supporting implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim and, in turn, contributing to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. Providing members of the public with a central information hub will support improved understanding and awareness of biodiversity initiatives in the Plan area. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.8	Celebrate Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week with public events to raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity	This action will foster increased stakeholder engagement in the Plan area, thus supporting implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim. This action will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. Promoting biodiversity initiatives will support improved understanding and awareness of biodiversity initiatives in the Plan area. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	1.9	Deliver climate-themed events and ensure sustainability and climate action are integrated into all events through the development of local authority-wide policy on events	This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and climate in the Plan area through the introduction of a policy on events. This action has the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components, including climate and population and human health. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.10	Promote and expand the delivery of the Heritage in Schools Programme to Primary schools	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will foster interest in younger members of the community and increase biodiversity awareness. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
Objective 2: Protect and restore natural habitats and native species	2.1	Identify wetland habitats of local and national importance using Wetlands Surveys Ireland data for potential conservation and restoration projects	This action proposes the identification and itemisation of important wetland habitats in the Plan Area. This action will support the effective implementation of the BAP, furthermore protection and restoration of wetlands will potentially lead to focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action will also enable informed decision-making at local authority level for potential enhancement or restoration measures. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.2	Identify, protect and restore areas of native ancient woodlands	This action proposes surveying and protection of native ancient woodlands in County Leitrim. The action has the potential to have direct positive effects on Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, indirect positive effects on water and soil quality, and climate. The protection and restoration of native ancient woodlands will enhance natural and cultural heritage in the Plan area. While this action is in support of biodiversity conservation and enhancement within the Plan area, in isolation, it does not have the potential to result in any significant, adverse environmental effects. All restoration projects will be subject to appropriate project-level environmental assessment. At Plan-level the general goal of this action is achieve biodiversity protection and enhancement.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.3	Support initiatives under the WFD that contribute to the restoration of ecology in water bodies, and the blue dot catchments programme	The Water Framework Directive is a framework for ensuring the good qualitative and quantitative health of all water bodies. Blue Dot Catchments Programme is a collaborative programme focused on directing resources towards the protection and restoration of sensitive, high-status objective water bodies. This action will support these frameworks to maintain, and where required, restore water bodies to 'Good Status' (both chemically and ecologically). The action, therefore, has the potential to generate direct positive effects on biodiversity, the water environment, and population and human health, and by way of interaction, indirect positive effects on the soils environment. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.4	Develop an ecological network map of the county to identify wildlife corridors and develop a plan to increase connectivity across the network and collaborate with neighbouring LA's	The creation of an ecology network map for County Leitrim will define and highlight the extents of the ecological assets within County Leitrim. The action will improve local authority decision-making through augmented knowledge of the baseline in the Plan Area, and can underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan. This can then potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity initiatives and improvements. Being reviewed-based, this action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.5	Investigate feasibility of implementing recommendations from hedgerow appraisal survey where appropriate	The County Council has commissioned a hedgerow survey to understand the unique significance that these habitats offer, and monitor trends and changes within them. Hedgerows hold features of archaeological, geological, social and natural heritage, and are important wildlife corridors and habitats, serving as refuges for biodiversity.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			The findings and recommendations of any hedgerow appraisals undertaken will underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.6	Identify and map County Biodiversity Areas (CBA) according to Heritage Council Guidance and support initiatives to protect these sites.	This action proposes the identification and mapping of County Biodiversity Areas within County Leitrim, and the informed protection of said sites. This action will foster improved decision making and will therefore underpin and support the effective implementation of the BAP. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.7	Undertake County grassland surveys and identify potential grassland sites for conservation and restoration	This action proposes the carrying out of grassland surveys in the Plan area. The itemisation of County grasslands will support a renewed understanding of such sites and their potential for biodiversity conservation in County Leitrim. This action will foster improved decision making by the local authority and will underpin effective implementation of the Plan, thus contributing to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.8	Support the creation of ponds and restoration of wetland habitats on public and private lands	This action will contribute to biodiversity enhancement via ponds and the restoration of wetland habitats, and will generate positive effects for population and human health, air and climate, and the water and soils environments. The action does not hold potential for generating any negative environmental effects. All restoration projects will be subject to appropriate project-level environmental assessment. At Plan-level the general goal of this action is achieve biodiversity protection and enhancement.
	2.9	Identify Local Authority land that may require ecological surveys and highlight areas that may be at risk and require protection	This action proposes the carrying out of surveying of Local Authority land in the Plan area. Developing an understanding of council-owned land holdings in County Leitrim, risk associated with such and the potential for ecological protection of such will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to improved decision making and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.10	Implement the AIPP as a Council partner and manage public land in line with AIPP guidelines	The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a cross-sectoral framework to create landscapes and environmental conditions where pollinator species can survive and thrive. The action is centred around fostering a collaborative approach to support the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, which will then inform and support focused and target pollinator-friendly biodiversity initiatives in County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.11	Investigate opportunities for planting native forestry on public land through the Forestry Programme 2023 - 2027 (e.g. FT3 Forests on Public Lands)	The Forestry Programme 2023-2027 aims to provide lasting benefits for several key areas, including biodiversity and climate change. This action supports the planting of native trees under the Forestry Programme 2023-2027, and thus will contribute to biodiversity enhancement and protection in the Plan area. The action itself is investigative/review based and will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	2.12	Develop an artificial lighting policy to incorporate environmentally friendly lighting practices in rural and urban areas where possible	Reducing artificial light in ecologically sensitive areas is an effective way of protecting light-sensitive species such as bats and small mammals. This action supports the preparation of a County Policy which will guide the inclusion of environmentally sustainable lighting throughout County Leitrim, as well as the reduction of light pollution and its associated impacts on biodiversity. The action has the potential to protect light-sensitive species and enhance ecological connectivity. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment. The creation of this policy will happen under the land use plan development process which will be subject to its own SEA and AA processes.
	2.13	Explore the potential for the development of a new wetland ecology park off the Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon as a hub for nature-based tourism whilst ensuring that the biodiversity of the wetlands is both maintained and protected.	It is proposed to explore the development of a wetland ecology park in County Leitrim. This action is exploratory in nature. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment. Such a development will be subject to appropriate project-level environmental assessment under the land use planning process.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 3: Tackle and raise awareness of Invasive Alien Species (IAS)	3.1	Develop an integrated programme to raise awareness of invasive alien species to help identify, prevent, manage and eradicate invasive species	This action supports the development of an Invasive Alien Species informational programme in County Leitrim. The implementation of an Invasive Alien Species informational programme will increase awareness of invasive species in the Plan area, and thus will ensure appropriate management of invasive species and protection of native or vulnerable species in County Leitrim. This action has the potential to result in positive effects on Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, soil and water quality. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	3.2	Promote Irish provenance native trees and plants to community groups, landowners and all stakeholders	This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Plan area through the promotion of native tree planting, with the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	3.3	Survey and map the presence of IAS throughout the county	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline surveying in the Plan area. Developing an understanding and an inventory of invasive alien species in County Leitrim will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially contribute to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	3.4	Organise and support the removal of IAS by community volunteers and landowners	This action proposes the carrying out of invasive species management in the Plan area. Developing an understanding and the removal of invasive alien species in County Leitrim will increase biodiversity awareness and environmental stewardship in the community, thus contributing to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	3.5	Work with other stakeholders to map the presence of Japanese Knotweed on public sites and implement management plan to eradicate it	This action pertains to the improvement of invasive species management, particularly of Japanese Knotweed (<i>Fallopia japonica</i>). Japanese Knotweed poses great threat to native flora due to its ability to spread rapidly and outcompete native flora. The action has the potential to result in positive effects on local flora and fauna through the prevention of invasive species spread. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
Objective 4: Promote and celebrate sustainable land use practices	4.1	Develop and adopt a pesticide reduction strategy for Leitrim County Council	The action has the potential to result in direct positive effects for biodiversity and population and human health, and indirect positive effects for the water and soils environments, without affecting any environmental receptor in a negative fashion. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	4.2	Deliver a public awareness raising campaign about pesticide use and the effects of pesticides on the environment and on human health	The action pertains to an active effort to increase awareness of pesticides and their effects in the Plan area. The action has the potential to result in direct positive effects for biodiversity and population and human health, and indirect positive effects for the water and soils environments, without affecting any environmental receptor in a negative fashion. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.3	Promote Forestry schemes that encourage planting native trees and community ownership of forestry	This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Plan area through the promotion of native tree planting, with the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	4.4	Work with farmers and landowners to promote good practices for hedgerow management	This action is centred around increasing knowledge of good practice hedgerow management. The action is awareness-oriented and has the potential to underpin and support biodiversity improvements within County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	4.5	Encourage low-intensity farming practices that enhance biodiversity, organic farming and support farmers in protecting high nature value farmland	This action is centred around acknowledging and featuring the significance of farmlands for supporting biodiversity. The action is awareness-oriented and has the potential to improve biodiversity-related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	4.6	Promote agricultural practices that implement actions to prevent agricultural run off, protect riparian buffer zones and improve water quality	This action is centred around acknowledging the role of agricultural practices for supporting biodiversity. A riparian buffer zone is an area adjacent to a water body where no chemical and organic fertilisers, cultivation and spraying can be carried out. Correctly located riparian buffer zones can minimise the impact of diffuse losses by intercepting the nutrients, sediment and pesticides and break the pathway of agricultural run off. This action has the potential to underpin and support biodiversity improvements within County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.7	Promote and support projects and landowners that are restoring peatlands to store carbon and to protect biodiversity	This action supports the promotion and conservation of peatlands via collaboration with organisations and landowners. This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Leitrim, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general, as well as positive impacts on environmental components such as climate and air. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment. It is engagement based and at Plan-level. The general goal of this action is to achieve biodiversity protection and enhancement. Any peatland restoration project will be subject to appropriate project-level environmental assessment.
	4.8	Support the creation of public and connected green spaces and wildlife corridors in Carrick on Shannon (DZ) and in other urban areas to enhance biodiversity, health and wellbeing.	This action supports the development of publicly accessible green spaces and wildlife corridors in the Carrick on Shannon Decarbonisation Zone. Green spaces and wildlife corridors connect isolated habitats and provide pathways between said habitats for pollinators. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment. The development of such green infrastructure will be subject to appropriate project-level assessment. At Plan-level the goal of this action is promote biodiversity and associated co-benefits.
	4.9	Provide advice on incorporating biodiversity measures and nature based solutions where appropriate in capital projects	Nature Based Solutions (NBS) involve assimilating nature into addressing societal issues to support human and biodiversity wellbeing. The integration of NBS into local authority projects will underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan Area. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			The development of any NBS infrastructure will be undertaken under the land use planning framework and will require appropriate planning consent.
	4.10	Promote and celebrate biodiversity friendly practices in residential areas, community spaces and council properties.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan at local level in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
Objective 5: Track progress through monitoring and evaluation	5.1	Compile and incorporate ecological data from previous surveys into internal GIS systems and provide access to GIS mapping and data for relevant staff	The action pertains to process improvement for ecological management, which includes revised GIS mapping strategy. The action has the potential to aid informed decision making, and improve understanding and awareness of biodiversity in the Plan area among local authority staff. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.2	Carry out ecological surveys to ground truth non-designated sites that have been identified as County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)	The action proposes the carrying out of ecological surveys of County Biodiversity Areas, which will underpin and support the effective implementation of the BAP and potentially lead to focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	5.3	Identify gaps in the surveying and monitoring of species and support surveys and studies to fill knowledge gaps	The action proposes the carrying out of ecological surveys which will underpin and support the effective implementation of the BAP and potentially lead to focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. Identifying knowledge gaps, as proposed under this action, will increase understanding and scientifically-informed knowledge of biodiversity in County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.4	Collaborate with other biodiversity organisations to share and publish data	The action pertains to process improvement for data gathering and management. The action has the potential to improve collaboration between organisations, and to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity in the Plan area. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.5	Undertake barn owl survey in Co. Leitrim and raise awareness of barn owls to the public and landowners in areas where they are likely to re-establish	The action proposes the carrying out of ecological surveys, particularly barn owl surveys, which will support the effective implementation of the BAP. The barn owl (<i>Tyto alba</i>) is protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Barn owls are important predators of rodents and other small mammals and play a key role in ecosystem function. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.6	Continue wetlands surveys on ecologically important sites that have been identified	The action is centred around undertaking wetlands surveys on sites of ecological importance. The action has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, including sensitive habitats and priority species. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	5.7	Encourage and support local communities, schools and citizen scientists to participate in biodiversity monitoring programmes to record ecological data	This action has the potential to foster biodiversity protection and enhancement through engagement with local communities and school projects, leading to positive effects for both biodiversity and population and human health. Collaboration with schools will equip students and teachers with the knowledge and skills for environmental sustainability. Citizen science initiatives enable data collection by members of the public to contribute to research and add to the national dataset on Ireland's biodiversity and biological data. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.8	Facilitate the Biodiversity Working Group which is made up of key stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the BAP	This action supports the development of a Biodiversity Working Group for key stakeholders, providing a platform for information sharing and coordination. It will strengthen collaboration in the implementation and monitoring of the BAP, as well as the protection and management of sensitive sites. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.9	Conduct biodiversity surveys & audits to monitor progress and adapt management practices as necessary	This action proposes the carrying out of ecological surveys of County Biodiversity Areas, which will underpin and support the effective implementation of the BAP and potentially lead to focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	5.10	Report biodiversity measures adopted and progress made towards objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan	This action will ensure alignment with and support of the National Biodiversity Action Plan, thus supporting biodiversity objectives in County Leitrim. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 6: Provide funding, resources and support for Biodiversity Actions	6.1	Apply for relevant funding for biodiversity projects and actions in the LABAP	This action pertains to funding of biodiversity-related initiatives. The action will foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	6.2	Support community groups to apply for funding to develop community biodiversity projects	This action pertains to funding of biodiversity-related initiatives. The action will foster increased environmental stewardship in the community and will support a collaborative approach to implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans in County Leitrim. The action will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	6.3	Establish partnerships with local organisations and stakeholders to leverage additional resources and expertise	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to exchanging knowledge and skills in County Leitrim, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	6.4	Advocate for adequate staff and financial resources within the Local Authority to implement actions from the LABAP	The action will enable the implementation of the BAP in County Leitrim, which in turn will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	6.5	Investigate opportunities to offer placements for 3rd level students and graduates	This action will increase biodiversity awareness and expertise within the community through educational opportunities in County Leitrim, which in turn will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	6.6	Develop and deliver a biodiversity training programme for Leitrim County Council staff & elected members	This action will increase biodiversity awareness and expertise within the local authority, and will aid integrate biodiversity improvements across all facets of the local authority. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	6.7	All relevant policies developed or updated within the council will consider biodiversity at the policy development stage	The action will enable the implementation of the BAP in County Leitrim, which in turn will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	6.8	Incorporate biodiversity priorities into the next County Development Plan	This action supports the consideration and inclusion of biodiversity priorities in the next Leitrim County County Development Plan. Integration of biodiversity initiatives and actions in higher-order land use plans such as the CDP will ensure continued alignment with the operating National Biodiversity Action Plan. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.



Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	6.9	Promote best practice guidance and policies for biodiversity to relevant LA staff	This action will increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity among local authority staff, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not introduce any source of negative impact that can lead to adverse effects on the receiving environment.

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

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



Potential Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:	
	<p>Each Local Action Plan is developed by a Working Group that includes representatives from relevant stakeholders and is led by heritage professionals within the local authority. The LABAP fits into this tier of plans. The LABAP supports the implementation of biodiversity related measures defined in inter-related plans, including the County Development Plan.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	<p>The LABAP supports and promotes the integration of biodiversity protection and enhancement measures into development and activities occurring in the plan area and supports ecological sustainability. The LABAP does not, however, stipulate specific development planning requirements and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.</p>
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	<p>Biodiversity in the plan area faces a number of known threats and pressures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development (residential, commercial, infrastructural and agricultural), • Agricultural activity and expansion, • The spread of invasive species, • Pollution (e.g., air, noise, water, light pollution), • Climate change, • Recreational activity, • Land abandonment, • Urban wastewater, • Changes in the hydrological environment. <p>These threats and pressures may cause a range of negative impacts on biodiversity, including habitat loss, reduction and fragmentation; disturbance to key species; reduction in species density, impacts on designated sites and locally important non-designated sites present or connected to the plan area, or changes to indicators of conservation value (i.e. water quality, air quality, habitat quality).</p> <p>The LABAP defines a variety of actions to address these threats and pressures.</p>



Potential Significant Effects

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

The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g., plans linked to waste-management or water protection)

The LABAP is a non-statutory land use plan. It does, however, support the achievement aims of EU nature-related legislation at a local level, including the following:

- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030,
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (the 'Nature Restoration Law'),
- Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ('the Birds Directive'),
- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'),
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended,
- Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ('the Water Framework Directive'),
- European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722/2003), as amended ,
- Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy ('the Marine Strategy Framework Directive'),
- European Communities (Marine Strategy Framework) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 249/2011), as amended,
- Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks ('the Floods Directive'),
- European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 122/2010), as amended,
- Directive 2006/113/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the quality required of shellfish waters ('the Shellfish Waters Directive'),
- European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 268/2006), as amended.



Table 4-5: Criteria for Determining Potential for Significant Effect – Characteristics of the Effects

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



Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive effects on landscape and visual amenity - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage that contributes to scenic value and visual amenity. <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. They have been carefully reviewed and it has been concluded that these actions do not have the potential to have unintended negative effects on the receiving environment.</p> <p>The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. There is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.</p>
The cumulative nature of the effects	<p>The LABAP is in harmony and consistent with inter-related plans, including land use plans relevant to the plan area, higher order heritage related plans, the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, the national Climate Action Plan and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The range of positive effects that may be realised by the implementation of the LABCAP have the potential to interact and combine with positive effects associated with biodiversity measures defined in these inter-related plans to create larger, more significant positive effects.</p> <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to interact and combine with negative effects associated with measures defined in these inter-related plans or projects to create larger, more significant negative effects.</p>
The transboundary nature of the effects	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in or connected to the plan area. These effects will be relatively localised however given that the LABCAP is local action plan. These effects have the potential to be transmitted to areas surrounding and outside the local authority functional area via environmental pathways. It is unlikely most of these effects will be transmitted Northern Ireland or any other country outside of Ireland however given the distance from the local authority functional area to these other countries and the lack of direct environmental pathways from the functional area to these countries. Actions in the LAPAB that may benefit migratory birds have some degree of potential to create positive effects beyond the national boundary of Ireland, however.</p>



Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
	The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the ability to be transmitted beyond the national boundary of Ireland.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents)	The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to create risks to human health or the environment.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in the plan area or connected to the plan area via environmental pathways, including elements that may up the receiving biodiversity environment such as habitats, key species, designated sites and non-designated locally important sites.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects that contribute to enhanced biodiversity and natural heritage; enhanced water, soil or air quality in the plan area, and more sustainable, ecologically diverse land use.</p> <p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that may affect special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (including built or archaeological heritage), or contribute to the exceedance of environmental quality standards, in the plan area.</p> <p>The LABAP does not support or promote intensive land use or development projects that may create negative environmental effects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive land-use 	
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	<p>There are a variety of sites designated for their ecological value (e.g., Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, proposed Natural Heritage Areas) present in and connected to the plan area. The actions in the LABAP have been carefully designed to support the protection and enhancement of these designated sites.</p> <p>There are sites in the plan area that are designated for their landscape and visual amenity value. The implementation of the LABAP has the potential to have positive effects on landscape and visual amenity generally and such designated sites - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage settings that contributes to landscape character, scenic value and visual amenity.</p>

Table 4-6: Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

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

1. CONCLUSIONS

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

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

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

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



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