

Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan
2022- 2030
Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Fingal County Council (FCC) has prepared a *Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 – 2030* (the ‘Draft Plan’ hereafter).

Brady Shipman Martin was appointed by FCC to undertake a screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment (AA). The purpose of the screening exercise is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the Draft Plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on European sites taking into account their conservation objectives.

This document constitutes the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (“AA screening report”) prepared for this purpose.

1.2 Expertise and Qualifications

The work was carried out by Ecologist Matthew Hague BSc MSc Adv. Dip. Plan. & Env. Law CEnv MCIEEM. Matthew is an Associate with Brady Shipman Martin and is a highly experienced and qualified ecologist, with a master’s degree in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management. He has 20 years of experience in ecological and environmental consultancy, across a wide range of sectors. He has prepared numerous reports for AA Screening as well as Natura Impact Statements, for projects of all scales, from small residential developments to nationally important infrastructure projects, as well as Local Area Plans.

Matthew is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). Matthew has also completed an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law, at King’s Inns and is a member of the Irish Environmental Law Association (IELA).

1.3 Legal requirement for Appropriate Assessment

European sites make up a network of sites designated for nature conservation under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the “Habitats Directive”) and 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”). The requirements for Appropriate Assessment are set out under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)¹ (the “Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations”) and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) (the “Planning Acts”).

European sites are also known as Natura 2000 Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)). As defined in section 177R of the Planning Acts “European site” means:

- (a) a candidate site of Community importance,
- (b) a site of Community importance,
- (ba) a candidate special area of conservation,
- (c) a special area of conservation,
- (d) a candidate special protection area and
- (e) a special protection area.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:

¹ SI No. 477 of 2011

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

The first test is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. Section 177U of the Planning Acts and Regulation 42 of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations require that screening for appropriate assessment must be carried out:

- To assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site;

An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

The Draft Plan will be a key document in guiding the work of everyone involved in the conservation of the natural environment in County Fingal for the next eight years. The primary purpose of the FBAP is to focus the efforts and resources of FCC and other nature conservation groups to respond to the escalating ecological crisis and climate emergency.

Although the Draft Plan will provide a framework for biodiversity action with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity in Fingal intended is not required for the management of any European Site and this AA Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Planning Acts and the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations.

1.4 Guidance and information sources

This report takes the following guidance documents into account:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects in Relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, September 2021);
- *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Guidance issued by the European Commission (21st November 2018);
- *Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management Office of the Planning Regulator*, March 2021).

Information was collated from the organisations and websites listed below:

- Data on European sites and rare and protected plant and animal species contained in the following databases:
 - The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (www.NPWS.ie);
 - The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC) (www.biodiversityireland.ie);

- BirdWatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie);
- Bat Conservation Ireland (www.batconservationireland.org).
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (<http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>);
- Recent and historical OSi mapping and aerial photography, including www.geohive.ie;
- Information on local watercourses from www.catchments.ie;
- Information on water quality in the area (www.epa.ie);
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area (www.gsi.ie);
- Information on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (Article 17 report) (NPWS, August 2019);
- Third National Biodiversity Plan 2017 – 2021 (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2017);
- Fingal Development Plan 2017 – 2022, including the accompanying Appropriate Assessment documentation (Natura Impact Report);
- Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023 – 2029, including the accompanying Natura Impact Report.

The report has regard to the following legislative instruments:

- Planning Acts;
- Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations.

The report takes full account of the details of the Draft Plan and a detailed examination of all relevant elements was undertaken. The *Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report* (Brady Shipman Martin, 2022) was also reviewed in the preparation of this report.

2 Screening for Appropriate Assessment - Methodology

2.1 Background

The first part of the Appropriate Assessment process is the screening phase. Screening identifies the likely effects of the Draft Plan on European sites that could arise, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and considers whether these impacts are likely to have a significant effect on the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

In accordance with section 177U of the Planning Acts, screening for appropriate assessment must be carried out:

- To assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site;
- An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Screening must be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation and it is in this context that this AA Screening Report is prepared.

Following screening therefore, if there is a possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site, this will generate the need for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. This means that if the conclusions at the end of the screening exercise are that significant effects on any European sites, as a result of the Draft Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely,

uncertain or unknown, then an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out. This is in accordance with established precedent and case law.

2.2 Potential zone of influence

For the risk of a significant effect to occur there must be a 'source', such as a construction site; a 'receptor', such as a designated site for nature conservation; and a pathway between the source and the receptor, such as a watercourse that links the construction site to the designated site. A construction site or completed development may also create a barrier to movement, for example by preventing the migration of fauna along a river corridor, or by obstructing the migration of birds.

Although there may be a risk of an impact it may not necessarily occur, and if it does occur, it may not be significant.

Identification of a potential effect means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the potential effect and the characteristics of the receptor.

There are no set recommended distances for projects to consider European sites as being relevant for assessment. Rather, for a project NPWS (2010) recommends that '*Any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the plan or project*' should be appraised. For projects '*the distance should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects*'.

In the case of plans, such as the *Draft Fingal Biodiversity Plan 2022 – 2030*, the guidance states that '*A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans, and derives from UK guidance (Scott Wilson et al. 2006)*²'.

In addition, the guidance states that '*Natura 2000 sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. In the case of sites with water dependent habitats or species, and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment.*'

Therefore, in some instances where there are hydrological connections a whole river catchment or a groundwater aquifer may need to be included. Similarly where bird flight paths are involved the impact may be on an SPA more than 15 km away. Taking the guidance into account, as a starting point a search was carried out for all European sites within 15km of the site at Kellystown. This search was then extended in order to ensure that all European sites with any potential links to the Draft Plan area (i.e. those within the Zone of Influence) were accounted for in the study.

Throughout the preparation of the Draft Plan the strategy and draft actions were reviewed in the context of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, in order to ensure that no elements of the Draft Plan would have a significant impact on any European site.

2.3 Description of the receiving environment

2.3.1 Fingal County

At the time of the 2016 census, Fingal was the third most populous local authority in Ireland (after Dublin City and Cork County), with a total of 296,020 people. Between 2011 and 2016 the population in Fingal increased by 7.4%

² Scott Wilson, Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants, Treweek Environmental Consultants and Land Use Consultants. 2006. Appropriate Assessment of plans.

(22,029 persons). This was considerably higher than the national average growth rate of 3.8% for the same period. The population of Fingal is projected to increase to between 327,000 and 333,000 up to 2026.

Fingal has a rich archaeological and architectural heritage ranging from historic farmhouses and buildings, cottages and Martello towers to demesne houses and their designated landscapes. There are approx. 1,070 known archaeological sites and monuments in Fingal. The wealth of archaeological sites ranges from cairns and passage graves to medieval churches and castles. The towns of Swords, Balrothery and Lusk are of particular archaeological significance with very important medieval structures surviving intact above ground and the potential of archaeological finds below ground. These towns have zones of archaeological potential delineated by the National Monuments Section of the DEHLG around their cores to protect their significant archaeological heritage. There are six national monuments in Fingal: Baldongan Church and Tower, Balrothery Church Tower, Dunsoghly Castle, St Mary's Church / Abbey in Howth, Lusk Round Tower and Swords Castle.

Fingal also has a diverse building stock, including protected structures and other buildings and structures of architectural heritage merit. This includes lighthouses; the 19th century railway stations; the Martello towers; holy wells; milestones; water-pumps and individual thatched buildings. There are 470 no. structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures and 32 no. Architectural Conservation Areas.

Agricultural land cover makes up the majority of the administrative area, with urban areas along the coast and along the northern fringe of Dublin City to the south. Rural Fingal's rich agricultural land is home to well-developed agriculture industries and centres of local food production. Agricultural activity in Fingal includes tillage of cereals and other crops, pasture and dairy. Quarrying and landfill activities are also present.

The landscape of Fingal is rich and varied, ranging from tranquil villages in rolling country landscape, picturesque seaside villages and rugged coastline to vibrant urban developments and historic towns. Fingal has been changing quite rapidly as a result of high levels of development to meet a growing population. The Landscape Character Assessment for the administrative area has classified seven landscape character areas: coastal area, estuary area, river valleys / canals area, airport and Swords area, high lying agricultural area, low lying agricultural area, and rolling hills with tree belts area. There are also a number of protected views and prospects in the administrative area, many of which take in views of high nature value / protected conservation areas.

FCC manages approximately 2,000ha of public open space and many public parks in the county have significant stands of woodland framing important and often iconic landscapes. Tree canopy cover across Fingal, which has predominantly rural land cover (74%) is estimated at 6.5%. There are 70,000 Council owned / managed trees in Fingal. Approximately 20% of the publicly owned open space within the county i.e. 400ha of land is occupied by woodland.

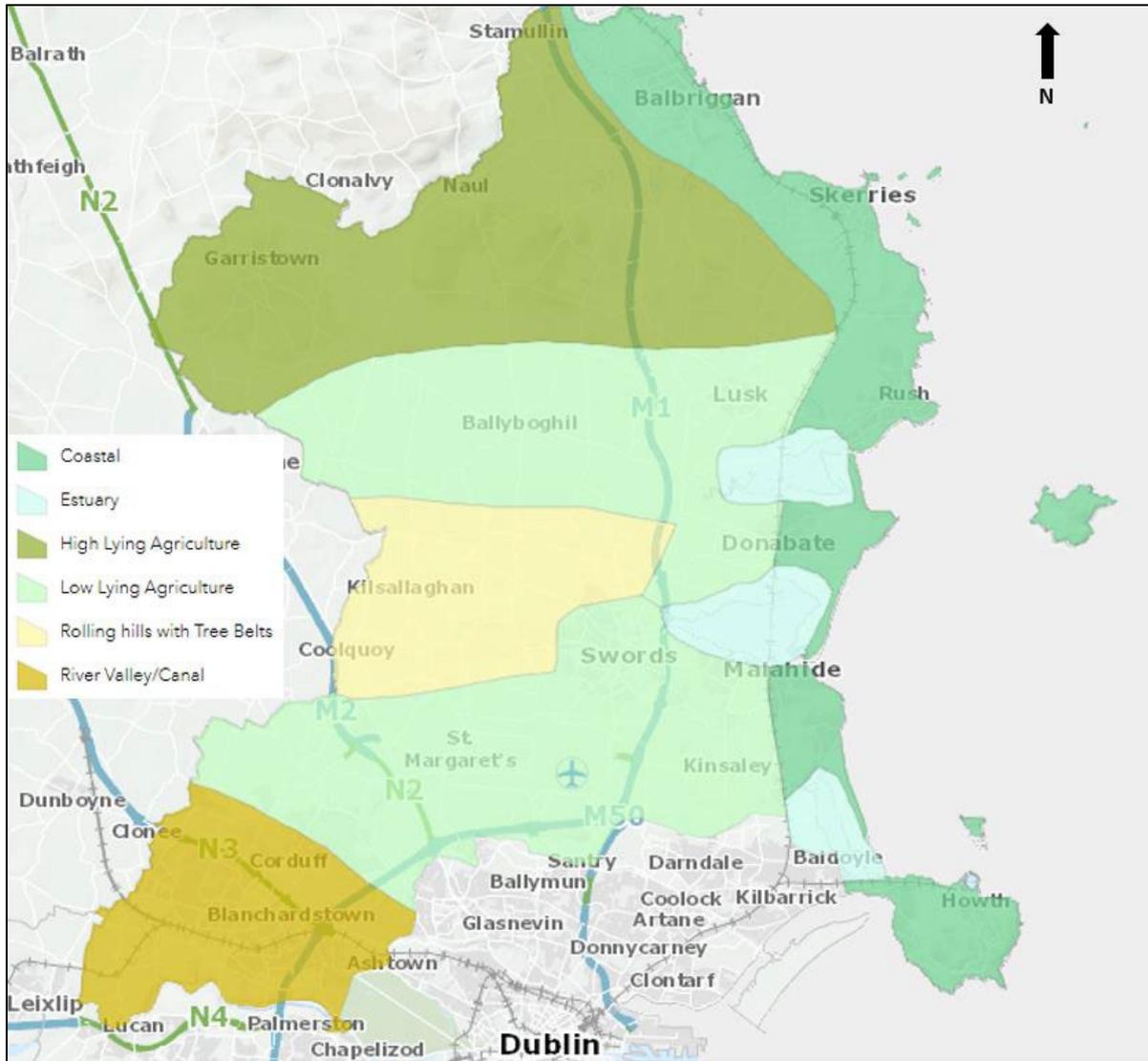


Figure 1: Landscape character areas in the Draft Plan area

The soil cover within Fingal is characterised by fine loamy drifts with limestones and siliceous stones. Clayey soils occur towards the north of Fingal. Urban / made ground is interspersed throughout the county, particularly along the coast and in the south of the county, reflecting settlement patterns. The coastal areas are by their nature characterised by the presence of rock outcroppings, beaches, sand dunes and tidal / marshy areas. Soils in the river valleys are comprised of riverine alluviums with marine alluviums deposited near the coast.

Fingal is traversed by a number of rivers and their tributaries including the River Liffey, River Tolka, River Ward, Broadmeadow River, Delvin River, Mayne River and Sluice River which are important fisheries and wildlife resources as well as being important for the ongoing provision of water services and for the management of flood risk. Other important river corridors include the River Matt, River Corduff, River Ballyboghil and River Santry. Fingal has no natural lakes. The status of the river waterbodies in the Plan area ranges from 'good' to 'poor' during the 2013-2018 monitoring period.

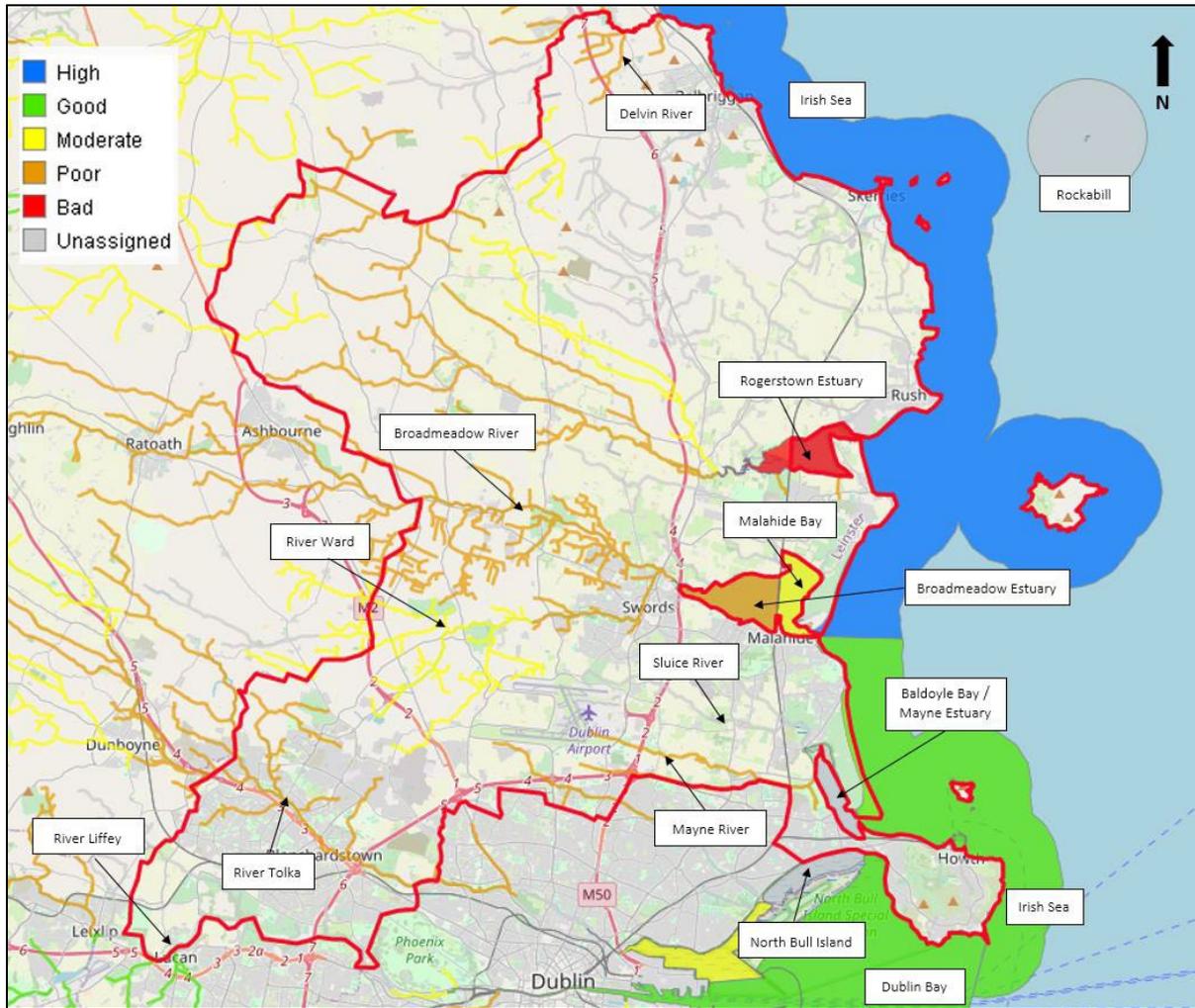


Figure 2: WFD waterbody status in the Draft Plan area

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of the transitional waterbodies in Fingal ranges from ‘bad’ to ‘poor’ during the 2013-2018 monitoring period, with Baldoye Bay / Malahide Estuary transitional waterbody and North Bull Island transitional waterbody both unassigned during the same period. The transitional waterbodies in Fingal are:

- Rogerstown Estuary (Bad and ‘at risk of not achieving good status’);
- Broadmeadow Estuary (Poor and ‘at risk of not achieving good status’);
- Baldoye Bay / Malahide Estuary (Unassigned and under review);
- North Bull Island (Unassigned and under review);

The WFD status of the coastal waterbodies in Fingal ranges from ‘high’ to ‘moderate’ during the 2013-2018 monitoring period, and therefore are listed as ‘Not at Risk’ by the EPA. The coastal waterbodies in Fingal are:

- North-western Irish Sea (High);
- Rockabill (Unassigned and under review);
- Malahide Bay (Moderate and ‘at risk of not achieving good status’);
- Irish Sea (Good);
- Dublin Bay (Good);

There are ten designated bathing waters along the Fingal coastline. The most recent report on bathing water quality 'Bathing Water Quality in Ireland - A Report for the Year 2020' sets out the status of Irish Seawater and Freshwater Bathing areas. The 2020 Annual Water Quality monitoring period results are:

- Balbriggan, Front Strand Beach (Poor);
- Skerries, South Beach (Good);
- Loughshinny Beach (Sufficient);
- Rush, North Beach (Good);
- Rush, South Beach (Excellent);
- Portrane, the Brook Beach (Good);
- Donabate, Balcarrick Beach (Excellent);
- Portmarnock, Velvet Strand Beach (Excellent);
- Sutton, Burrow Beach (Excellent);
- Claremont Beach, Howth (Sufficient);

Fingal is susceptible to fluvial, pluvial, tidal / coastal and groundwater flooding.

According to the *National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017 – 2021)*, just over 15% of taxa (species, subspecies, varieties and forms) are under threat of extinction in Ireland. The most recent assessment of the habitats and species protected under the Habitats and Birds Directive (NPWS, 2019a; 2019b & 2019c) produced the following findings:

- 85% of protected habitats are in unfavourable (i.e. inadequate or bad) status, with just 15% in favourable status;
- The overall status of protected habitats has remained largely unchanged from the previous assessments (in 2007 and 2013), with 46% of protected habitats in ongoing decline and just 2% improving;
- 30% of protected species (other than vagrants) are in unfavourable status; and
- 15% of protected species are exhibiting declining population trends in Ireland.

Key pressures and threats to protected habitats and species in Ireland include (but are not limited to) agriculture (particularly overgrazing, undergrazing, land abandonment and water pollution), invasive alien species, built development, resource extraction, forestry and direct extraction / cultivation of biological living resources (ibid.). In relation to biodiversity in Ireland more generally, the main threats and pressures are from agriculture, forestry, fisheries, natural system modifications (including drainage), resource extraction (including mining, quarrying and peat harvesting), climate change, pollution and invasive alien species.

In addition to the aforementioned, human disturbance is key threat in Fingal specifically, where a large human population interacts with a number of internationally and nationally important sites for wildlife, including wintering birds. The estuaries and islands, where thousands of birds winter and breed, are popular recreational amenities. The presence of humans and dogs can result in vigilance behaviour and / or flushing of birds, resulting in increased energetic costs, reduced time foraging and / or physiological effects related to chronic stress.

2.3.2 European sites

There are 13 European sites within the administrative boundary of Fingal County Council:

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):**
 - Rogerstown Estuary SAC (site codes 000208);

- Malahide Estuary SAC (site code 000205);
- Baldoyle Bay SAC (site code 000199);
- Howth Head SAC (site code 000202);
- Lambay Island SAC (site code 000204);
- Ireland's Eye SAC (site code 002193);
- **Special Protection Areas (SPA):**
 - Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site codes 004015);
 - Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary (Malahide Estuary) SPA (site code 004025);
 - Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016);
 - Howth Head Coast SPA (site code 004113);
 - Lambay Island SPA (site code 004069);
 - Ireland's Eye SPA (site code 004117);
 - Skerries Islands SPA(site code 004122);
 - Rockabill SPA(site code 004006);

There are further European sites outside of the administrative area of Fingal County Council, potentially within the zone of influence of the Draft Plan:

- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (site code 003000);
- North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206);
- Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (site code 001398);
- South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210);
- Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (site code 001957);
- River Boyne and Blackwater SAC (site code 002299);
- Glenasmole Valley SAC (site code 001209);
- Wicklow Mountains SAC (site code 002122);
- Codling Fault Zone SAC (site code 001957);
- North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006);
- River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (site code 004024);
- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024);
- Dalkey Islands SPA (site code 004172);
- Boyne Estuary SPA (site code 004080);
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232);
- Wicklow Mountains SPA (site code 004040);

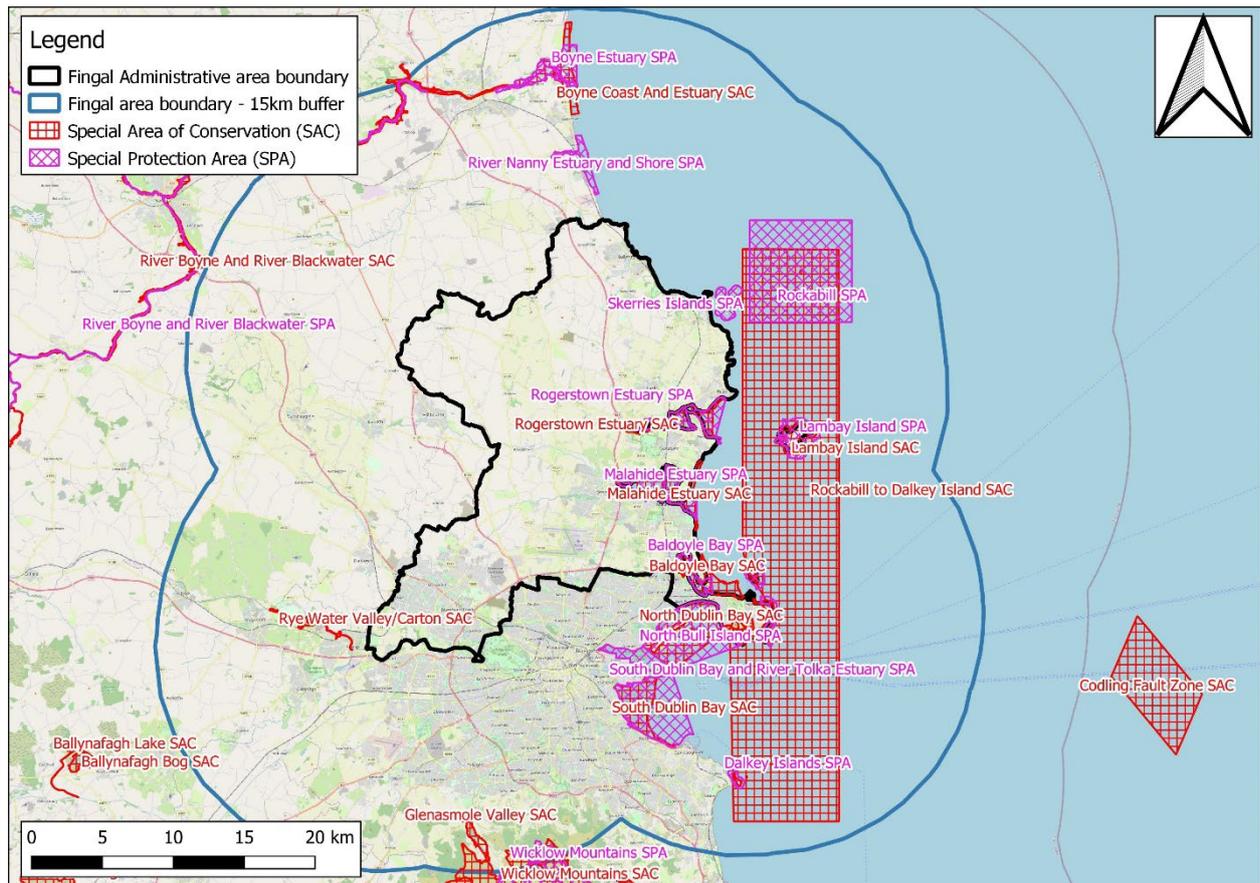


Figure 3: European designated sites within and adjacent to the Draft Plan area

2.3.3 Other designated areas (other than European sites)

There are 17 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) within the Fingal administrative area, as well as a single fully designated NHA (Skerries Islands NHA). A total of 24 pNHAs are located within 15km of the Fingal county boundary. In total, 21 of these pNHAs (and Skerries Islands NHA (site code 001218) are also designated as European sites. Twenty pNHAs in Fingal and within 15km are not otherwise designated as European sites. The pNHAs not otherwise designated as European sites are as follows:

- **Within the Fingal area:**
 - Knock Lake pNHA (site code 001203);
 - Feltrim Hill pNHA (site code 001208);
 - Bog of the Ring pNHA (site code 001204);
 - Portraine Shore pNHA (site code 001215);
 - Sluice River Marsh pNHA (site code 001763);
 - Loughshinny Coast pNHA (site code 002000);
 - Santry Demesne pNHA (site code 000178);
 - Royal Canal pNHA (site code 002103);
 - Liffey Valley pNHA (site code 000128);
- **Within 15km of the Fingal area:**
 - Cromwell’s Bush Fen pNHA (site code 001576);

- Dodder Valley pNHA (site code 000991);
- Balrath Woods pNHA (site code 001579);
- Duleek Commons pNHA (site code 001578);
- Thomastown Bog pNHA (site code 001593);
- Lugmore Glen pNHA (site code 001212);
- Slade of Saggart and Crooksling Glen pNHA (site code 000211);
- Fitzsimon's Wood pNHA (site code 001753);
- Loughlinstown Wood pNHA (site code 001211);
- Kilteel Wood pNHA (site code 001394);
- Dingle Glen pNHA (site code 001207).

These are included in this report in order to address their potential to act as supporting sites for the European sites.

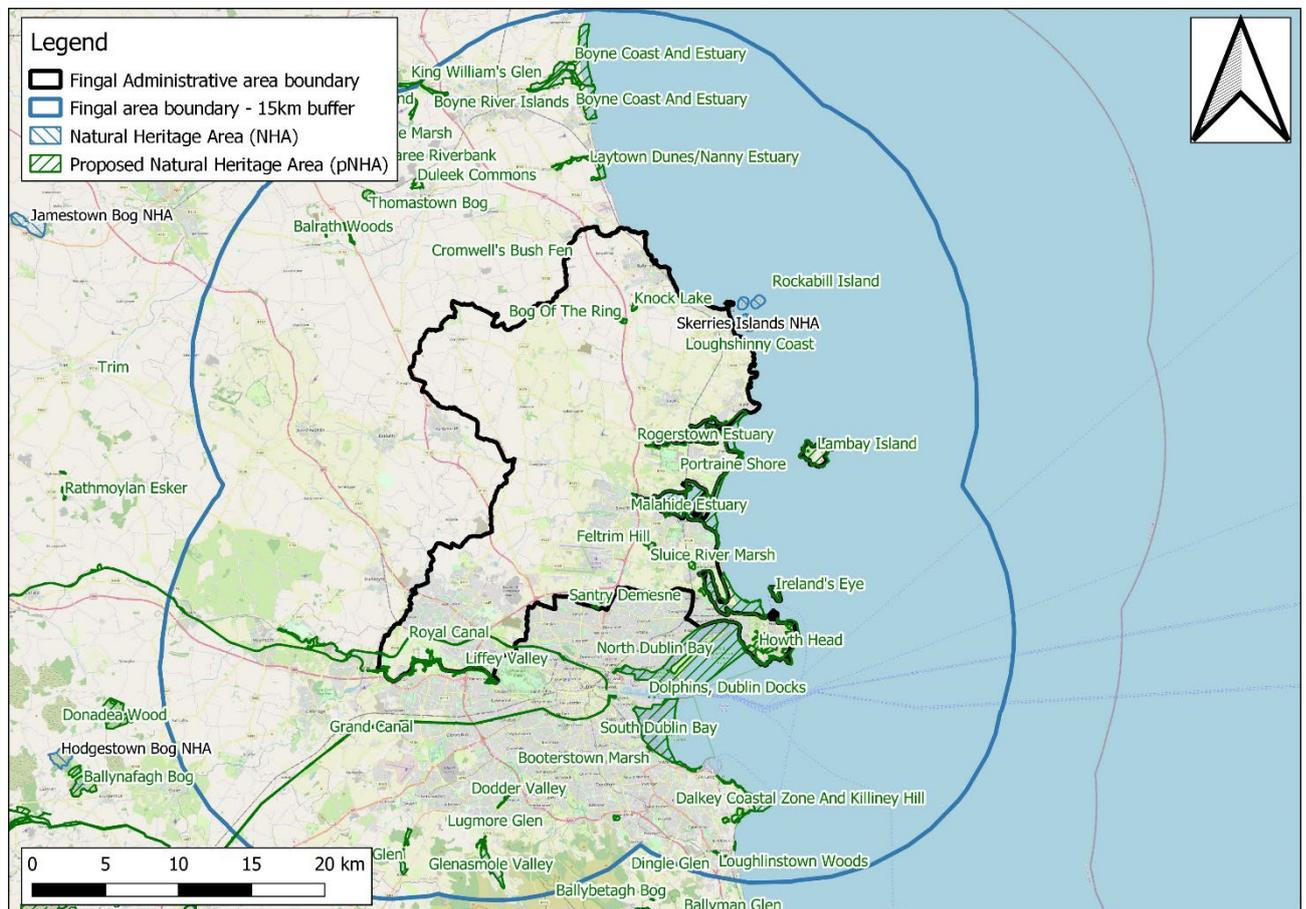


Figure 4: Non-European Designated sites within and adjacent to the Draft Plan area

Other than the European sites and the pNHAs (and the single NHA), there are also a number of Statutory Nature Reserves and Refuges for Fauna within Fingal. These sites are all European sites. Baldoyle Bay, Rogerstown Estuary and North Bull Island are Statutory Nature Reserves and Rockabill Island is a Refuge for Fauna. North Bull Island and Howth Head are both designated under Special Amenity Area Orders. Again these designations coincide with the sites' European designations.

Table 1 below, provides an overview of nature conservation areas designated for protection under national and / or European provisions in the Local Authority area.

Table 1: Nationally and internationally designated nature conservation areas in/adjacent to the Fingal area

Location	SAC	SPA	pNHA	NHA	WFDRPA ³	Ramsar	SNR ⁴	RFF ⁵
Baldoyle Bay	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
North Bull Island	✓ ⁶	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Bog of the Ring			✓		✓			
Coding Fault Zone	✓ ⁷							
Feltrim Hill			✓		✓			
Howth Head	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Ireland's Eye	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Lambay Island	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Knock Lake			✓		✓			
Liffey Valley			✓		✓			
Loughshinny Coast			✓		✓			
Malahide Estuary	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
North Dublin Bay	✓		✓		✓			
Portrane / Portrane Shore			✓		✓			
Rockabill Island		✓	✓		✓			✓
Rockabill to Dalkey	✓							
Rogerstown Estuary	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Royal Canal			✓		✓			
Santry Demesne			✓		✓			
Skerries Islands		✓		✓	✓			
Sluice River Marsh			✓		✓			

Under the scope of the Draft Plan, Fingal County Council has developed a c.13,120ha. The Fingal Ecological Network is shown in **Figure 5**.

³ Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas site

⁴ Statutory Nature Reserve

⁵ Refuge for Fauna

⁶ Under North Dublin Bay SAC

⁷ Marine SAC

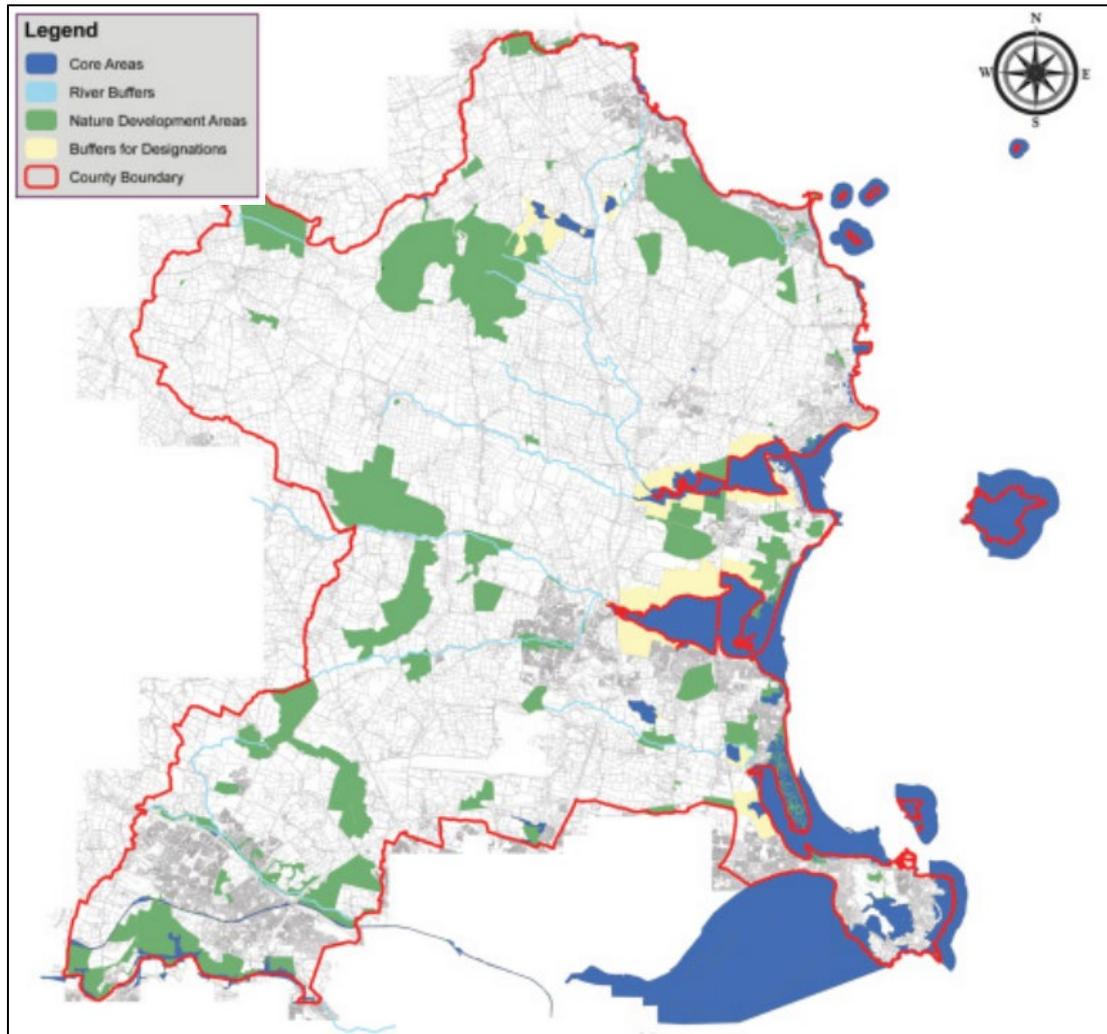


Figure 5: Fingal Ecological Network

The Ecological Network provides a spatial framework for biodiversity conservation and management in the administrative area. It comprises:

- Core nature conservation sites;
- Buffer zones around the core sites;
- Nature development areas; and
- Ecological corridors and stepping stones.

3 Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan (2022 – 2030)

The objectives of the *Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan (2022 – 2030)* are set out as follows:

- To develop and maintain the Fingal Ecological Network and increase the resilience of the network by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation;
- Tackle key pressures on species and habitats;
- To ensure that (inter)national targets for species and habitats are translated into effective conservation action at local level in Fingal;
- To raise public awareness and encourage involvement in biodiversity action by the wider community;
- To increase our knowledge and understanding of biodiversity and monitor impacts of biodiversity actions through ecological research.

The Draft Plan sets out strategies in relation to the various elements of the Ecological Network as set out in **Table A1.1** in **Appendix 2**:

With a view to achieving these objectives, the Draft Plan sets out a list of 100 actions to promote the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the Local Authority area. These actions – and their corresponding key performance indicators (KPIs) – are listed in **Table A1.2** in **Appendix 2**. Of these actions, 32 have been identified as priority actions for implementation over the 2022 – 2030 period, as indicated in **Table A1.2** in **Appendix 2**. The actions have been prioritised with regard to existing project commitments, and are focussed on the following:

- The management of the Howth Head SAC and Rogerstown Estuary SAC and SPA;
- Making open space more biodiversity friendly;
- The implementation of the Tidy Towns Biodiversity Plans;
- The completion of ecological studies to inform the planning process and the County Development Plan; and
- Updating the Fingal Biodiversity website to disseminate the study reports and project information.

The remainder of the actions set out in the Draft Plan are proposed to be carried out as more staff and financial resources are made available for these purposes.

4 Potential impacts from the Draft Plan, including in-combination effects

4.1 Summary description of the Draft Plan actions

As set out in the Draft Plan, at Section 9, the 100 Plan actions are intended to halt biodiversity loss in Fingal by 2030.

The actions are based upon recommendations made during ecological studies and on proposals put forward by nature conservation NGO's, members of the public, the Public Participation Network, Strategic Policy Committee members and various Council Departments. The actions in this plan are centred around six topics:

- **Delivery of the ecological network across Fingal (Developing the Ecological Network);**
 - This topic includes a total of **30 actions**, of which 12 are considered to be priority actions. These actions are centred on developing and implementing biodiversity-focussed masterplans for designated and non-designated sites throughout the county, to continue to protect and manage species and habitats in known sites.

There are also actions intended to control invasive species within the Draft Plan area and to work with quarry owners, golf course owners and other landowners to protect and enhance the nature conservation value of their sites. Other actions include proposals to lease or acquire land for the purpose of protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

- *All of these actions are designed for the benefit of biodiversity, either separate from, or related to, the European designated sites. Where applicable these actions are necessary for the management of the European sites. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*
- **Building biodiversity:**
 - This topic includes **8 actions**, of which two are considered to be priority actions. These include the preparation of guidance and design documents and the organisation of conferences. Actions 37 and 38 require FCC to incorporate biodiversity design into new developments and other Council projects.
 - *All of these actions are designed to benefit biodiversity. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*
- **Managing Open Space for Biodiversity:**
 - This topic includes **5 actions**, of which three are considered to be priority actions. These include the development of a pesticide policy for the local authority, support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, implementation of Tidy Towns Biodiversity Action Plans and the development of urban greening plans and biodiversity makeovers;
 - *All of these actions are designed to benefit biodiversity. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*
- **Woodland and Wetland Projects – Climate change adaptation and mitigation;**
 - This topic includes **15 actions**, of which three are considered to be priority actions. These include the preparation and implementation of wetland and river restoration projects and the development of SuDS demonstration sites in key parks and other areas. It also includes the preparation of woodland management plans within the Draft Plan area and the acquisition, where possible, of sites suitable for woodland planting and river restoration as well as developing climate buffer sites. There are actions intended to support rewilding/wilding and actions to restore marine ecosystems;
 - *All of these actions are designed to benefit biodiversity. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*
- **Agri-environment schemes and rewilding;**
 - This topic includes **7 actions**, of which two are considered to be priority actions. These actions focus on promoting and supporting the conservation of Irish rare farm breed cattle and the implementation of conservation measures within farmland. One particular action is intended to increase the number of birds of prey species within the county;
 - *All of these actions are designed to benefit biodiversity. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*

- **Research and monitoring;**
 - This topic includes **27 actions**, of which five are considered to be priority actions. These include funding or undertaking directly a wide range of biodiversity surveys and studies, focussing on key bird and mammal species groups, as well as protected habitats outside of European sites;
 - *All of these actions are designed to benefit biodiversity. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*
- **Raising awareness:**
 - This topic includes **8 actions**, of which three are considered to be priority actions. These include the redevelopment of the FCC biodiversity website and the organisation of biodiversity-related events and education programmes. Actions for biodiversity education include actions targeting schools and the general public as well as FCC staff and politicians;
 - *All of these actions are designed to benefit biodiversity. There is no possibility that any of the actions listed under this topic could have a significant effect on any of the European sites within the potential zone of influence of the Draft Plan area.*

All of the strategies and actions set out in the Draft Plan are intended to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity. There are no elements of the Draft Plan that are likely to give rise to impacts on any of the European sites listed in Section 2.3.2 of this report, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

4.2 Description of any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Draft Plan on European sites by virtue of:

4.2.1 Size and scale

The Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 – 2030 covers the entire administrative area of Fingal County Council. However it is not a statutory land use plan. It is a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan, as required under the *National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017 – 2021)*, which establishes a framework for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the Fingal County Council administrative area. The Draft Plan sets out 100 actions (32 of which are priority actions for implementation over the stated policy period) to this effect.

The implementation of the Draft Plan is considered likely to have positive effects in relation to at least the following aspects of the environment in the Fingal administrative area:

- Biodiversity, including habitats, species and sites protected under national and European provisions;
- Water quality;
- Flood risk;
- Climate change (mitigation and adaptation);
- Population and human health (e.g. in relation to amenity and public health); and
- Soil quality.

4.2.2 Land take

None of the actions in the Draft Plan require any land take from any European site. As noted in the Draft Plan, *“The emphasis for the next 8 years will be to restore internationally and nationally designated sites to favourable condition by improving the habitat and water quality and enlarging the designated sites where possible”.*

Further, the Draft Plan states that *“Where development is proposed in or near designated sites strict procedures are to be followed as set out in article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive to ensure that the conservation objectives established for each Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area are not compromised.”*

4.2.3 Distance from the European site

A total of 16 European sites are located either within the Draft Plan area or immediately adjacent to it. A further 13 European sites are located within approximately 25km. However, all of the Draft Plan strategies and actions have been designed with the intention of protecting and enhancing the natural environment – including within the European sites.

4.2.4 Resource requirements

There are no resource requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Draft Plan.

4.2.5 Emissions

There are no emissions of any kind that would result in significant effects on any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Draft Plan.

4.2.6 Excavation requirements

There are no excavation requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Draft Plan.

4.2.7 Transport requirements

There are no transport requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Draft Plan.

4.3 Description of any likely changes arising as a result of:

4.3.1 Reduction in habitat area

The Draft Plan proposes no reductions in habitat area in any European site.

4.3.2 Disturbance to key species

The Draft Plan contains actions intended to reduce or eliminate disturbance to key species, in designated sites and elsewhere.

No habitat or species disturbance will arise. As such any impacts are expected to be positive.

4.3.3 Habitat and species fragmentation

The Draft Plan contains actions that will protect core sites (designated sites, Annex I habitat outside designated sites such as dune habitats, cliffs and petrifying springs, marine inshore waters and sites with protected and rare plant species), buffer zones and nature development areas (farmland, demesnes, golf courses, parkland and open spaces, reservoirs and open water bodies, quarries, woodland opportunity areas) and ecological corridors.

No habitat or species fragmentation will arise. As such any impacts are expected to be positive.

4.3.4 Changes in key indicators of conservation value

Any changes in key indicators are expected to be positive.

4.3.5 Climate change

The Draft Plan contains actions (such as actions 49 and 71) intended to identify (and acquire) buffer sites where flood defences can be removed in order to increase flood capacity and to enhance our understanding of the risks of climate change. The actions all align with Ireland's Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2019).

4.4 Description of any likely impacts on European sites in terms of:

4.4.1 Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site

The Draft Plan will result in no interference with the key relationships that define the structure of any European site (other than in a positive manner to the benefit of biodiversity both within and external to any European sites).

4.4.2 Interference with the key relationships that define the function of the site

The Draft Plan will result in no interference with the key relationships that define the function of any European site (other than in a positive manner to the benefit of biodiversity).

Potential pathways for impacts to European sites are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1 lists relevant European sites and outlines their Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives

European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
Rogerstown Estuary SAC (site code 000208). Within the Draft Plan area	1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 14 August 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement a masterplan for the Rogerstown Estuary and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the qualifying habitats and species. There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation. However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.
Malahide Estuary SAC (site code 000205). Within the Draft Plan area	1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 May 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement a masterplan for the Malahide Estuary and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of this area. There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation. However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.
Baldoyle Bay SAC (site code 000199).	1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)	The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement the masterplan for the Baldoyle Bay and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of this area.



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
Within the Draft Plan area	According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 19 November 2012), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
Howth Head SAC (site code 000202). Within the Draft Plan area	<p>1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts 4030 European dry heaths</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 06 December 2016), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitats for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement a masterplan for the Howth Head to restore this SAC to good ecological status.</p> <p>There is a no hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, although there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
Lambay Island SAC (site code 000204). Within the Draft Plan area	<p>1170 Reefs 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts 1364 Grey seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) 1365 Harbour seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>)</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 22 July 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitats for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
Ireland's Eye SAC (site code 002193). Within the Draft Plan area	<p>1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 January 2017), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
<p>Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (site code 003000).</p> <p>Adjacent to the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1170 Reefs 1351 Harbour Porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 07 May 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to identify the key feeding and breeding areas within the Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC</p> <p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206).</p> <p>Adjacent to the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* 2190 Humid dune slacks 1395 Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>)</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 06 November 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (site code 001398).</p> <p>c.1km to the south east of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) 1014 Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>)</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 22 December 2021), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the</p>	<p>No. There is no pathway to this site from the Draft Plan area.</p>

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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	
<p>South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210). c.5km to the south of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>The following habitats are listed as Qualifying Interests on the NPWS website, but are not included in the Conservation Objectives document:</p> <p>(1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes)</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 22 August 2013), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (site code 001957). c.7km to the north of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes') 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes')</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 31 October 2012), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
<p>River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299)</p> <p>c.10km to the north of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1099 River Lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> 1106 Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 7230 Alkaline fens 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*</p> <p>According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 3 December 2021), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Glenasmole Valley SAC (site code 001209),</p> <p>c.10.5km to the south of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) 6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</p> <p>According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 10 December 2021), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>No. There is no pathway to this site from the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Wicklow Mountains SAC (site code 002122).</p> <p>c.13km to the south of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) 3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea 3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> 4030 European dry heaths 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths 6130 Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae</p>	<p>No. There is no pathway to this site from the Draft Plan area.</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>6230 Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)</p> <p>7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog)</p> <p>8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>)</p> <p>8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p> <p>According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 31 July 2017), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	
<p>Codling Fault Zone SAC (site code 001957).</p> <p>c.25km to the south east of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>1180 Submarine structures made by leaking gases</p> <p>According to this SAC’s Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for the listed SCI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site code 004015).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</p> <p>A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</p> <p>A043 Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)</p> <p>A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</p> <p>A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)</p> <p>A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</p> <p>A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</p> <p>A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)</p> <p>A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)</p> <p>A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement a masterplan for the Rogerstown Estuary and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the qualifying habitats and species.</p> <p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) Wetlands</p> <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 20 May 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	
<p>Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary (Malahide Estuary) SPA (site code 004025).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) A067 Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) A069 Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) A005 Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) A999 Wetlands</p> <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 16 August 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement a masterplan for the Malahide Estuary and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of this area.</p> <p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) A999 Wetlands</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement the masterplan for the Baldoyle Bay and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of this area.</p> <p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 February 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Howth Head SPA (site code 004113).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)</p> <p>According to this SPA's Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for the listed SCI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to develop and implement a masterplan for the Howth Head to restore Howth Head to good ecological status.</p> <p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Lambay Island SPA (site code 004069).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A009 Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> A017 Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> A018 Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i> A043 Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i> A183 Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i> A184 Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i> A188 Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> A199 Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i> A200 Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i> A204 Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i></p> <p>According to this SPA's Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Ireland's Eye SPA (site code 004117).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) A199 Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) A200 Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the</p>

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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>According to this SPA's Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Skerries Islands SPA (site code 004122).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) A018 Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) A046 Light-bellied Brent goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) A148 Purple sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)</p> <p>According to this SPA's Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>The Draft Plan includes objectives to carry out flora study and breeding bird study of the Skerries Islands in order to find out what flora species can be found on the islands and how the breeding seabirds are faring.</p> <p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Rockabill SPA (site code 004006).</p> <p>Within the Draft Plan area</p>	<p>A148 Purple sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) A192 Roseate tern (<i>Sterna dougalii</i>) A193 Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) A194 Arctic tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)</p> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 8 May 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006).</p> <p>Adjacent to the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A160 Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) A052 Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Wetlands</p> <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 9 March 2015), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	
<p>River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (site code 004024). c.2km to the north of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) wintering A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) wintering A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) wintering A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) wintering A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) wintering A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) wintering A999 Wetlands</p> <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 21 September 2012), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024). c.4km to the south of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the</p>



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European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>A192 Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) A194 Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) Wetlands</p> <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 9 March 2015), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Dalkey Islands SPA (site code 004172). c.9km to the south of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A192 Roseate tern (<i>Sterna dougalii</i>) A193 Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) A194 Arctic tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)</p> <p>According to this SPA’s Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Boyne Estuary SPA (site code 004080). c.9km to the north of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) A142 Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) A195 Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) A999 Wetlands</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>



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Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

European Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of 17 May 2022) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Source – Pathway – Receptor link
	<p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 26 February 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	
<p>River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232). c.12km to the north of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A228 Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)</p> <p>According to this SPA’s Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Draft Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However there will be no impacts on water quality and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategies or actions proposed in the Draft Plan, which is specifically intended to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Draft Plan area.</p>
<p>Wicklow Mountains SPA (site code 004040). c.13km to the south of the Draft Plan Area</p>	<p>A098 Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) A103 Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)</p> <p>According to this SPA’s Generic Conservation Objectives document (Version 9, dated 26 January 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>No. There is no pathway to this site from the Draft Plan area.</p>



4.5 Summary of potential impacts of the proposed development

There will be no loss of any habitat or species listed as a QI or SCI of any designated site as a consequence of the implementation of the Draft Plan. There is, therefore, no potential for the effects of habitat loss or fragmentation to occur.

There will also be no significant effects on any European sites as a result of:

- Impacts on water quality (e.g. via contaminated surface water or foul water);
- Land-take;
- Resource requirements such as water abstraction;
- Impacts to habitat structure;
- Mortality to species (such as roadkill);
- Noise pollution/vibration impacts;
- Light pollution;
- Air pollution.

5 Mitigation specific to European sites

In relation to European sites, there will be no negative impacts as a result of the implementation of the Draft Plan. Therefore no mitigation is necessary or proposed for the protection of European sites or which was intended to avoid or reduce impacts on any European sites.

6 In-combination effects

It is a requirement of Section 177U of the Planning Acts that when considering whether a plan or project will have a significant effect on a European site the assessment must take into account in-combination effects with other plans and projects. The assessment should consider plans and projects that are completed, approved but uncompleted, or proposed (but not yet approved).⁸ If there are identified effects arising from the plan or project even if they are perceived as minor and not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site alone, then these effects must be considered 'in-combination' with the effects arising from other plans and projects.

The Fingal Development Plan 2017 – 2023, (including Variations to the Plan), sets out the Council's policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period. It seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County. The Draft Biodiversity Action Plan has had due regard to all relevant policies and objectives set out in the Development Plan. It also takes into account the (draft) policies and objectives of the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023 – 2029, in particular the policies in relation to climate action, green infrastructure and natural heritage.

On the basis of objective information it can be excluded that the implementation of the Draft Plan, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

A number of other plans were considered when assessing in-combination effects, but it was determined that there would be no in-combination effects with these:

- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030;

⁸ *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001)*

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (2018);
- National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017 – 2021);
- Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019);
- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2019 – 2031);
- Fingal Climate Action plan (2019 – 2024).

7 Screening conclusion

Following review of the draft objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan against the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites, it is concluded that there is no possibility that the implementation of the Draft BAP could result in any likely significant effects on European sites on its own or in combination with other plans and programmes.

In view of best scientific knowledge, this report concludes that the implementation of the *Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 – 2030*, individually or in combination with another plan or project, will not have a significant effect on any European sites. This assessment was reached without considering or taking into account mitigation measures or measures intended to avoid or reduce any impact on European sites. The Draft Plan does not require an Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.

Appendix 1: Background

The European⁹ network is a Europe-wide network of ecologically important sites (SPAs and cSACs – also known as ‘European Sites’ or ‘Natura 2000 sites’) that have been designated for protection under either the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) or the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna).

The main aim of the Habitats Directive is “to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the treaty applies”. Any actions taken must be designed to “maintain or restore, at a favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest”. Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, an assessment is required where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a European site.

In addition, it is a matter of law that candidate SACs (cSACs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCI) are considered in this process;

Article 6 (paragraphs (3) and (4)) of the Habitats Directive states that:

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

(4) If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest”

The requirements of the Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish law by means of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations and by the Planning Acts.

In Ireland, the statutory agency responsible for the designated areas is NPWS.

Stages in the assessment

European Commission guidance (2001)¹⁰ sets out the principles on how to undertake decision making in applying the Habitats Directive. The requirements of the Habitats Directive comprise four distinct stages:

Stage 1: Screening is the process which initially identifies the likely significant effects upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts may be significant. It is important to note that the burden of evidence is to show, on the basis of objective information, that there will be no significant effect; if the effect may be significant, or is not known, that would trigger the need for an Appropriate Assessment. There is European Court of Justice case law to the

⁹ The EU Habitats Directive, Article 3.1, states “A Coherent European ecological network of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas pursuant to Directive 79/409/EEC shall be set up under the title European”

¹⁰ European Commission (2001) *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European Sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*

effect that unless the likelihood of a significant effect can be ruled out on the basis of objective information, then an Appropriate Assessment must be made.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment is the detailed consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's conservation objectives and its structure and function. This is to determine with scientific certainty whether or not there will be adverse effects on the integrity of the site in light of its conservation objectives. This stage also includes the development of mitigation measures to avoid or reduce any possible impacts.

Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions is the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that would avoid impacts on the integrity of the European site, should avoidance or mitigation measures be unable to cancel out adverse effects.

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain. At Stage 4 an assessment is made with regard to whether or not the development is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) and, if so, of the compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the European network.

Conservation Objectives of European sites

The conservation objectives for a European Site are intended to represent the aims of the Habitats and Birds Directives in relation to that site. To this end, habitats and species of European Community importance should be maintained or restored to 'favourable conservation status' (FCS), as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive below:

The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- Its natural range and the area it covers within that range are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future;
- Conservation status of typical species is favourable as defined in Article 1(i).

The conservation status of a species will be taken as favourable when:

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

Guidance from the European Commission¹¹ indicates that the Habitats Directive intends FCS to be applied at the level of an individual site, as well as to habitats and species across their European range. Therefore, in order to properly express the aims of the Habitats Directive for an individual site, the conservation objectives for a site are essentially to maintain (or restore) the habitats and species of the site at (or to) FCS.

The European Commission guidance recommends that screening should fulfil the following steps:

1. Determine whether the plan (or policy) is directly connected with or necessary for the management of European sites;
2. Describe the plan and describe and characterise any other plans or projects which, in combination, have the potential for having significant effects on European sites;
3. Identify the potential effects on European sites;

Assess the likely significance of any effects on European sites.

¹¹ Managing European sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. (European Commission 2000)

Appendix 2: Strategy & List of Draft Actions

Table A2.1 Strategy of the Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan in relation to the Fingal Ecological Network

Element	Component	Strategy
Core sites	Designated Sites	<p>The emphasis for the next 8 years will be to restore internationally and nationally designated sites to favourable condition by improving the habitat and water quality and enlarging the designated sites where possible. Management plans for Howth Head and the estuaries (including their surrounding buffer zones) shall be prepared by Fingal County Council in conjunction with landowners and other stakeholders. The most appropriate land use, nature conservation goals and development of recreational infrastructure within each of the sites shall be worked out in greater detail in these plans. Particular focus shall be on the Rogerstown Estuary, Malahide Estuary, Howth Head and the Bog of the Ring as they are most in need of restoration measures. Fingal County Council will also seek to acquire privately owned lands in and around the designated sites, particularly where the lands have potential for wetland restoration. The Council may also lease lands to facilitate sympathetic land management for designated species.</p> <p>Where development is proposed in or near designated sites strict procedures are to be followed as set out in article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive to ensure that the conservation objectives established for each Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area are not compromised.</p>
	Annex I habitats outside Designated Sites	<p>The protection of the dune habitats, cliffs and associated petrifying springs will be the focus of the works related to Annex I species outside the designated areas. The County Council shall encourage golf course managers to protect and expand the Annex I habitats within their courses by developing Biodiversity Plans for golf courses together with the golf clubs. A hydrological study is to be undertaken of all petrifying springs in the county and the surrounding landscape to gain a better understanding of the current flow of water to the spring and to identify potential threats in the future. The County Council shall develop targeted awareness campaigns and invasive species removal projects to protect the vegetation at the top of the cliffs from herbicide spraying and dumping.</p> <p>Where development is proposed in or near Annex I Habitats, the development will have to demonstrate that it will have no significant adverse impact on the habitats of interest in these areas and their ecological integrity.</p>
	Marine inshore waters	<p>A feasibility study is to be undertaken to identify how a voluntary Marine Protection Area or no-take zone between Lambay and Howth could be established, which stakeholders are to be involved and what key issues should be addressed in a management plan for this inshore area. The study would also determine to what extent Oysterbeds, shellfish beds, seagrass beds and kelp forests can be restored and what practical steps are required to deliver these projects. A cost benefit analysis shall also be part of the study to compare the value of the fisheries with the potential value of nature based solutions to improve the water quality and to create a healthier</p>

Element	Component	Strategy
	Sites with nationally protected and rare plant species	<p>and more resilient marine ecosystem. Funding models for such a project are also to be explored in more detail such as an aqua-environment scheme and funding streams associated with Blue carbon capture.</p> <p>The County Council will continue its search for rare and protected flora and monitor the populations at known sites. The survey effort shall focus on the FPO listed species and the Red data book species. Further studies shall be carried out on sites that are suspected to be of historic or current ecological interest, to establish the occurrence and distribution of other plants that are locally and nationally rare and threatened.</p> <p>Comprehensive management plans will be drawn up together with landowners for sites with rare and protected species. These plans will take account of the current conservation status of the plant species and its habitat, and if practicable a list of conservation actions will be drawn-up. The preparation of biodiversity plans for the links courses is particularly relevant given the prevalence of rare and protected species in the dunes at Portmarnock, Donabate, Portrane and Rush.</p> <p>Where development is proposed on sites with legally protected or nationally rare plant species, the development will have to demonstrate that it will have no significant adverse impact on the plant species or its habitat.</p>
Buffer zones		<p>The emphasis for the next 8 years will be to restore internationally and nationally designated sites to favourable condition by improving the habitat and water quality and enlarging the designated sites by managing the bufferzones for designated species and habitats. Management plans for the estuaries and their surrounding shall be prepared by Fingal County Council in conjunction with landowners and other stakeholders. The plans set out opportunities for agri-environment schemes, nature conservation projects and recreational infrastructure within each of the sites. Particular focus shall be on the Rogerstown Estuary, Malahide Estuary and the Bog of the Ring as they are most need of restoration measures. Fingal County Council will also seek to acquire privately owned lands within the bufferzones, particularly where the lands have potential for wetland restoration. The Council may also lease bufferzone lands to facilitate sympathetic land management for designated species.</p> <p>Where development is proposed in or near designated sites strict procedures are to be followed as set out in article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive to ensure that the conservation objectives established for each Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area are not compromised.</p>
Nature development areas	Farmland	<p>The Council wants to work with local farmers to develop demonstration plots or groups of farms to promote wildlife and environmental enhancement works. The purpose behind the demonstration farms is to explore the range of habitat improvement measures and agri-environment possibilities on a farm, explore the costs associated with these measures, study the wildlife effects and provide a cost-benefit analysis. These measures could provide the basis for an EIP agri-environment scheme bid or Council run agri-environment scheme if this is of interest to local farmers. The key topics for agri-environment measures would focus on soil health, natural pest control, minimum tillage, winter cover crops, water (quality) management, habitat strips along field</p>

Element	Component	Strategy
		<p>margins, hedgerow management, reducing rodenticide & pesticide use and species specific conservation measures for Grey Partridge, Yellow Hammer, Tree Sparrow, Stock Dove, Red Kite, Kestrel and Barn owl.</p> <p>It should be noted that the results of any agri-environment schemes can't have any negative consequences for the farmers involved. In other words, participation in these schemes and managing habitats for rare or protected species shall not lead to tighter regulations or restrictions on farming activity. Such guarantees will be provided in writing to participating farmers.</p> <p>The Nature Development Areas are the focus and search areas for demonstration farms and possible agri-environment schemes. Where development is proposed within the farmland nature development area, the local authority will request the applicants to retain existing natural features as much as possible, but no specific additional measures are requested from the applicant.</p>
	Demesnes	<p>Fingal County Council will develop ecological management plans and woodland management plans for the demesnes that it manages. Woodland management plans shall be prepared to address the ecological, historical, and recreational issues and opportunities present on the site and provide detailed management recommendations to guide the woodland management efforts over the next 20 years. The woodland management works shall be carried out in small-scale operations, to allow for natural processes and succession to take place. This will result in diverse woodlands that are attractive to wildlife and to the visitor. The County Council will also explore the possibilities of grazing in the public demesnes and facilitate farmers to take hay from these parks.</p> <p>On private estates Fingal County Council will make grant funding available for estate owners to develop woodland management plans and ecological management plans. The landowner shall decide what is possible and what is not. Where development is proposed within the private demesnes, the County Council shall require the applicant to prepare an ecological management plan as outlined in Appendix XV [of the Draft Plan].</p>
	Golf courses	<p>The County Council will work with golf course managers and their members to develop and implement ecological management plans for most golf courses by 2030. The initial focus will be on the links courses along the coast and the golf courses in the Liffey Valley as they hold most of the legally protected plant species in the County.</p> <p>Where development is proposed in existing golf courses, the County Council will request the applicants to prepare an ecological management plan if not already in existence and retain existing natural features, particularly Annex I habitats or legally protected as outlined in Appendix XV [of the Draft Plan].</p>
	Parkland and open space	<p>Fingal County Council will undertake ecological studies of each regional park and large open space and will determine the opportunities for habitat enhancement and habitat creation. The focus in the management strategies will be on the preservation and management of hedgerows and creating wildflower meadows, copses</p>



Element	Component	Strategy
		<p>of trees & shrubs, and low maintenance herbaceous planting schemes. Pond and other wetland features can be added to the wettest parts of the open spaces and/or where SUDS are required.</p> <p>Public consultation will play an important role in the change of management of the parks and open spaces. This will ensure that local people can express their ideas and concerns for the parks in their locality and will keep them informed of upcoming developments.</p> <p>Where park development or other infrastructural works are planned to take place in the parkland by the County Council or third parties, the habitats of good ecological quality and habitats of legally protected or locally rare species shall be avoided. All projects shall ensure no nett loss of biodiversity, and where possible will achieve a nett gain of biodiversity.</p> <p>The other smaller open spaces in the county are not included in the Ecological Network, but they are part of the overall Green Infrastructure of Fingal and the vision and strategy for parkland can therefore also apply to other open spaces.</p>
	Reservoirs and open waterbodies	<p>The Council shall undertake ecological studies of Knock Lake and the reservoirs to assess their ecological significance and identify the measures required to improve these sites for wildlife. The Council shall undertake the required habitat improvement works where the reservoir and the surrounding lands are in public ownership. Where the waterbody is located on private lands the County Council shall liaise with the landowner to see what habitat improvement works can be carried out.</p>
	Quarries (incl. sand and gravel pits)	<p>To protect and enhance the biodiversity value of the quarries in Fingal, the County Council will request quarry operators to compile and implement a site specific Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) for their quarry as part of the licensing process. The principal objective of a BMP is to provide the site manager with a clear understanding of how contributions to national and local biodiversity can be achieved through the management of the site and environmental awareness within the company.</p> <p>The BMP audits the habitat and species present in and around the quarry, identifies local and national priority habitats and species, and provides a framework to maximise site biodiversity. The plan covers the entire lifespan of the quarry and manages habitats and species during the extraction phase and plan for restoration afterwards. The plan shall be subject to 3-5 year reviews to give it the flexibility to reflect changes in work practices and/or the appearance of new wildlife species on the site.</p>
	Woodland opportunity areas	<p>Detailed masterplans are to be developed for the two woodland opportunity sites at near Ardgillan and in the Liffey Valley. These plans will explore in more detail how these woodlands can be developed and will address issues such as recreational use, funding sources, species composition, community involvement, landowner consultation etc.</p>

Element	Component	Strategy
		<p>During the course of the plan, the County Council shall seek out more potential woodland sites to increase the woodland coverage in Fingal. This search shall particularly focus on finding sites along our rivers that are suitable for alluvial woodland development as part of river restoration projects, particularly along the Mayne, Sluice, Ballyboughal, Corduff, Matt/Bracken rivers.</p> <p>Where development is proposed in the new woodland opportunity areas, the County Council will request the applicants to retain existing hedgerows and woodland planting as much as possible but no specific additional measures will be requested from the applicant.</p>
<p>Ecological corridors / stepping stones</p>		<p>Ecological studies are to be undertaken of the Corduff, Ballyboughal, Bracken/Matt, Sluice and Mayne rivers. These studies shall identify the current habitat quality, potential stepping stone sites and the range of measures required to improve the river habitat, the corridor function and water quality of these rivers. Lands within or adjacent to the corridors in ownership of the County Council shall be maintained and developed to provide a mosaic of typical river valley habitats for all target species associated with the ecological corridors. Fingal County Council will seek to lease or acquire the most strategic nature conservation lands within the corridors. It will also work with farmers to develop and manage the lands within the ecological corridors through farming demonstration projects and potentially an EIP project.</p> <p>Planning and design guidance is to be prepared for both river and terrestrial ecological corridors to inform developers, planners, engineers and landscape architects how these ecological corridors are to be designed and managed.</p> <p>The Tolka River Valley, Royal Canal and the Liffey Valley shall be developed as a multi-functional amenity corridors, forming a "GREEN Z" in the Dublin 15 area. Similarly, the Ward River Valley and the lower reaches of the Broadmeadow river will be developed for nature conservation and amenity purposes for the community in Swords. Detailed masterplans are to be prepared within the plan period for each of these linear parks. The development of the ecological corridors in the countryside shall focus on flood protection, water quality improvement, habitat enhancement and sustainable farming practices</p> <p>Some of the ecological corridors are shown as indicative on the green infrastructure network. These indicative corridors are located where a connection is to be created between two nature conservation areas but where the exact location of the corridor is not determined yet. Further ecological survey work and consultation with landowners will ultimately determine where these corridors are to be created.</p>



Table A2.2: Actions of the Draft Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan (* = Priority action)

No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
<i>Developing the Ecological Network</i>				
1*	Implement Masterplan for Rogerstown Inner Estuary and prepare & implement masterplan for Rogerstown Outer Estuary	To develop and implement a masterplan for the Rogerstown Estuary and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the qualifying habitats and species .	Acreage of land acquired or leased at the inner and outer estuary Length of flood embankment removed, and acreage of new saltmarsh and brackish meadows created. Populations of qualifying interest species are stable or increasing No loss of feeding and roosting sites on lands surrounding the estuary as a result of human disturbance Populations of Green winged Orchid, Hairy Violet, Rough Poppy are stable or increasing	Landowners, local community groups, Birdwatch, NPWS & DNFC
2*	Develop and implement detailed management plan for the Howth Head SAC & SPA	To develop and implement a management plan for Howth Head to restore this SAC to good ecological status	Management Plan for Howth Head SAC prepared Vegetated sea cliffs and European dry heaths habitats restored to good ecological status	Howth SAAO committee, NPWS
3*	Implement SAAO Operational Plan for Howth Head SAAO	To carry out studies and practical conservation work on heathland and wetland restoration and wildfire management	Number of prioritized actions implemented	Howth SAAO committee, NPWS
4*	Support implementation of Dublin Bay Biosphere Nature Conservation Strategy, Education & Awareness strategy	To carry out studies and practical conservation work outlined in the Biosphere strategy documents	Number of FCC and joint actions implemented	DCC, DLR, NPWS, DP, FI
5*	Develop management plans for key winter bird sites identified in satellite tagging programs	To ensure the protection of the most important feeding and roosting sites of qualifying interest species outside designated sites	Management plans prepared for key winter bird sites Percentage of key sites actively managed for qualifying interest species	NPWS, Birdwatch Ireland, Brent Research Group
6*	Prepare biodiversity plans for golf courses in conjunction with golf course owners to enhance their grounds for Biodiversity	To protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the golf courses,	Number of Biodiversity Plans prepared and number of actions implemented for golf courses in Fingal Populations stable or increasing of Hairy violet, Lesser Centaury, Greenwinged orchid, Bee orchid, Green flowered helleborine, Spring vetch, Sea bindweed, Skylark, Shelduck, Small Blue, Dark	Golf course owners

* Priority action



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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
			Green Fritillary and Grayling, <i>Colletes floralis</i> , <i>Colletes similis</i> , <i>Osmia aurulenta</i> , <i>Andrena barbilabris</i> , <i>Bombus lapidarius</i> , <i>B. muscorum</i>	
7**	Continue to support Little Tern and Ringed Plover conservation project at tip of Portrane	To protect Little Tern Colony at the Burrow, Portrane	Population of Little tern and Ringed Plover increasing	Birdwatch
8*	Continue managing lands at the Burrow Portrane for Green winged orchid and Hairy Violet	To protect the existing populations of Green-winged orchid and Hairy violet	Lease on lands renewed Population of Greenwinged Orchid and Hairy Violet stable or increasing	Landowner
9*	Restore and enhance the Meadow Barley sites at the Rogerstown Estuary	Restore population of Meadow Barley at Rogerstown Inner Estuary	Number of Meadow Barley sites subject to active restoration measures and enhanced measures Meadow Barley numbers	-
10*	Maintain the verge along the coast Road between Portmarnock & Malahide as a wildflower meadow	To continue the wildflower management project along the coast road	Number of Pyramidal and bee orchids in verge	TT
11*	Organise clean up of mudflats in Malahide Estuary once a year	To remove rubbish from the mudflats	Clean up of mudflat organised	Local volunteers
12*	Control invasive species in Fingal	To eradicate and control invasive flora and fauna species	Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam eradicated throughout Fingal Rhododendron Ponticum eradicated from Howth Head SAC on Howth Cherry laurel, Snowberry ad Bamboo eradicated from private pNHA woodlands and Council woodlands Acreage of seabuckthorn in dunes reduced by 75% Hottentot fig and garden invasives eradicated from sea cliffs at Howth and Balbriggan Control program undertaken every two years for Mink on all rivers in Fingal	Landowners
13	Prepare and implement masterplan for Malahide Estuary SAC & SPA, including Cave's Marsh	To develop and implement a masterplan for the Malahide Estuary and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of this area.	Acreage of land acquired or leased at the Malahide estuary for nature restoration projects Populations of migratory birds such as Brent Goose Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Lapwing, Redshank are stable or increasing No loss of feeding and roosting sites on lands surrounding the estuary as a result of human disturbance	Landowners, local community groups, Birdwatch, NPWS & DNFC



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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
14	Prepare and implement masterplan for Baldoyle bay SAC & SPA	To develop and implement the masterplan for the Baldoyle Bay and surrounding lands with the aim of protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of this area.	Acreage of land acquired or leased at the Baldoyle estuary for nature restoration projects Populations of migratory birds such as Brent Goose Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Lapwing, Redshank are stable or increasing No loss of feeding and roosting sites on lands surrounding the estuary as a result of human disturbance Racecourse Park Plan implemented	Landowners, local community groups, Birdwatch, NPWS & DNFC
15	Prepare and implement masterplan for Tolka Valley Park	To develop a masterplan that will combine recreational and nature conservation requirements in such a way, that allows both functions to be developed to their full potential	Masterplan for Tolka Valley Park prepared Water quality status restored to good quality Acreage of Orchid rich dry calcareous grassland protected and restored Acreage of alluvial woodland created Length of river habitat restored Populations of Otter, Kingfisher, Dipper, Bats, Brown Trout and Badger are stable or increasing	Local Community groups
16	Prepare and implement masterplan for Ward River Valley Park	To prepare a masterplan that will combine recreational and nature conservation requirements in such a way, that allows both functions to be developed to their full potential	Masterplan for Tolka Valley Park prepared Water quality status restored to good quality Salmon spawning beds protected Acreage of Orchid rich dry calcareous grassland protected and restored Acreage of alluvial woodland created Length of river habitat restored and number of artificial structures such as weir removed Populations of Otter, Kingfisher, Dipper, Bats, Brown Trout and Badger are stable or increasing	Local Community groups
17	Prepare and implement masterplan for the linear park along the Mayne River together with Dublin City Council	To prepare a masterplan that will combine recreational and nature conservation requirements in such a way, that allows both functions to be developed to their full potential	Masterplan prepared for Mayne River Green Corridor Length of river habitat restored Water quality status restored to good quality Acreage of Alluvial woodland created Populations of typical river species such as Otter, Kingfisher, Dipper, Bats, Lamprey, Brown Trout are stable or increasing	DCC & Local Community groups
18	Incorporate measures for biodiversity conservation in the management plans for a Regional Parks in Fingal	To enhance the biodiversity potential of regional parks	Number of management plans developed for Fingal parks with specific recommendations for biodiversity conservation	-

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
19	Seek to establish an ecological corridor to link the Royal Canal, the Tolka River and the Liffey Valley	To develop a network of wetland habitats linking the Liffey Valley with the Royal Canal and the Tolka Valley for Otter, Common frog, Kingfisher, Green Figwort, Bats	Ecological corridor established Number of target species using the corridor	Waterways Ireland, OPW
20	Seek to establish two wetland corridors between the river Liffey and the Royal Canal at Westmanstown	To develop a corridor of wetland habitats linking the Liffey Valley with the Royal Canal for Otter, Common Frog, Kingfisher, Dipper, all Bats	Wetland corridors established Number of target species using the corridor	Landowners
21	Establish a woodland corridor between St. Catherines park and Luttrellstown Demesne	To expand and link the old woodlands in the Liffey Valley by planting new woodland for Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Leislars Bat, Natterer's bat, Wiskered bat, Brown Long-eared bat, Red Squirrel, Badger, Pinemarten, Spotted flycatcher	Woodland corridor established Number of target species using the corridor	-
22	Seek to establish an ecological corridor between the Tolka and Ward rivers via the Pinkeen stream	To develop an ecological corridor of wetland and terrestrial habitats linking the Tolka River Valley and the Ward River Valley for Otter, Common Frog, Kingfisher, Dipper, Bats and Badger	Acreage of ecological corridor acquired Acreage of ecological developed and managed Number of target species using the corridor	-
23	Manage linear calcareous grassland strip along the Canal at Clonsilla	To restore calcareous grassland at this site	Acreage of Calcareous grassland with orchid species that is restored Numbers of Pyramidal and Common spotted orchid on site	Landowner
24	Liaise with landowners to explore possibilities of introducing grazing management in Liffey floodplain at Strawberry beds	To establish low-intensity grazing regime on Liffey Valley floodplain	Number of floodplain sites along the Liffey in Fingal subject to a lease or conservation grazing agreement with a local farmer Acreage of new Alluvial woodland, Wet grassland, Freshwater marsh and Ponds Numbers of Otter, Common Frog, Common Newt, Kingfisher, Green Figwort, various bat species found on newly managed sites	Landowners
25	Manage lands at the tip of the Burrow, Portrane for Skylark, wildfowl & waders	Develop and enhance roosting site for Brent Goose and other wildfowl and waders and breeding habitat for Skylark	Acreage of Land purchased or leased Number of days site is used by Pale-bellied Brent Goose. Breeding Skylark numbers stable or increasing	Birdwatch & Landowner
			Acreage of land purchased	Landowner

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
26	Acquire lands at Portrane with landowner for <i>Papaver hybridum</i>	Re-establish a population of <i>Papaver hybridum</i> at the Burrow, Portrane	Population of Rough Poppy and other rare arable weeds stable or increasing	
27	Lease or acquire the Sluice River Marsh for wildlife	To protect and enhance the Sluice River Marsh NHA and its surrounding lands for protected plant species and migratory birds	Lands acquired or leased	Landowner
			Number of recommendations implemented from latest ecological study report	
			Breeding Stock Dove, Skylark, Grasshopper warbler, water rail numbers stable or increasing	
			Migratory birds number using the sites stable or increasing	
28	Develop artificial nesting platforms Malahide estuary	To develop small floating platforms in the estuaries that will serve as secure nesting sites for seabirds	Number of floating devices installed	Birdwatch, NPWS
			Number of Little Tern, Common Tern or Arctic tern using the platforms	
29	Restore Wintering bird roosting site at Cave's Marsh in Malahide	To restore the conservation status of the Malahide Estuary SPA	Number of measures installed to prevent access by people and dogs to key roosting site	NPWS, Birdwatch
			Duration of stay and number of Brent Goose, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Bar Tailed godwit increasing	
30	Work together with quarry owners to develop biodiversity plans for quarries to enhance these sites for Biodiversity	To protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the quarries with a focus on orchid rich calcareous grassland, Peregrine Falcon, Sandmartin and amphibians	Number of Biodiversity Plans prepared for Quarry	Quarry owners
			Number of actions implemented	
Developing the Ecological Network (Action Nos. 1 – 30):				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with developing the ecological network within the county provide for the study, management and enhancement of the biodiversity resource for specific purposes, including the protection and enhancement of European sites. The actions also seek to liaise and work with landowners to provide additional lands, and / or measures for further enhancement of the ecological biodiversity network. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including water and the landscape. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
Building for Biodiversity				
31*	Prepare planning & design guidance for incorporating nesting facilities in building facades	To maximise nesting opportunities arising from new developments for Swift, House Sparrow, House Martin, Swallow, Bats & insects	Guidance document produced	DCC, DLR, Birdwatch, BCI, NPWS
			Number of sites where nesting facilities have been incorporated	
32*	Prepare guidance document and training on quality rating and management prescription of hedgerows in open space for FCC Operations and developers	To provide guidance on the protection and management hedgerows during planning process and in open space management	Guidance document produced	DCC, DLR, HA, TTs
			Number of training events organized and numbers of attendees at training events	
			Length of hedgerow managed appropriately on FCC owned open space	

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
33	Prepare promotional guidance on how to incorporate biodiversity in development and infrastructure projects	To promote biodiversity conservation in residential, industrial, commercial and infrastructure developments	Guidance document produced	DCC, DLR, Birdwatch, BCI
34	Prepare planning and design guidance for ecological corridors	To provide technical specification for ecological corridors along rivers and terrestrial sites	Guidance document produced	DCC, DLR, BCI, Birdwatch, IFI, NPWS
35	Prepare planning and design guidance on net biodiversity gain	To inform the Council on how to incorporate net biodiversity gain in the planning process	Guidance document produced	DCC, DLR
			Number of sites where net biodiversity gain has been applied and achieved	
36	Organise a conference on Building for Biodiversity/Nature inclusive design	To organize at least 1 conference promoting best practice examples of nature inclusive design	Conference organised	-
37	Pilot a biodiversity inclusive design for a social housing estate with green roofs, green walls, wetland & pond SUDS, green carparking, nest boxes in facades, wildflower meadows and wildlife friendly shrubs and trees in open space	To gain practical experience within the County Council with Building for Biodiversity and to allow for the monitoring of the impact of these measures on the flora and fauna in the new development	Demonstration site developed of a social housing site where biodiversity inclusive design has been applied	-
38	All Council housing, parks and infrastructure projects to include biodiversity enhancement proposals	To ensure that Council projects achieve at least no net loss and ideally a net biodiversity gain	Number of Council projects where no biodiversity net loss has been achieved	-
Building for Biodiversity (Action Nos. 31 – 38):				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with building for biodiversity provide for planning and guidance on incorporation and enhancement of biodiversity including piloting biodiversity inclusive design. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including water and the landscape. The actions will indirectly contribute to the protection and enhancement of European sites. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
Managing Open Space for Biodiversity				
39*	Develop pesticide use policy for Fingal County Council	Eliminate pesticide use in the Council where possible	Policy document prepared	-
40*	Support and promote All Ireland Pollinator Plan Actions for Councils and monitor resulting changes	Increase by 20% the area of Council owned land that is managed with the objective of improving biodiversity	Acreage of FCC owned open space subject to wildflower management	TTs
			Annual monitoring program for invertebrates established for key sites	
41*	Implement Tidy Towns Biodiversity Action Plans	To guide 23 TT group efforts for nature conservation	Annual number of actions implemented from Tidy towns Biodiversity plans	TTs
42	Organise and monitor the effects of a biodiversity make-over of 3 housing	To gain practical experience with managing open space and gardens for	3 demonstration estates established	-
			Annual monitoring program implemented	

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
	estates in Fingal in conjunction with local residents and FCC Operations Department	Biodiversity and to monitor of the impact of particular measures on flora and fauna		
43	Develop Urban greening Plans for Dublin 15, Swords and Balbriggan	To prepare 3 Urban greening plans that outline biodiversity & green infrastructure enhancement opportunities in these towns	3 Urban Greening Plans prepared Number of actions implemented from Urban Greening Plans	-
Managing Open Space for Biodiversity (Action Nos. 39 – 43):				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with managing open space for biodiversity provide for the management and promotion of the existing biodiversity resource. The actions also seek to pilot and monitor biodiversity enhancement projects. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including human health, soils, water and the landscape. The actions will indirectly contribute to the protection and enhancement of European sites. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
Woodland and Wetland Projects – Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation				
44*	Prepare wetland and river restoration project for the Bog of the Ring and the Matt river corridor	To restore wetland river habitat and improve water quality to good status and capture carbon	Restoration plan prepared % of actions from restoration plan implemented Acreage of land acquired for wetland and river restoration Water Quality status of Matt river improved Length of river corridor restored Populations of target species stable or increasing: Otter, Kingfisher, Dipper, Bats, Amphibians, Snipe, Grasshopper warbler & Waterrail	Local community
45*	Restore St. Ita’s wetlands local nature reserve	Maximise water attenuation capacity and nature conservation benefits	Two roads removed from wetland Number of new open water features added Install interpretative signage Populations of target species stable or increasing	-
46*	Develop SUDS demonstration sites in the Tolka Valley, Ward River Valley, Balbriggan town Park and Rogerstown estuary	To gain experience with using wetlands to treat surface water effluent to improve water quality	The number of demonstration sites developed The water quality status of the adjoining river and the outflow of the SUDS features.	-
47	Prepare and implement woodland management plans in Fingal Demesnes and parks	To enhance the nature conservation value of the woodlands in Fingal	Number of woodland management plans prepared Number of actions implemented at each site Populations are stable or increasing of target species: Hairy St. John’s Wort, Yellow archangel, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Leislars Bat, Natterer’s bat, Wiskered bat, Brown Long-eared bat, Spotted flycatcher at woodland management sites	-

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
48	Acquire sites for woodland planting at St Catherine’s park and Ardgillan Demesne and prepare masterplans for the design of these woodlands.	To expand existing woodland cover and regional parks	Acreeage of land acquired for new woodland planting	-
			Two masterplans prepared for new woodland sites	
			Acreeage of new woodland planted	
49	Identify and acquire where possible, Climate buffer sites where flood defence features can be removed or relocated to increase flood capacity of rivers and estuaries	To increase flood capacity of rivers and estuaries, restore natural dynamics, restore floodplain habitat & capture carbon	High potential climate buffer sites identified	-
			Acreeage of land acquired for increasing the floodplain capacity of rivers and estuaries	
			Number of projects implemented to develop the climate buffer sites	
50	Prepare river restoration project for the Ballyboughal river and implement on FCC lands and acquire lands where necessary	To restore river habitat and improve water quality to good status and capture carbon	River Restoration plan prepared	Local community
			% of actions from restoration plan implemented	
			Acreeage of land acquired for river restoration	
			Water Quality status of river improved	
			Length of river corridor restored	
			Populations of target species stable or increasing: Otter, Kingfisher, Dipper, Bats & Salmon	
51	Carry out feasibility study to restore Garristown Bog and acquire lands where opportunities arise	To establish if the former 300ha wetland can be restored	Feasibility study undertaken	Local community
			Acreeage of lands acquired for wetland restoration purposes	
Woodland and Wetland Projects – Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation (Action Nos. 44 – 51):				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with woodlands and wetlands projects – climate change adaptation & mitigation provide for the restoration, protection and management of the woodland and wetland biodiversity resource, including for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The actions also seek to implement demonstration projects and feasibility studies to educate and promote the actions. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including soils, water, climate and the landscape. The actions will indirectly contribute to the protection and enhancement of European sites. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
Wilding				
52	Acquire and/or lease lands at Rogerstown, Broadmeadow and Baldoyle estuaries	To create more robust core sites, restore natural processes and allow for wilding opportunities	Acreeage of land acquired or leased for wilding purposes at estuaries	Landowners
			Number of wilding projects implemented on newly acquired lands	
53	Support reintroduction of Osprey in Fingal and install artificial nest platforms near estuaries	To establish a sustainable breeding population of Osprey along the Fingal coast	Osprey reintroduced in Fingal	Golden Eagle Trust & Birdwatch
			Number of artificial nesting platforms installed	
			Numbers of breeding pairs of Osprey in Fingal	
54	Wild FCC owned Corballis golf club lands to create natural Grey dunes (bad status in Ireland)	To restore at least 75% of the dune habitat at Corballis	Wilding project implemented	-
			Acreeage of good quality Grey dunes at Corballis	



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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
55	Acquire large area of farmland or work with farmer(s) for wilding project to create alternative natural habitat for declining typical farmland species	To organize a demonstration project to showcase and assess the effectiveness of wilding farmland in enhancing the populations of declining farmland species	Acreeage of farmland acquired or under cooperative agreement with local farmer for wilding demonstration project	Local farmer(s)
			Annual monitoring program implemented to establish effects on Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow, Stockdove, Birds of Prey, Invertebrates and Bats	
56	Organise and/or support a national conference on wilding	To organize at least 1 conference promoting the use of wilding as a nature conservation tool	Conference organised	-
57	Carry out feasibility studies of developing a Marine Protection Area along the Fingal Coast and on the restoration of Oysterbeds, Shellfish beds, Seagrass beds and Kelp stands	The feasibility studies will determine to what extent these marine habitats can be restored and what practical actions and steps are required to make such projects a success	Feasibility study undertaken for Marine Protected Area between Howth and Rush	Marine Institute, UCD and fishing industry
			Feasibility studies undertaken of restoration potential for Oysterbeds, Shellfish beds, Seagrass beds and Kelp stands	
58	Restore marine ecosystem along Fingal coast by supporting restoration projects of Oysterbeds, Shellfish beds, Seagrass beds and Kelp stands	To support or organize at least 2 projects to restore the marine ecosystem	Number of sites and acreage of restored Oyster beds, Shellfish beds , Seagrass beds and Kelp stands	Marine Institute, UCD and fishing industry
Wilding (Action Nos. 52 – 58):				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with wilding provide for the enhancement, protection and management of the biodiversity resource, including marine areas. The actions also seek acquire additional lands for supporting biodiversity and / or wilding projects. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including soils, water, climate and the landscape. The actions will contribute to the protection and enhancement of European sites. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
<i>Agri-environmental Schemes and Irish Rare Farm Breed Conservation</i>				
59*	Develop Newbridge Farm as a national hub for the promotion of Irish rare farm breeds	To support and promote the conservation of Irish rare farm breed	% of actions from Newbridge Rare Breed Study implemented	DAFM, rare breed societies
			Number of breeding females of cattle, horses and goats at Newbridge	
60*	Use native Irish farm breeds for conservation grazing schemes	To support and promote the conservation of Irish rare farm breed	Number of sites where native livestock breeds are used for conservation grazing	-
61	Develop a 400ha demonstration Agri-Environment EIP Scheme with local farmers in Fingal targeting farmland birds and habitats and water quality improvement measures	To implement conservation measures for farmland species & habitats and water quality improvement at landscape level	EIP project proposal submitted and approved	Local farmers
			Number of farmers participating in scheme	
62	Develop Bird of Prey Conservation project with local farmers including raising	To increase the Bird of Prey population of 4 species	Populations of target species stable or increasing: Grey Partridge, Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow, Stock Dove, Bird of Prey, pollinators	Birdwatch & Local farmers
			Number of farmers participating in Bird of Prey project.	

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
	awareness of the impacts of Rodenticide use and its proper application		Populations of target species stable or increasing: Red Kite, Buzzard, Barn owl, Kestrel and Long eared owl	
63	Develop demonstration farm(s) for biodiversity conservation e.g. hedgerow management, field margins, river management, soil improvement, Integrated pest management, nest boxes etc	To set up a demonstration farm with a local farmer showcasing best practice for biodiversity conservation and monitoring effectiveness of measures	Demonstration farm set up Number of visits by interested farmers Populations of target species stable or increasing: Yellowhammer, Linnet, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge, Bats, Badger, Birds of Prey, <i>Andrina</i> and <i>Nomada</i> ground nesting bee species	Local Farmer, Birdwatch, DNFC, BCI & Hedge-laying Association
64	Carry out feasibility study on local marketing of the produce from lands included in the ecological network	To develop a regional market between farmers and consumers for local wood, fruit, veg and meat etc	Feasibility study undertaken Number of participating landowners	-
65	Support the development of a national conservation strategy for rare farmland breeds	To support and promote the conservation of Irish rare farm breed	Level of funding support provided towards national conservation strategy	DAFM, rare breed societies
Agri-environmental Schemes and Irish Rare Farm Breed Conservation (Action Nos. 59 – 65)				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with agri-environmental schemes and Irish rare farm breed conservation provide support for conservation of native rare breeds and the use of such breeds for the management of grazing for wider biodiversity value. The actions also seek to liaise agricultural landowners and to develop a demonstration farms / farm projects to promote and understand the value of the actions. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including soils, water and the landscape. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
Research & Monitoring				
66*	Fund satellite tracking studies of winter birds listed as qualifying features in SPA's	To identify key roosting and feeding sites of qualifying species outside the estuaries	Key feeding and roosting sites identified outside designated sites for Brent Goose, Golden Plover, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew	Exeter University
67*	Carry out population assessments of wintering birds in estuaries	To determine population trends of qualifying species	All qualifying bird species associated with estuarine SPAs	Birdwatch
68*	Repeat rare and protected flora study along the Fingal coast	To provide new flora data for state of environment report	Coastal rare and protected flora study repeated and report(s) produced	-
69*	Carry out Otter survey all of rivers in Fingal	To determine if Otters are still present along all Fingal rivers	Otter survey of all Fingal rivers undertaken and report produced	LAWPRO
70*	Carry out urban bird and bat survey	To determine the presence of breeding birds in urban areas	Number of towns that are included in the urban bird and bat studies Number of records submitted by the public	Birdwatch, BCI, TT's
71	Undertake study to identify the habitats and species at risk of climate change	To determine which species and habitats are most at risk from climate change and where they are located	Study undertaken and report with map of habitats at risk produced	Universities

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
72	Explore funding models for carbon offsetting to fund wetland and woodland development	To find alternative funding sources to fund wetland and woodland creation	Funding models identified Number of projects implemented using new funding models	CARO
73	Map petrifying springs on the green infrastructure maps	To help protect petrifying springs from adverse developments	Petrifying springs mapped and incorporated on green infrastructure maps	-
74	Re assess Annex I habitats outside designated sites	To determine the conservation status of the Annex I habitats	All sites revisited and assessed Green Infrastructure maps updated in County Development Plan	-
75	Map townland boundary hedgerows on green infrastructure maps	To help protect the most important hedgerows from adverse developments	All townland boundaries mapped and incorporated on Green Infrastructure maps	-
76	Carry out or support Harbour Porpoise satellite tagging program along Fingal Coast	To identify the key feeding and breeding areas within the Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC	Tagging program carried out and report published	NPWS, UCC
77	Review beach management practices of FCC in context of management of SAC's and SPA's	To assess the impact of beach cleaning operations on the ecology of the beach and dunes habitats and associated flora & fauna species	Beach cleaning operations reviewed and amended where necessary	-
78	Prepare a <i>State of the natural environment in Fingal</i> report	To provide an overview of the state of the natural environment in Fingal based on a comparison of historical and new survey work	<i>State of the natural environment in Fingal</i> report prepared	-
79	Repeat coastal breeding bird study	To provide new bird data for state of environment report	Breeding bird study repeated and report(s) produced	Birdwatch
80	Repeat Intertidal study of the Fingal Coast	To provide new intertidal data for state of environment report	Intertidal study repeated and report(s) produced	-
81	Repeat woodland bird, mammal and rare plant survey	To provide new woodland data for state of environment report	Woodland studies repeated and report(s) produced	-
82	Carry out Countryside Breeding bird survey	To provide new countryside bird data for state of environment report	Countryside Breeding Bird survey completed and report produced	Birdwatch
83	Carry out Countryside Mammal Survey	To provide new mammal data for state of environment report	Countryside Mammal survey completed and report produced	BCI
84	Carry out Fungi Surveys in Turvey, Luttrellstown, Knockmaroon, Santry and Malahide Demesne	To locate the most important locations for fungi in these woodland and provide new data for state of environment report	Fungi surveys completed and report(s) produced	DNFC
85	Carry out an ecological study and habitat assessment of the Ballyboughal, Mayne, Sluice and Matt rivers	To find out what flora & fauna species can be found along our rivers, what the conservation status is of our rivers and	Number of rivers surveyed Report produced	LAWPRO

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
		what works are required to restore the rivers to their full health.		
86	Carry out flora study and breeding bird study of the Skerries Islands	To find out what flora species can be found on the islands and how the breeding seabirds are faring	Flora and breeding bird survey undertaken and report produced	Birdwatch Ireland
87	Carry out breeding bird, flora and invertebrates studies in Turvey Nature Reserve, Donabate	To determine the effects of land management changes in the park	Breeding bird, flora and invertebrate studies undertaken and reports produced	-
88	Carry out feasibility study for bird conservation projects at the tips of the Donabate & Portmarnock peninsulas	To assess the potential for the re-instatement of a Little Tern and Ringed Plover colony at Donabate and Portmarnock	Feasibility study undertaken	Birdwatch
			Number of proposed actions in study implemented	
89	Assess lands adjacent to estuaries for breeding potential for Redshank, Snipe and Lapwing	Identify and protect potential breeding sites for Redshank, Snipe and Lapwing	Field studies undertaken and report produced	Birdwatch
90	Support Eco-toxicology studies on farmland	To research the impacts of the use of pesticides on farmland species	Number of research projects funded by the Council	Universities
91	Carry out ecological study of the large open water bodies and reservoirs in Fingal	To find out what flora & fauna species can be found in the large standing water bodies	Field studies undertaken and report produced	-
92	Establish a monitoring programme on coastal dynamics along the Fingal Coast	To gain a better understanding of the natural sedimentation and erosion processes that occur along the Fingal coastline	Coastal monitoring program established	Local community groups and specialists
			Results published every two years	
Research & Monitoring (Action Nos. 66 – 92)				
<p>AA consideration: The actions associated with research and monitoring provide support for education, study, understanding and monitoring of the wider biodiversity resource. The actions will allow the Council develop appropriate conservation and enhancement interventions and to monitor the effectiveness of actions. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including soils, water, climate and the landscape. The actions will indirectly contribute to the protection and enhancement of European sites. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				
Raising Awareness				
93*	Redevelop Fingal Biodiversity website and social media channels	Re-develop website to promote latest research, projects volunteering work and events	Fingal Biodiversity Website re-developed	-
94*	Organise a monthly program of events e.g. walks, talks and practical conservation outings	Organise at least 20 outings per year	Number of outings organized per year	-
			Number of attendees to events	
			Nature Education Centre developed at Turvey	-

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No.	Action	Objective	KPI	Partner Organisations
95*	Develop a Nature Education Centre for Dublin in Turvey Nature Park	To provide a dedicated nature education centre for Dublin	Number of annual visitors	
96	Develop a promotional program on what people can do for wildlife in their garden.	To encourage the public to make their gardens more biodiversity friendly	Promotional program developed	Local garden centres
			Online tutorials included in Fingal Biodiversity website	
97	Run a nature education program for primary and secondary schools	Provide multi-annual nature education program to at least 20 schools	Number of schools participating in program	-
			Number of students participating in program	
98	Include biodiversity corner at Flavours of Fingal festival	To promote conservation work by FCC and other groups	Biodiversity corner included in event	NGO's, Tidy towns
99	Organise training days for County Council staff and politicians regarding biodiversity	To educate staff and politicians about biodiversity e.g. building for biodiversity, rewilding, & appropriate assessment	Number of training days organized	-
			Number of attendees at training events	
100	Develop operational procedures with respect to Council work that may impact on SAC's and SPA's and protected species	To avoid damaging SAC's and SPAs and protected species as a result of Council activities	Operational procedures developed for Operations and Water Services Departments	-
<p>Raising Awareness (Action Nos. 93 – 100)</p> <p>AA consideration: The actions associated with raising awareness provide support for promotion, education, and better understanding of the nature, significance and sensitivity of the biodiversity resource. The actions will provide for positive effects on biodiversity and on other environmental aspects, including human beings, soils, water, climate and the landscape. The actions will indirectly contribute to the protection and enhancement of European sites. Likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded. See also Section 4.1 of the AA Screening Report.</p>				

* Priority action



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