

Interim Review of the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan 2002-2006

November 2005



AN ROINN COMHSHAOIL, OIÐHREACHTA AGUS RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



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MARSH SAXIFRAGE

The Marsh Saxifrage is protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 and is listed on Annex 11 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Although once widely distributed across Europe, this species is now declining and under considerable threat and is currently only found in County Mayo, with seven sites documented. A project is under way to investigate the conservation biology of the Marsh Saxifrage. The project aims to devise a suitable monitoring programme and management plan for this species.



WICKLOW MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK – Management Plans for both the Wicklow Mountains National Park and Killarney National Park were published in 2005 and officially launched by Dick Roche T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in April and May.

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Foreword by Dick Roche T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government



In 2002, the Government adopted the first ever *National Biodiversity Plan* for Ireland. This decision reflected our commitment to the implementation of the objectives of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the decision of the EU Heads of State and Government at their Spring Summit in Gothenburg in 2001 to “halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010”.

The Plan covers the five-year period 2002–2006 and sets out a series of 91 actions for the conservation and sustainable use of Ireland’s biodiversity.

This Interim Review of the *National Biodiversity Plan* outlines the level of progress we have made in implementing the 91 actions and identifies the areas where further efforts are required. In undertaking this Review, I have given careful consideration to the outcome of an independent review which was carried out by a Biodiversity Working Group of COMHAR – the National Sustainable Development Partnership – and which was completed and submitted to me in November 2004. I would like here to express my warm appreciation for the excellent work undertaken by COMHAR and for the clarity and focus of their analysis.

Since this Review has had the benefit of recording further action under the Plan since the COMHAR analysis, I am able to demonstrate a greater level of progress in implementation. Nevertheless, my Review highlights a number of areas where greater progress is required to meet our goals.

We are now less than five years away from the 2010 target set by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity across the globe and the more ambitious EU target of halting biodiversity loss. I am determined that Ireland will contribute fully to the achievement of these targets and I hereby commit the Government to continued sustained action in this area.

Dick Roche T.D.
Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and Local Government.

Glossary of Abbreviations

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| | |
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| AEWA | – African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement |
| ASCOBANS | – Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the North and Baltic Seas |
| CAP | – Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union |
| CBD | – Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CITES | – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna |
| CFP | – Commonage Framework Plans |
| CFB | – Central Fisheries Board |
| COFORD | – The National Council for Forest Research and Development |
| COP | – Conference of the Parties to multi-lateral Conventions, such as the CBD |
| DCI | – Development Co-operation Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs |
| DCMNR | – Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources |
| DAF | – Department of Agriculture and Food |
| DEHLG | – Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government |
| EHS | – Environment and Heritage Service of Northern Ireland |
| ENFO | – Public Environmental Information Service, established by DEHLG |
| EPA | – Environmental Protection Agency |
| EIA | – Environmental Impact Assessment |
| EIS | – Environmental Impact Statement |
| FAO | – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations |
| FRM | – Forest Reproductive Material |
| FSAI | – Food Safety Authority of Ireland |
| FIPS | – Forest Inventory and Planning System |
| GWFGS | – Greenland White-fronted Geese Scheme |
| GFP | – Good Farming Practice |

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| IBEC | – Irish Business and Employers Confederation |
| ICES | – International Council for the Exploration of the Seas |
| ICWs | – Integrated Constructed Wetlands |
| ICZM | – Integrated Coastal Zone Management |
| IDSG | – Inter-Departmental Steering Group overseeing the NBP |
| LBAP | – Local Biodiversity Action Plans |
| LMO | – Living Modified Organisms |
| NBP | – National Biodiversity Plan |
| NDP | – National Development Plan |
| NGO | – Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NHAs | – National Heritage Areas |
| NRA | – National Roads Authority |
| NPWS | – National Parks and Wildlife Service of DEHLG |
| NS-SHARE | – The North-South Shared Aquatic Resource |
| OSPAR | – Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic |
| OPW | – Office of Public Works |
| REPS | – Rural Environmental Protection Scheme |
| SACs | – Special Areas of Conservation for habitats and species |
| SAPs | – Species Action Plans |
| SEA | – Strategic Environmental Assessment |
| SFM | – Sustainable Forest Management |
| SIR | – Site Inspection Reporting |
| SPAs | – Special Protected Areas for Birds |
| UNEP | – United Nations Environment Programme |
| WFD | – Water Framework Directive of the European Union |

Members of the Inter-Departmental Steering Group on the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan

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| | |
|--|--|
| Chris O’Grady – Chair | Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government |
| David Kelly | Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government |
| Michael O’Donovan | Department of Agriculture & Food |
| Mary Jackson/ Fionn O’Grada | Department of Arts, Sports & Tourism |
| Declan O’Rourke/ Dave O’Donoghue | Department of Communication, Marine & Natural Resources |
| Donal Coleman/ Breda Dooley | Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs |
| Margaret Barrett/ Tony O’Reilly/ Lt. Col. Dave Prendergast | Department of Defence |
| John Quinlan/ Grainne Dooher | Department of Education & Science |
| Gary Tobin | Department of Finance |
| Paula Slattery/ Karen Lynch | Department of Foreign Affairs |
| Supt. J. Shanahan | An Garda Síochána |
| Tony Morris | Department of Health & Children |
| Gerry Shannon | Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform |
| Tom Sherlock/ Nathy Gilligan | Office of Public Works |
| Mr. Jude Connellan | Revenue Commissioners |
| Harry Dunne | Department of Social & Family Affairs |
| Eimear Cotter | Department of Transport |
| <i>Supported by:</i> | |
| Josephine Walsh/ Brian Thornberry/ John Gorman | Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government |



WOODLAND/FOREST

A woodland survey is in progress and these types of surveys are an important element in the selection of sites for NHA designation.

4.1 Biological Diversity/Biodiversity

Biological diversity (biodiversity) is the term given to the variety of life on earth. Essentially, it covers all life on earth and the ecosystems, which support it. It comprehends wildlife, plants and domesticated crops and animals and their interface with humans. It covers traditional nature conservation but also the interaction between biodiversity and many other sectors/issues such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, trade, biotechnology, biosafety and access to, and benefit sharing from, genetic resources. Biodiversity provides humans with food, fresh water, fuel, building materials, medicines etc. For this reason, biodiversity can be considered as the very raw material which sustains life on earth.

In his statement to COHAB, the first ever Conference on Health and Biodiversity in Galway on 23–25 August, 2005, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said:

“If we fail to use and conserve biodiversity in a sustainable manner, the result will be increasingly degraded environments, and a world plagued with new and more rampant illnesses, deepening poverty, and the perpetuation of patterns of inequitable and unsustainable growth. Unfortunately, our actions run the risk of taking humanity down this path. As the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment reported earlier this year, human activities are fundamentally changing the planet, perhaps irreversibly. Over the last fifty years, pollution, climate change, degradation of habitats and overexploitation of natural resources led to more rapid losses of biological diversity than at any other time in human history”.

4.2 UN Convention on Biological Diversity

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) resulted from the Earth Summit held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Ireland signed the Convention in 1992 and ratified it in 1996. The CBD is pre-eminent amongst nature/biodiversity-related Conventions, both in terms of its widespread support (188 countries are Parties) and its comprehensive scope.

The main target of the Convention is to secure a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biodiversity across the globe by 2010. The Convention has three objectives, which are:

- the conservation of biological diversity
- the sustainable use of its components; and
- the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

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By becoming a Party to the Convention, Ireland has committed itself to working at national level and to international measures to achieve the three objectives of the Convention.

Under the CBD, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was adopted in January 2000. Ireland ratified the Protocol in November 2003. The objective of the Protocol is to provide a framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have an adverse effect on the conservation of biological diversity, taking into account risks to human health. An LMO is essentially the same as the more popularly recognised Genetically Modified Organism (GMO).

4.3 EU Target on Biodiversity.

The EU, at the Gothenburg Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2001, set an even more ambitious target than that of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The EU target is now to halt, rather than to significantly reduce, the current rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. The main vehicle available to the EU for this purpose is the **EC Biodiversity Strategy**, which was the subject of a comprehensive review under Ireland's Presidency of the EU in 2004. A Presidency Conference held in Malahide, Dublin, on the subject - "**Biodiversity and the EU - Sustaining Life, Sustaining Livelihoods**" - attracted participation from 22 Member States and a wide range of stakeholders across Europe, and adopted the **Malahide Message**. This document represents a major contribution to the finalisation of the review of the EC Biodiversity Strategy. The intention is that the European Commission will bring forward proposals for re-focussed measures under the Strategy to assist in meeting the 2010 target, based on the **Malahide Message**.

4.4 Ministerial Responsibility for Biological Diversity/Biodiversity

Section 9 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, places a statutory responsibility on the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to "*promote the conservation of biological diversity*".

Local school children from An Taisce's Green Schools Programme helping to launch the Countdown 2010 Initiative at the Malahide Biodiversity Conference "Sustaining Life, Sustaining Livelihoods" during Ireland's EU Presidency in May 2004.



4.5 Countdown 2010

Ireland is affiliated to the IUCN, the World Conservation Union, which is currently promoting *Countdown 2010*, a broad alliance of Governments, State agencies, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and private sector interests which are being brought together to achieve the 2010 biodiversity targets. *Countdown 2010* involves awareness raising; development of monitoring strategies and indicators; promotion of information and data; and promotion of regional and national action. During its Presidency of the EU, Ireland was pleased to be able to facilitate the European Launch of *Countdown 2010* at its Biodiversity Stakeholder Conference, organised jointly with the European Commission, in Malahide in May, 2004.

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COUNTDOWN
2010
Halt the loss of biodiversity

4.6 National Biodiversity Plan 2002-6

The National Biodiversity Plan is the main vehicle by which Ireland is meeting its commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the EC Biodiversity Strategy. The Plan was approved by Government and published in April 2002. Its implementation is overseen by an Inter-Departmental Steering Group. The Plan contains 91 Actions aimed at securing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Ireland, and where possible its enhancement, and also to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally.

A key concept of the Plan is that Government Departments and agencies, individuals, communities, non-governmental organisations, regional and local authorities all share responsibility for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The focus of the National Biodiversity Plan is, therefore, to integrate biodiversity concerns into all sectoral activities over time.



HEDGEROWS

Measure 5 in REPS provides for the conservation and maintenance of hedgerows. The new REPS requires participants to choose from a range of biodiversity options to rejuvenate existing hedgerows and to establish new hedgerows. Under the Wildlife Act 1976-2000, it is illegal to cut hedgerows between 1st March and 31st August.

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The ninety-one Actions in the Plan are broken down and divided into the following categories:

- Integration of Biodiversity into Sectors (11 actions, nos. 1 to 11)
- Legislation (3 actions, nos. 12 to 14)
- Protected Areas (10 actions, nos. 15 to 24)
- Species Conservation (6 actions, nos. 25 to 30)
- Habitat and Ecosystem Conservation (1 action, no. 31)
- Countryside Conservation, (3 actions, nos. 32 to 34)
- Conservation and Sustainable Use of Genetic Diversity (3 actions, nos. 35 to 37)
- Biosafety - Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) (2 actions, nos. 38 and 39)
- Knowledge: Identification, Monitoring and Research (5 actions, nos. 40 to 44)
- Public Awareness and Education (2 actions, nos. 45 and 46)
- EU, Regional and International (10 actions, nos. 47 to 56)
- Terrestrial Ecosystems: Agriculture (8 actions, nos. 57 to 64)
- Terrestrial Ecosystems: Forests (14 actions, nos. 65 to 78)
- Inland Waters and Wetlands (6 actions, nos. 79 to 84)
- Marine and Coastal (7 actions, nos. 85 to 91).

4.7 Independent Assessment of the National Biodiversity Plan

At the request of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, COMHAR – the National Sustainable Development Partnership, agreed to undertake an independent assessment of progress in implementing the National Biodiversity Plan. An informal Biodiversity Working Group of COMHAR was established to undertake this task and their conclusions were submitted to the Minister in November, 2004, and subsequently published as *“Recommendations on the Implementation and Review of the National Biodiversity Plan”* in May, 2005. The full COMHAR analysis, as outlined in this publication, can be accessed at www.comhar-nsdp.ie. A summary of the COMHAR analysis follows under two headings – their observations on the Plan; and their recommendations.

4.8 COMHAR - Observations on the Plan

The COMHAR publication had the following observation to make on the Plan:

- It provides a comprehensive list of actions addressing a wide range of Government Departments, agencies, non-governmental bodies and other stakeholders.
- It is a welcome first step on the road towards engaging all parts of Government in protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- The Plan represents a major opportunity for Ireland to capitalise on and enhance its clean green image by taking action to conserve species and habitats which could become a symbol of a high quality environment.

- A significant body of biodiversity skills and expertise has been built up in recent years due to Government investment in research programmes.
- Economic growth and enhanced public awareness has improved the opportunity and demand for better knowledge generation, conservation and enhancement.
- Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is a major opportunity for refocusing agricultural policy as a positive force in favour of biodiversity. Cross compliance requirements will bring about major changes for biodiversity.
- Biodiversity loss is occurring at an increasingly rapid rate and therefore demands effective and timely action.
- Pressures on biodiversity are increasing with growth in population, use of resources and change in land use, urbanisation, road building and infrastructure development.
- Climate change is bringing about movement of species from one geographical region to another. This is adding to the complexity of biodiversity management.
- The impact of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and threat of invasive species to Irish flora and fauna needs to be examined.

4.9 COMHAR – Recommendations

The COMHAR report made the following recommendations to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government:

1. Establish a Biodiversity Fund (€1 million per annum) to support local site conservation and management, and for the production of biodiversity awareness and educational material.
2. Establish the biodiversity unit within the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and create biodiversity units or posts within the relevant Government Departments and State agencies, as soon as possible.
3. Set up a Biodiversity Forum for all relevant stakeholders.
4. Carry out biodiversity awareness and training in all relevant Government Departments and in local authorities.
5. Generate public awareness of the importance and relevance of biodiversity protection to the people of Ireland.
6. Establish prioritised targets and timescales for species and habitat protection and conservation.
7. Develop indicators to measure progress of conservation measures.
8. Update present information systems to improve access to information on all aspects of biodiversity conservation in Ireland.
9. Develop better means of communication with the public.

Interim Review of the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan



In undertaking this Interim Review of the National Biodiversity Plan, careful consideration has been given to the COMHAR analysis and recommendations. Moreover, the Inter-Departmental Steering Group which oversees implementation of the Plan has had a longer timeframe to undertake its assessment than was the case for COMHAR. As a result, the Group is of the opinion that it can report significantly more progress in the implementation of the Plan. However, it is acknowledged that there are still areas of the Plan where increased efforts will be required to meet its objectives.

Overall, this Interim Review concludes that, of the 91 Actions in the Plan, the following is the breakdown of progress achieved to date:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Number of Actions Implemented | 23 |
| Numbers of Actions where Implementation is Ongoing | 60 |
| Number of Actions where further action is required..... | 8 |

A detailed commentary on the progress achieved under each of the 91 Actions, under their 15 categories, follows. However, in summary, this Review would highlight the following achievements under the National Biodiversity Plan:

- the continuing designation by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas for birds and Natural Heritage Areas, now covering some 11.5% of the land mass of the State;
- the continuing designation by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government of marine areas, thus ensuring a strong network of protected areas both on land and at sea, and now comprising some 420,000 hectares;
- an increase from €22.42m in 2002 to €34.87m in 2005 in the funds available to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for nature conservation;
- the establishment of dedicated Biodiversity Units in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and in the Department of Agriculture and Food;
- the submission of a revised national Nitrates Action Programme for Ireland to the European Commission in July 2005, to protect waters against pollution from agricultural sources and to strengthen the application of good agricultural practice; the Programme will be a key component in Ireland's ongoing efforts to protect and enhance water quality, aquatic ecosystems and water-dependent terrestrial ecosystems;

- the introduction of the Single Farm Payment Scheme this year, which requires the implementation of cross compliance and obliges farmers to maintain all their land in good agricultural and environmental conditions;
- the rollout of REPS 3 – the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme – in 2004 which now includes a far greater emphasis on biodiversity and, for example, has specific measures for the conservation and maintenance of hedgerows, with options to rejuvenate existing hedgerows and to establish new ones;
- the implementation by the Department of Agriculture and Food of a co-ordinated programme for the conservation and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture, food and forestry, overseen by a National Advisory Committee on Plant and Animal Genetic Resources;
- the employment of forest ecologists by both Coillte and the Forestry Service of the Department of Agriculture and Food;
- the drafting of Guidelines for Local Biodiversity Action Plans and for Departmental Biodiversity Action Plans;
- the appointment by Local Authorities with the support of the Heritage Council of 27 Heritage Officers to date;
- the establishment of a National Biodiversity Research Platform to underpin the scientific basis for the National Biodiversity Plan, which is, inter alia, elaborating a framework for a Biodiversity Knowledge Programme for Ireland;
- a significant biodiversity dimension to the annual call for research by the Environmental Protection Agency;
- agreement to the establishment of a Biological Records Centre which will be an essential mechanism for identification, monitoring and research in the area of biodiversity;
- the ratification by Ireland in 2003 of the Cartagena Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which aims to provide a framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs), which are more commonly known as Genetically Modified Organisms;
- the ratification by Ireland of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement and of Annex V of OSPAR – the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic;
- the putting in place of capital allowances for corporate investment in renewal energy products and the provision in the Finance Act, 2004, which provided for the introduction of a scheme for excise tax relief for biofuels (this scheme enabled the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources to announce, in August, 2005, the granting of this excise relief to 8 Biofuel Projects for the introduction of 16 million litres of biofuels over a two year period commencing in 2005; the 8 Projects address plant oil, biodiesel and bioethanol products);
- the announcement by the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources of a major new €45 million decommissioning programme for older and larger Irish fishing vessels operating in the whitefish fleet and the shellfish sector, resulting in the removal of 25% of the tonnage of the whitefish sector;
- the development of a comprehensive plan, at a cost of €10.6 million, by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources to rehabilitate an

area of some 2,300 hectares in the vicinity of disused mining operations at Silvermines, Co. Tipperary;

- the extension by the Finance Act, 2005, of the termination date for farm pollution control for an additional two years to end-2008; moreover, an excise differential for sulphur-free fuel was introduced as a specific environmental measure;
- the rollout of a new management planning structure for our National Parks, commencing with the launch of the Wicklow Mountains National Park Management Plan in April, 2005, and of the Killarney National Park Management Plan in July, 2005;
- the completion of over 4000 Commonage Framework Plans – designed to eliminate overgrazing resulting from excessive sheep grazing levels;
- the completion of 295 draft Conservation Plans for Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas for birds, with a public consultation phase for these plans already underway;



CORNCRAKE

The Corncrake Scheme existed prior to the NBP but has had a positive contribution to the objectives of the plan with the scheme assisting in increasing the number of breeding pairs of this species.

- the preparation, in conjunction with the Environment and Heritage Services of Northern Ireland, of Species Action Plans for the Irish Hare, the Pollan, the Corncrake and the Irish Lady's Tresses Orchid and for an all-island study on Invasive Alien Species with further Species Actions Plans to follow;
- the reintroduction of the Golden Eagle to Glenveagh National Park, which has been very successful with 40 birds out of the 43 reintroduced surviving to date;
- the introduction of a National Strategy for Plant Conservation, which is being led by the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland;
- the adoption by Development Co-operation Ireland under the Department of Foreign Affairs of a specific policy for environmentally-sustainable development in developing countries; under this policy, appropriate levels of analysis and assessment will be carried out to ensure that development programmes and policies do not result in harm to the environment;
- the publication by the NRA of guidelines "Landscape Treatments for National Road Schemes in Ireland" which *inter alia*, promote the use of native species derived from indigenous seed stands, ecological landscape design, landscape integration, nature conservation and biodiversity and heritage amenity;
- solid progress towards reaching the target of 30% of broad leaf planting by the end of 2006;
- the putting in place of communications protocols between the Office of Public Works (OPW), the Central Fisheries Board, Regional Fisheries Boards and the National Parks and Wildlife Service on the annual drainage programme of OPW;
- the awarding in 2005 of 82 Blue Flags for Ireland's beaches and marinas (the highest ever including Dollymount, resulting in Dublin being one of only five EU capital cities which boasts a Blue Flag; this very welcome development points to the real improvements which are being made to the water quality in Dublin Bay and elsewhere by way of new and upgraded sewage treatment plants, leading to very positive benefits for freshwater and marine biodiversity);
- the strong emphasis being placed on biodiversity in the leaflets and postcards produced by ENFO, the free public environmental information service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government;
- as a further critically important information and awareness measure, the continued extension of the Green Schools Programme, which is administered by An Taisce and co-funded by local authorities and private sponsorship; with no fewer than 651 schools now displaying the green flag and a total of 1,975 schools, or 49% of all schools in the State, registered for the Programme, the extent of penetration of the



ENFO ON TOUR

ENFO on Tour visited 950 schools with presentations and workshops. In this image Kate Bradbury of ENFO on Tour is telling kids how leatherback turtles in our oceans can choke on plastic litter which they mistake for their prey jellyfish.

Programme in Ireland's schools network is now internationally recognised as the standard that other participating countries aspire to; the activities promoted by the Programme include composting; the recycling of paper, tetrapaks, batteries and stamps; reusable lunch boxes and bottles; and on-site shredding of paper for re-use as packaging;

- the major initiative taken under Ireland's Presidency of the EU in May, 2004, to elaborate new priorities and targets for the review of the EC's Biodiversity Strategy by means of the *Killarney Declaration* on biodiversity research priorities and the *Malahide Message* on biodiversity policy priorities at a major EU Stakeholders' Conference;
- the ratification, on behalf of the EU, of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture under Ireland's EU Presidency.

There follows a full analysis of the status of implementation of each of the 91 Actions under the National Biodiversity Plan.

5.1 Status of Implementation of all 91 Actions

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
|--|---|---|
| INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY INTO SECTORS | | |
| <p>1. Relevant Government Departments and State agencies to prepare, with stakeholders, their own Biodiversity Action Plans in line with agreed guidelines to ensure and promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.</p> | <p>Relevant Government Departments and State agencies</p> | <p>Further action required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines for the production of Biodiversity Action Plans have been developed and issued to all Government Departments. Departments and Agencies have not yet produced plans although many have introduced biodiversity-friendly initiatives which promote the conservation of biodiversity. <p><i>Comhar recommendation to establish workshop for Government Departments will be implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>2. Improve generation and management of information on biodiversity within Government Departments and agencies.</p> | <p>Government Departments/ Agencies</p> | <p>Implementation Ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Inter- Departmental Steering Group (IDSG) has an important role to play in relation to this action and Departmental nominees have been asked to consider steps to increase awareness of the issues across their Departments. The Department of Agriculture and Food (DAF) has been involved with European projects creating and maintaining databases aimed at improving the generation and management of information on biodiversity. Examples of these projects include the European Association for Animal Protection (EAAP) Animal Genetic database; the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Domestic Animal Diversity Information Systems; and the European Plant Genetic Resources database. DAF, through the Conservation of Plant and Animal Genetic Resources Grant Scheme, is funding mean kinship analysis for animal breeders to use in their mating plans. Close liaison within the relevant Divisions in DAF, with Teagasc, and with other Government Departments and agencies continues to be maintained in the generation and management of the information. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
|--------|-------------------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) manages an environmental research programme called the Environmental Research Technological Development and Innovation Programme on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government (DEHLG). Biodiversity is one of the main topics under this programme. One of the programme aims is to generate the knowledge and expertise needed to protect and manage Ireland's environment, including biodiversity. Research and monitoring provides the knowledge base for policy implementation and new policy development. The EPA stores the datasets compiled during the research projects and makes the results of the research projects available to all interested parties in both electronic and hard copy format. Details of the relevant projects can be accessed on the EPA website, www.epa.ie. • The EPA's most recent State of the Environment report "Ireland's Environment 2004" included a chapter (6) on natural heritage and biodiversity. • ANSwer – www.answer-online.org, is an online register of environmental research being undertaken in the island of Ireland. This is a joint project by the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) in the North and the EPA in the south. The Shared Register of Environmental Data Sources contains links to Environmental data sources in the Island of Ireland. • As lead Department and as part of its own Environmental Policy Statement, DEHLG has been successful in retaining its ISO 14001 : 1996 accreditation for its headquarters at the Custom House, Dublin, in 2004, having initially received it for 2003; ISO 14001 is the international standard for environmental management systems; this DEHLG initiative might prove of interest to other Government Departments and Agencies over time. <p><i>The IDSG agree with the Comhar recommendation that this Action needs to be undertaken in tandem with action 1 and that a framework for Government Departments on managing biodiversity must be devised. This framework will be addressed in the proposed workshop for Government Departments as recommended under action 1.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>3. Create Biodiversity Units or posts within relevant Government Departments and State agencies whose functions will include the preparation of biodiversity action plans within the framework of the National Biodiversity Plan.</p> | <p>Relevant Government Departments; Relevant Agencies;</p> | <p>Further action required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity Units have now been established in two lead Departments, DEHLG and DAF. The Office of Public Works (OPW) have created a new Environmental Section with responsibility for biodiversity issues in the Engineering Services Division. A Development Specialist in Development Co-operation Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs) is responsible for the implementation of their recently adopted policy for environmentally sustainable development. The Forest Service and Coillte have engaged ecologists who are engaged in conserving forest biodiversity. This includes raising awareness of biodiversity issues within the forest industry, as well as advising on best practice and site inspections <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to provide training for Biodiversity Units will be implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>4. Ensure all relevant plans and programmes and all new legislation, and key existing legislation, incorporates provisions requiring the conservation of biological diversity.</p> | <p>All Government Departments</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEHLG currently provides observations on all relevant new legislation, programmes and plans in relation to biodiversity conservation. This provision has been strengthened by the creation of the new Biodiversity Unit. The introduction of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) in July 2004 requires public bodies to consider the environmental consequences of all plans and programmes across all sectors. One of the objectives of Development Co-Operation Ireland's (DCI) policy for environmentally sustainable development is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into its policies and programmes. Some examples of initiatives taken by individual Government Departments and Agencies include:-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government approved in 2004 the drafting of a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Statutory Body to manage the Curragh, with the exception of the Curragh Camp, and to update the existing legislation. The Bill is at present being drafted by the Parliamentary Counsel. Activities on the Curragh will be regulated and conducted in accordance with the Governments overall environmental policy as currently set out in the documents <i>Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, the National Heritage Plan and the National Biodiversity Plan.</i> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity is not specifically integrated into OPW plans and programmes but multiple sustainable practices are currently being implemented as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A Partnership Working Group “Green Team” is instigating recycling, promotes staff awareness and supports a number of smaller staff-led green initiatives. – Architectural Services Division operate a work group on “Sustainable Design and Universal Access” which encourages good practice in “Environmentally Preferred” alternatives in a number of products. – Furniture Division have independently assessed their product specifications for environmental friendliness and now implement a range of “green” features, such as preference for timber from sustainably-managed forests. – Electronically-controlled Building Management Systems are now being integrated into many public buildings, which improves energy efficiencies. • The Environmental Section in Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail takes cognisance of the Wildlife Acts and EPA advice when undertaking infrastructural works. Environmental issues are also considered at routine meetings on infrastructural projects. • The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) have developed a comprehensive plan to manage and rehabilitate an area of some 2,300 hectares in the vicinity of disused mining operations at Silvermines, Co. Tipperary. The works, which will cost approximately €10.6 million, will significantly reduce the level of soil and water contamination by lead and other heavy metals arising from mining activities in the area. The Plan envisages extensive revegetation and improved water quality in local rivers and streams and the creation of wetland areas that will benefit existing flora and fauna and encourage increased biodiversity in the area. The Plan also provides for the ongoing monitoring and protection of new eco-systems, which evolve within the remediated sites. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action will be given further consideration</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>5. Ensure biodiversity continues to be fully addressed in the implementation of the operational programmes of the National Development Plan, and in the preparation of future National Plans (e.g. National Development Plan, National Sustainable Development Strategy); ensure the integration and enhancement of biodiversity will be a key consideration.</p> | <p>Department of Finance</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current National Development Plan (NDP) and its Operational Programmes were subjected to an eco-audit and “guidelines” were set up to help the Programme Managers in this task. Biodiversity was considered as part of this process. The Department of Finance has reported that biodiversity will be a consideration in the development of the next NDP. • Biodiversity is also an integral component of the Forestry and The Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) measures in the CAP Rural Development Plan 2000-2006. The integration and enhancement of biodiversity will be a key consideration in the preparation of further forestry and agri-environment measures in future National Plans. • In the EPA’s 2005 call for research proposals in Urban Environment, Urban Biodiversity is one of the areas addressed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving our understanding of biodiversity in the urban environment and its role in the life and well-being of citizens - Development of tools for promotion of good biodiversity practice in planning, design and construction of new urban developments - Development of activities/tools to promote awareness and enhancement of biodiversity for communities and business - Assessment of the impact of lighting / sky-glow from urban areas on biodiversity and measures to mitigate effects - Development of tools for promotion of good biodiversity practice for the management of areas including municipal green spaces, urban coastlines and urban waterbodies – individually and as groupings, corridors, networks etc; - Preparation of inventories of types and quantities of urban ecosystems. <p><i>The Comhar view that there is a need to more adequately address biodiversity issues is acknowledged. DEHLG Biodiversity Unit will continue to pursue this and will promote the understanding of biodiversity at Operational Programme level.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>6. Consider the development of financial instruments/incentives to promote the conservation of biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Finance Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <p>DAF have a number of successful measures in place aimed at conserving biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised REPS 3 Scheme, introduced in 2004, places a far greater emphasis on biodiversity conservation. • Both the Native Woodland Scheme and the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme operated by the Forest Service include significant biodiversity components. • An Exchequer-funded grant scheme, which commenced in 1996, continues to operate and to date almost €0.7m has been awarded to projects supporting specific genetic resource activities in the area of plant and animal genetic resources. • The Kerry Cattle Grant Scheme and the Irish Draught Mare Scheme are grant-funded schemes, operated by DAF, aimed at providing incentives to promote the conservation of these rare breeds. The preservation of these breeds is also an optional undertaking, with additional payment, in REPS. • DAF are also considering a number of other options for use of modulation funds, i.e. EU funds diverted from direct farm supports, for rural development measures under the recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. • Under the Single Payment Scheme introduced by DAF in 2003, farmers have more freedom to exploit new farming opportunities, including the growing of crops for non-food uses such as energy; in 2004 an Energy Crops Scheme was introduced by DAF offering aid of €45 per hectare for areas sown under energy crops. • The Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources provides supports to the renewable electricity sector, to stimulate the deployment of renewable energy, through 15 year power purchase agreements; it also has two Divisions responsible for promoting and developing renewable energy and energy efficiency in the economy. Sustainable Energy Ireland, a State Agency under the remit of the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources, has a range of programmes to stimulate renewable and energy efficiency deployment across all sectors of the economy. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July, 2005, the Minister for Communications Marine & Natural Resources announced a major new decommissioning programme for older and larger Irish fishing vessels operating in the whitefish fleet (over 18 metres); this biodiversity-friendly initiative will run for three years and will remove 25% of the tonnage of the whitefish sector; it will also target the older vessels and will remove excess capacity in the scallops fleet; the overall aim of this new programme is to achieve a better balance between the size of the fishing fleets and the available fishing opportunities. • A small number of instruments existing prior to the National Biodiversity Plan such as the Corncrake Scheme have also made a positive contribution to the objectives of the Plan with the grant scheme assisting in increasing the number of breeding pairs of this species. A total of €200,000 was allocated to the Corncrake scheme in 2004. • A category in the Tidy Towns competition gives specific recognition to the maintenance of wildlife areas within and on the outskirts of the participating towns. Other categories were also revised, such as landscaping and overall developmental approach, to take into account the maintenance and enhancement of Ireland's biodiversity at community level in accordance with local Agenda 21 objectives. • The Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE) requires producers to be responsible for the financing of the collection, treatment, recovery and environmentally sound disposal of WEEE from 13 August 2005. Effective implementation is going to bring positive economic and environmental dividends for Ireland and the key stakeholders. The EPA will have the lead role in enforcing the WEEE regulations. • The EPA has recently announced seed funding to companies developing environmentally beneficial technologies and processes as part of its implementation of the Commission's Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP). The amount of the fund is €3 million. • The EPA announced a call for proposals on Biodiversity research on 30th June 2005 with a budget in the region of €1.5 million. One of the requirements is that the forces creating environmental change be evaluated in a comprehensive manner and that recommendations should be made on mitigation measures where appropriate. Theme 2.3 of the call addresses sectoral impacts on biodiversity and related issues, e.g. industry services and energy generation. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <p>Tax measures currently in place include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital allowances for corporate investment in renewable energy projects; and a provision in the Finance Act 2004, has provided for the introduction of a scheme for excise tax relief for pilot bio fuels projects. • The termination date of the scheme for farm pollution control has been extended for an additional 2 years from 31 December 2006 to 31 December 2008 by the Finance Act 2005. This scheme provides tax relief for expenditure incurred on the construction of farm buildings or structures for the reduction or elimination of farm pollution as part of a farm nutrient management plan, certified by the Department of Agriculture and Food. The writing-down period for this relief was also reduced from the current 7 years to 3 years. • In the Summary of Budget 2005 Measures, the Minister for Finance announced an excise differential for sulphur-free fuel as an environmental measure. He also extended, until 31 December 2006, the scheme which provides a 50% refund on Vehicle Registration Tax on the purchase of 'hybrid' vehicles. • Budget 2005 announced that the Department of Finance in conjunction with the Revenue Commissioners would undertake this year a detailed review of certain tax incentive schemes and tax exemptions. This review is now underway. • The Minister for Finance will consider further initiatives in the tax area but any impacts on competitiveness will need to be considered. • Finally, the Department of Finance view on the Comhar proposal for a Tax Credit/waiver of stamp duty for transfer of lands for nature conservation is that the stamp duty code provides few exemptions and introducing such a provision would represent a significant departure from normal stamp duty rules. Also, if an exemption was introduced for this type of situation, there would be demands for similar treatment for other cases, which would lead to a narrowing of the stamp duty base. This would run counter to the Government's taxation policy of having a wide tax base in order to keep direct tax rates low. <p><i>Comhar recommendations under this Action will be further considered by the IDSG.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>7. Establish a Biodiversity Unit within the lead Department to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate and support delivery of the National Biodiversity Plan and the continuing response to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) • support the preparation of the sectoral biodiversity plans; and • assist the work of the Biodiversity Forum. | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Biodiversity and Policy Unit has been created reporting to a Director in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of DEHLG which is now the lead Department for the NBP. The Unit is headed by an Assistant Principal Officer with a Higher Executive Officer, Executive Officer and Clerical Officer and with support from the Research Branch and regional management in NPWS. • The Unit also acts as the focal point for the Convention on Biological Diversity and contributes to the development of EU policy through, inter alia, attendance at Working Group meetings and contributions to policy papers. • The Unit will be working closely with the Biodiversity Forum upon its establishment. <i>The Comhar recommendation has been implemented in full.</i> |
| <p>8. Continue the role of the Inter-Departmental Biodiversity Steering Group and expand to oversee ongoing exchange of information, co-ordination and collaboration in respect of biodiversity in the context of the implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan and furtherance of the objectives of the CBD.</p> | <p>All Government Departments/ Agencies</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the Inter-Departmental Steering Group on the implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan is ongoing. Following the completion of the Mid-Term Review, the IDSG will meet bi-monthly to oversee future implementation. • The IDSG will develop strong links with the Biodiversity Forum following its establishment. <i>There are no specific Comhar recommendations on this Action.</i> |
| <p>9. Establish a specific Biodiversity Forum, representative of all stakeholders, to provide a mechanism for consultation with, and input from, all interested parties, specifically in relation to biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Further Action Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the request of DEHLG, an informal Biodiversity Working Group of <i>Comhar</i>, the National Sustainable Development Partnership, produced a review of the Plan entitled “Recommendations on the Implementation and Review of the National Biodiversity Plan”. This document and its recommendations were considered by the IDSG during the drafting of this review. <i>The Comhar recommendation that the Forum be established, comprising a broad range of representatives reflecting the scope of the Plan, will be implemented.</i> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| Providing For Biodiversity at local level | | |
| <p>10. Each Local Authority to prepare a Local Biodiversity Plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders.</p> | <p>All Local Authorities</p> | <p>Further action required. Draft guidelines for the production of Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) by Local Authorities were developed by NPWS in consultation with the Heritage Council. These guidelines are being utilised by the Heritage Officers (see Action 11). A number of Local Authorities have commenced the production of LBAPS. <i>The Comhar recommendation that Local Biodiversity Action Plans should form part of the County Development Plan process will be considered.</i></p> |
| <p>11. Each Local Authority to designate a contact officer for natural heritage conservation matters in its area.</p> | <p>All Local Authorities</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27 of the 31 Local Authorities have appointed Heritage Officers, with part funding in most cases coming from the Heritage Council. The Local Authorities that have not appointed Heritage Officers have designated contact officers for nature conservation matters. <i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation on this Action.</i> |
| LEGISLATION | | |
| <p>12. To review continuously the adequacy of wildlife legislation in furthering the objectives of strategies for biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS review the Wildlife legislation on a continuous basis. Work on a review of the Habitats Regulations is ongoing to afford improved protection to Natura 2000 sites. A Statutory Instrument amending the Regulations was signed by the Minister in July 2005. This amendment sets out, pending primary legislation, to address issues relating to the transposition of the Habitats Directive into Irish law. Reasoned opinions from the European Commission and Judgements from the European Court of Justice have pointed out areas where change is needed. <i>The Comhar recommendation to incorporate transparency and public participation in the review process will be implemented, as would be the norm for DEHLG.</i> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>13. Introduce legislation to provide a legal basis for National Parks (and other heritage properties) and, if necessary, introduce a National Parks and Heritage Properties Bill.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Office of Public Works</p> | <p>Implementation Ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to provide a legal basis for the National Parks is under way. Responsibility for built Heritage Properties now lies with the OPW. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action is being implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>14. Review the need for legislation to provide additional conservation measures for a limited number of species which are of particularly serious conservation concern.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS review the Wildlife legislation on a continuous basis. (see Action 12) Resources have been utilised on research-led agri-environment policy advances for species such as the corncrake, research and site designation for species such as marsh saxifrage, and research and survey on groups for which there is still little data, such as bryophytes. In the latter case this will culminate in a Red Data Book, and the subsequent addition and removal of species in the Flora Protection Order. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to carry out a review will be pursued subject to the availability of resources.</i></p> |
| PROTECTED AREAS | | |
| <p>15. Review previously proposed Natural Heritage Areas and designate as appropriate under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing but complete in respect of Peatland sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 raised bogs and 75 blanket bogs have been designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) under the Wildlife (Amendment Act) 2000. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to review the legislative basis for these sites will be considered.</i></p> |
| <p>16. Elaborate and publish a framework for the selection and designation of future Natural Heritage Areas, including sites of geological and geomorphological importance, taking into account the views of interested parties.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Geological Survey Office</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports on the framework used for the selection of raised bog and blanket bog NHAs have been produced by NPWS. The Geological Survey of Ireland, through its Geological Heritage Programme, has compiled a list of sites of geological and geomorphological importance and work on the selection of sites for designation as NHAs is ongoing. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to publish the draft framework on the internet will be implemented.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>17. Complete identification and notification of SACs and SPAs, their transmission to the European Commission and formal designation.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing but largely complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natura 2000 is the European network of protected sites. The network represents areas which have been identified as being of the highest ecological value for natural habitats and for species of rare, endangered or vulnerable plants and animals. The term Natura 2000 comes from the 1992 EC Habitats Directive. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. 420 candidate SACs have been evaluated by the European Commission and accepted as Sites of Community Importance. There are some outstanding requirements which relate to further listing of habitats and species in addition to some extensions of existing sites, in particular the inclusions of further stretches of smaller rivers where salmon spawn. Approximately 428,000 hectares of marine areas have been proposed for designation as SPAs and SACs. These proposals are being evaluated by the European Commission and it is anticipated that the EU evaluation will lead to a requirement for more marine sites. These are likely to relate to offshore habitats, e.g. sandbanks, rather than intertidal coastal habitats. Ireland has designated 128 sites to date as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds under the 1979 Birds Directive with a further 16 to follow. The total area of SPAs comprises in excess of 230,000 hectares. Ireland is still required to designate sites for certain dispersed species, in particular the hen harrier and chough. The Department is committed, when this information has been assessed, to further consultation with landowners' representatives in relation to the proposals before they are finalised. The Department will discuss these proposals and their implications also with landowners' representatives. Certain other dispersed species also require designation of sites. For species such as merlin and kingfisher this can be contained on lands / waters already designated. For species such as red-throated diver and corncrake it is likely that a small number of areas will be designated for their protection. 5 additional areas for Greenland White-fronted Goose are required. These will be extensions of existing designated areas. In addition, designation of further areas of foreshore, cliff and offshore areas for seabirds are required. This will have minimal impact on landowners. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation is in line with DEHLG policy.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>18. Provide advice and prepare and issue Guidelines on the Conservation of SACs, SPAs, NHAs and other protected areas to local authorities and other authorities.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some guidance on this area has been incorporated into relevant Planning Circulars. Draft conservation plans are made available on request and further ad-hoc advice is available from DEHLG. No formal guidelines specific to conservation areas have been issued to date but work will commence on this Action. <p><i>There are no specific Comhar recommendations on this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>19. Continue the programme of acquisition, agreement to, and designation of a representative series of Nature Reserves.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of State-owned properties are currently being considered for designation as Nature Reserves under the Wildlife Acts 1976 & 2000. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation that land acquisition by the State is not always necessary is welcomed and the recommendation that the mechanism for designating privately-owned lands be published will be implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>20. Prepare and implement site specific conservation plans and other plans (e.g. Commonage Framework Plans) with particular reference to Natura 2000 sites, NHAs, Nature Reserves and National Parks in consultation with affected landowners and the public.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 295 draft conservation management plans for SACs/SPAs have been produced with 104 plans edited and maps digitised in preparation for public consultation. 32 Plans have completed a phase of public consultation. Management Plans for Wicklow Mountains National Park and Killarney National Park were published in 2005. Both plans completed a phase of public consultation. Text for Management Plans for Glenveagh National Park, Connemara National Park, Ballycroy National Park, Co. Mayo, and the Burren National Park will be finalised for consideration by Park Liaison Councils in the first instance. 4372 Commonage Framework Plans (CFPs) have been prepared covering 439,840 ha. <p><i>The future structure of the Park Liaison Councils is currently under review and this review will address the stakeholder representation raised by Comhar. The Management Plans for the National Parks include practical actions, targets and strong review mechanisms, as sought by Comhar.</i></p> |

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| <p>21. Continue to provide compensation for farmers and other landowners for losses incurred in managing their lands in a manner which is compatible with the conservation requirements of designated sites.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A figure of €4.5m was paid in both 2002 and 2003 while €3.1m was paid in 2004 for sheep destocking. A lower figure of approximately €1.8m is likely to be expended in 2005 because of the introduction of the Single Farm Payment, which includes the premium element of NPWS previous payments. For 2005, €10.8m has been allocated for capital compensation and acquisition of sites which are of conservation importance or will consolidate existing State holdings. This figure represents a large increase on previous years arising from a commitment in the 2003 Sustaining Progress Partnership Agreement, where it was decided that the Government would review all aspects of the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997, under which SACs are designated. Discussions with the farming organisations led to an agreement in July 2004 which allowed for substantial increases in the rates to be paid per acre for the purchase of bog or turbary and in the once-off incentive payment, to encourage owners to cease cutting and sell. The agreement also included a provision for retrospective by means of ex-gratia payments. Land in designated areas is eligible for a higher rate of payment in REPS 3 and DAF has undertaken to consult with other Departments as appropriate to establish farming prescriptions for site management. The NPWS Farm Plan Scheme provides compensation for losses, and payment for works done by farmers whose land is designated as SAC, SPA, NHA or commonage. It applies only to farmers who do not participate in REPS. NPWS has engaged in consultation with the farming organisations and the Department of Agriculture & Food. Farm planners were trained in June 2005. The Scheme will be advertised in the farming press and nationwide. Information will also be available on the NPWS website. A small number of farmers have already received payments under the new Scheme. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation for a distinction to be made between compensation for wildlife damage and damage resulting from farm practices will be considered further.</i></p> |

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| <p>22. Continue or put in place further measures, including appeals procedures, to provide for consultation with, and the participation of, those affected by existing and future protected areas.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Nature Conservation Designation Appeals Board, formerly known as the SAC Appeals Advisory Board, is in place. Since its establishment in 1998 the Board has dealt with 151 appeals and a further 66 appeals are outstanding. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to allow NGOs and other State agencies to appeal within the formal appeals process will be considered.</i></p> |
| <p>23. Establish a comprehensive programme to monitor the condition of protected areas.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Site Inspection Reporting (SIR) programme has been set up to report on impacts that may potentially affect (both positively and negatively) the integrity of the designated sites. The area affected is calculated and the impacts listed. The reporting cycle is every three years and is carried out by the NPWS Conservation Rangers. Aerial monitoring has also been carried out to monitor the integrity of designated sites. In conjunction with the SIR, more detailed programmes have been devised for both habitats and flora and fauna species. These programmes monitor the status of various habitats and species with a number of habitats selected each year, depending on resources. Since the inception of the NBP, monitoring programmes have included surveys on woodlands, the seal, the freshwater mussel, the lesser horseshoe bat, the Vertigo Angustiar snail, the bottle-nosed dolphin, the leatherback turtle, the natterjack toad, the otter and a number of plant species. In relation to the monitoring of bird species, the NPWS surveillance programme has concentrated on certain species listed in Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive and groups of migratory waterbirds and breeding seabirds. National surveys have been conducted for many years for Annex 1 species which include: Berwicks Swan, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose, Brent Goose, Corncrake, Terns, Hen Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Chough, Golden Plover, Migratory Species*, Breeding Seabirds* and the Wintering Waterfowl* (* the last three are co-ordinated internationally with the UK). The surveys on these species are conducted by the NPWS, Birdwatch Ireland, Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and GWFGS (Greenland White-fronted Goose Study). |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Countryside Bird Survey has been running for the last 5 years and is co-ordinated by NPWS, Birdwatch Ireland, the Heritage Council and University College, Cork. The survey monitors the abundance and distribution of breeding Bird populations, which will allow the assessment of the effects of temporal changes in the change of the environment on the more common species. <p><i>There are no specific Comhar recommendations on this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>24. Review effectiveness of legislation, policies, practices and mechanisms for site safeguards.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NPWS is responsible for ensuring that activities outside of those covered in Wildlife legislation are kept under review from a biodiversity conservation perspective. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation for annual progress reports has been noted and will be considered</i></p> |
| <p>SPECIES CONSERVATION</p> | | |
| <p>25. Prepare & periodically revise Irish Red Data Books (or similar assessments) for important species groups, in collaboration with Northern Ireland authorities.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Data books set out the conservation status of threatened species. Red Data Books currently exist as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish Red Data Book 1 – Vascular Plants Red Data Books of Britain & Ireland – Stoneworts Irish Red Data Book 2 – Vertebrates: Threatened Mammals, Birds, Amphibians and Fish in Ireland A number of surveys have commenced with a view to revising the Red Data Book on vascular plants. Extensive preparatory work has been carried out for the production of a Red Data Book on Bryophytes. The National Botanic Gardens hosted a stakeholder meeting on 28-29th September, 2005 to initiate a consultation on the present red data book listing and important areas of plant diversity. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on the production of annual progress reports will be implemented as resources permit.</i></p> |

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| <p>26. Identify species of highest conservation concern in Ireland and prepare, and periodically revise, Species Action Plans for them.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four Draft Species Action Plans (SAPs) have been prepared in conjunction with the Environment & Heritage Services (EHS) of Northern Ireland. The species are the Irish Hare, the Pollan, the Corncrake and the Irish Lady's Tresses Orchid. Drafts of these plans have been placed on the respective Departmental websites for public consultation. The programme for the preparation of additional Species Action Plans is being developed in conjunction with EHS (NI). The priorities for Species Action Plans are determined by the need to meet Ireland's responsibilities under EU Directives. In 2005 Species Action Plans will be prepared for <i>Margaritifera Margaritifera</i> (freshwater mussel), Killarney Fern, Red Squirrel and nine Bat species. The Red Squirrel and Bats SAPs will be joint projects with the EHS (NI), while the Killarney Fern and <i>Margaritifera Margaritifera</i> SAPs will be carried out by the NPWS. A major publication on the Natural History of Ireland's Dragonflies has been completed, in full co-operation with the NI authorities. Dragonflies represent important biodiversity indicators and are a valuable asset when determining the health and well-being of our wetland habitats. Birdwatch Ireland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (NI) produced 'Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland' (BOCCI) in 1999. There are plans to review this document and, in that process, to bring NPWS and EHS(NI) on board. This exercise indicates that there are species of bird not listed on annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive which require immediate attention. Ireland has also participated in the process of EU action plans for endangered annex 1 species (Corncrake) and a suite of EU action plans for species listed in annex 2 of the Birds Directive (huntable species) which have an unfavourable conservation status. All Species Action Plans will be reviewed and revised as appropriate. In 2000 a project to reintroduce the Golden Eagle to Glenveagh National Park commenced as part of the Millennium celebrations. The project has been very successful with 40 birds out of the 43 reintroduced surviving to date. It is expected that the releasing of birds will continue for the next two years. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EPA's 2005 call for biodiversity research included the following relevant areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further research into suitable sites for the reintroduction of species at risk, or which have already been lost. This should consider the reasons for the original loss and means of preventing such loss again - Describe the ecology and conservation biology of species of functional and conservation importance. Improve understanding of species interaction, including pollination - Identify keystone species and the potential effects of targeted species loss in nationally-important ecosystems - Identification of minimum viable areas for species of conservation importance - Creation of a register of rare / unusual species and recommendations on soil management practices in order to ensure sustainability. • The EPA's 2005 call for research in soils included a theme entitled "Keystone species in Soil". Deliverables from this project should provide literature review, list of keystone species for the main types of soils in Ireland, role / impact of these species in the whole ecosystem, identification of pressures & impacts on keystone species and a list of species in need for special protection. <p><i>The Comhar recommendations under this Action are noted.</i></p> |
| <p>27. Encourage the Gardai and Customs officers to play an enhanced role in enforcing wildlife legislation, through, among other actions, the provision of specific training and guidance.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Revenue Commissioners</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary discussions have been held between NPWS and the Gardai in relation to the provision of training on wildlife legislation. Probationer Gardai stationed in areas that require training to police the Wildlife Act will be instructed on the relevant legislation and associated powers. The Superintendent at the Garda College has undertaken to contact NPWS when preparing the 2006 training programme. The Gardai have carried out a number of investigations into serious wildlife crimes (e.g. illegal seal cull on the Blasket Islands in 2004). • Training on the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is regularly provided for Customs Officers. |

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| <p>28. Prepare strategies, in consultation with Northern Ireland, to control introduced species and to prevent, or minimise, future (accidental or deliberate) introductions of alien species which might threaten biodiversity. Unless clearly safe, all deliberate introductions into Ireland of alien species will require a risk assessment.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government; Department of Agriculture & Food;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Energy and Environment Unit of the Revenue Commissioners provide a coordinating role and ensure that training is provided to all relevant staff. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation for in-service training for Gardai stationed in areas which include Natura 2000 sites will be implemented.</i></p> |
| | | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An All-Ireland Invasive Alien Species report has been completed . A stakeholders workshop was hosted in 2003 as part of the All-Ireland Review. A joint North-South tender document is being prepared for a three year project to implement the key recommendations of the report. Legislative review will be an element of this work. In the absence of EU and national legislation, DAF operates an Action Plan, similar to that operated in other Member States, which controls the import of seeds to prevent the introduction of material with adventitious Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) contamination. The European Commission is experiencing difficulties in bringing forward suitable legislation in this area that will gain the support of the majority of Member States DAF also chairs an interdepartmental / interagency group charged with the task of drawing up guidelines and best practice for coexistence of GM crops alongside non-GM crops in Ireland. The working group proposes to finalise its Report soon. The group consulted with the Northern Ireland authorities in the preparation of the Report. All Garden Centres are inspected annually by DAF for quarantine pests and diseases in connection with compliance with the plant passport controls. Samples are taken from relevant material and sent for analysis for diseases etc. Imported material from third countries is inspected at point of entry. In recognition of the need to tighten up control systems on alien species (both wildlife and domesticated), DAF will be proactive in any liaison arrangements put in place by DEHLG in the preparation of strategies to control introduced species which might threaten biodiversity. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to publish and implement an all-island Invasive Species Report will be implemented.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>29. All public bodies will endeavour to use native species, landraces and breeds and the public will be encouraged to do so.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Agriculture & Food All Local Authorities National Roads Authority</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Heritage Council have compiled a list of native species which will be incorporated into the guidelines for the production of Local Authority and Departmental Biodiversity Action Plans. In response to the National Biodiversity Plan, the National Roads Authority (NRA) has produced a guideline document '<i>Landscape Treatments for National Road Schemes in Ireland</i>'. A core objective of the guidelines is to promote the use of native species derived from indigenous seed stands. Furthermore, the guidelines promote an 'ecological landscape design' and include landscape integration, nature conservation and biodiversity and heritage amenity. The NRA has also produced guidelines for the assessment of ecological impacts of national road schemes. This document provides guidance on the assessment of impacts on the natural environment during the planning and design of national roads. Supplementary Measures and Biodiversity Options under REPS encourage the planting of native species where appropriate; e.g. planting of trees, riparian zones, etc. Supplementary Measure 2 in REPS encourages farmers to create and maintain apple orchards with specific varieties traditional to Ireland. Supplementary Measure 3 assists farmers who rear Kerry Dexter and Irish Maol cattle, Connemara Pony, Irish Draught horses and Galway sheep. Many of the National Parks and other NPWS sites are being used as homes to rare plants and animals. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation for more action with other State agencies, notably in aquaculture and forestry, will be pursued.</i></p> |

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| <p>30. Ireland will seek to ensure that relevant laws and instruments, including those concerned with trade – both within the EU and internationally – do not contribute to the problem posed by alien species and Ireland will support the development of specific international instruments to address alien species.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support was given to an International Aquatic Invasive Alien Species Conference held in 2004 and the Department engages at EU and international level in efforts to tackle the problem of alien species. NPWS is reviewing the need to draft a Ministerial Order under section 52(6)(A) of the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000 to prohibit the possession or the introduction of certain species of wild bird, wild animal or wild flora or any part, products or derivative of such which may be detrimental to native species. This measure would effectively involve the black listing of species. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation on this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION</p> | | |
| <p>31. Initiate a programme to survey and assess the key natural habitat types which have been inadequately studied. (An indicative list of the habitats to be covered by the programme is given in Appendix III of the NBP).</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A study on lagoons was completed in 2004. A follow up project will be completed this year to create a standard set of data for all known Lagoons. The locations of all lagoons have been registered with the EPA, who have overall responsibility for co-ordination of the implementation of work on the Water Framework Directive. Surveys have also been carried out on blanket and raised bogs, while a woodland survey is in progress and a survey on Sea Cliffs is planned. These surveys are an important element in the selection of sites for NHA designation. The EPA's 2005 call for biodiversity research included the following topics – the investigation of specific ecological requirements on habitats and species dependant on marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems and the influence of biodiversity of habitats on the functioning of other habitats. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be pursued.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION | | |
| <p>32. Review options on regulation of hedgerow removal and produce guidelines on hedgerows and biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under Section 46 of the Wildlife Act 2000, it is prohibited to remove or destroy hedgerows or any vegetation growing in any hedge or ditch between 1st March and 31st August. This requirement is advertised in the National Papers and the Farming Press each year. The NPWS has initiated a number of prosecutions arising from the unlawful cutting and removal of hedgerows. DAF and DEHLG supports Networks for Nature, a project run by environmental NGOs and funded by the Heritage Council, DAF and DEHLG. DEHLG and DAF are represented on the Interim Steering Group of Networks for Nature which had two objectives: to facilitate the implementation of a national hedgerow survey, which is ongoing, and the production of a booklet on standards for conservation, maintenance and cutting of hedgerows, which was published in 2004. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action will be pursued.</i></p> |
| <p>33. Ensure the new approach to hedgerow management for wildlife under the REPS scheme is implemented throughout the country, and that penalties for any removal of hedgerows are applied.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government All Local Authorities</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure 5 in REPS provides for the conservation and maintenance of boundary and roadside fences, stone walls and hedgerows in the interest of stock control, wildlife and scenic appearance of the area. A penalty of 100% is applied for hedgerow removal under REPS. The new REPS also requires participants to choose from a range of biodiversity options, including options to rejuvenate existing hedgerows and to establish new hedgerows. The EPA and DAF co-funded a desk study entitled "Identification of Environmental Variables for use in Monitoring for the Evaluation of the REPS". Hedgerow management is one of the aspects addressed in this report. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |

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| <p>34. The lead Department will develop Guides to Best Practice with Local Authorities and other relevant bodies to safeguard biodiversity. These will, inter alia, normally require such bodies to use native species and seed stock in their tree planting programmes and to employ other environmentally beneficial management practices (e.g. cease using herbicides)</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft guidelines on the production of Biodiversity Action Plans by Local Authorities have been prepared (see Action 10). These guidelines cover best practice to safeguard biodiversity and cover native species, seed stock and environmentally beneficial management practices. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to encourage Local Authorities and other public bodies not to use pesticides will be implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF GENETIC DIVERSITY</p> | | |
| <p>35. Establish a national advisory committee with the participation of stakeholders in Ireland to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on a co-ordinated programme on the conservation and utilisation of genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry; Characterise and inventory genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry both in-situ and ex-situ; Identify genetic resources in greatest danger of extinction and co-ordinate appropriate preservation initiatives; Ensure what is already held in existing collections is maintained; and | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national advisory committee on Plant and Animal Genetic Resources, chaired by the Department of Agriculture and Food, exists and reports on the co-ordinated programme for the conservation and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture, food and forestry. In addition, a national Consultative Committee was established to prepare Ireland's Country Report on Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) as part of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) State of the World Report on AnGR. This report was published in 2003. The aforementioned Exchequer-funded Genetic Resources Grant Scheme has funded projects aimed at the characterisation and inventory of genetic resources for food and agriculture, both in situ and ex situ. The National Preservation Strategy for Rare Breeds is designed to facilitate the protection of those animals identified by the Department as being in greatest danger of extinction. The Department, along with other State bodies, has participated in and funded work aimed at ensuring that genetic resources held in existing collections are maintained in a safe and satisfactory condition. The aforementioned Exchequer-funded Genetic Resources Grant Scheme has funded projects aimed at the conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture. It has provided seed capital for such projects to assist the replicating and propagating of plant and animal genetic resources. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote activities to assist the conservation of genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry; including through on-farm conservation; Examine the need for, and where required propose strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of wild genetic diversity; Undertake genetic characterisation and analysis of genetic variability for priority wild species; Conserve wild genetic resources ex-situ; and Support species conservation and recovery programmes for certain priority species. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same Scheme has also funded collection and characterisation missions of wild species of plants. Work is ongoing in this area – the new National Preservation Strategy for Rare Breeds will concentrate, inter alia, on recovery programmes. The Forest Service is responsible for the implementation of Council Directive 1999/105/EC on the marketing of Forest Reproductive Material (FRM). The Directive identifies that the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity of forests, including the genetic diversity of trees, is essential for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). The NPWS and the National Botanic Gardens are working on the development of a <i>National Strategy for Plant Conservation</i>. This plan has identified the importance of ex-situ actions with regard to Critically Endangered Species of vascular plants in Ireland. The Botanic Gardens will participate in a programme with <i>PlantNetwork: the plant collections network of Britain and Ireland</i> to collate a complete dataset of cultivation protocols for all threatened species in Ireland (ca. 120 spp.). The Forest Service, in association with The National Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD), maintains a National Catalogue of (Forest) Seed Stands. The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) is a collaborative mechanism among European countries to promote conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources. It was established to implement Resolution 2 (Conservation of forest genetic resources) of the First Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in 1990. COFORD services EUFORGEN on behalf of the Forest Service. (See also Action No 66) DAF has provided financial resources to support preparations for the first meeting of the fledgling Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) to be held in Spain in late 2005/early 2006. Ireland's contributions were the subject of special mention at a recent FAO meeting dealing with this issue. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |

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| <p>36. Review the legislative requirements for the protection and maintenance of genetic diversity.</p> | <p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Department of Agriculture & Food Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During its EU Presidency in 2004, Ireland chaired the introduction of a new EU Regulation to replace Council Regulation (EC) No 1467/94 on the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture that terminated on 31 December 1999. The new Regulation introduces a three-year programme and makes €10m available for suitable large-scale genetic conservation projects throughout the EU. • The Irish Presidency also saw the ratification, on behalf of the EU, of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). The Treaty, which came into force at the end of June 2004, deals with the following specific issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The obligation to provide access to all genetic resources contained in Annex 1 of the treaty – Fair and equitable benefit sharing – Farmers rights – Supporting components – Intellectual property rights • DAF will continue to participate in the process that will review the legislative requirements for the protection and maintenance of genetic diversity. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation on this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>37. Undertake a review and prepare a comprehensive Strategy on Access to Genetic Resources, with appropriate consultation, nationally and internationally.</p> | <p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Department of Agriculture & Food Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Further action required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aforementioned International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, to which Ireland is a signatory, deals with strategies on access to genetic resources. The key focus is on access to genetic resources with prior informed consent. • DAF will participate actively in any review process and preparation of a Strategy on Access to Genetic Resources, which may be prepared under the International Treaty. Ireland is currently involved in negotiations aimed at drawing an acceptable Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) under the Treaty. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation on this Action.</i></p> |

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| BIOSAFETY – GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs) | | |
| <p>38. Ireland supports the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and will ratify it in a timely manner, taking account, <i>inter alia</i>, of progress in relation to necessary legislative measures at EU level.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was ratified by Ireland in November 2003. The Protocol provides a framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs). Community legislation relating to genetically modified organisms, in particular Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms, and Regulation 1946/2003 on transboundary movements of genetically modified organisms, implement the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol. The necessary national legislative measures have been taken in respect of the Directive and the Regulation i.e. the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 2003 and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Transboundary Movement) Regulations 2004. The EPA has been designated as the focal point for the purposes of Regulation 1946/2003 as well as the Competent Authority (CA) for both contained use and deliberate release of GMOs into the environment. In addition, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and the Department of Agriculture & Food (DAF) are the Competent Authorities (CAs) for food and processing and for feed and processing respectively. Under the EPA's 2005 call for biodiversity research, proposals were invited to address the topic "Evaluation of the effect of GMOs on biodiversity", with particular reference to GM crops that are used for cultivation by the EU. This should relate to Irish agriculture. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>39. Through its participation in the Cartagena Protocol, Ireland will continue to support capacity building for biosafety in developing countries.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Foreign Affairs</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Co-Operation Ireland (DFA) supports capacity building across the full range of policies and sectors, through priorities identified by partner programme countries. Its support to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is focussed on capacity-building to address the goals of sustainable development. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |

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| KNOWLEDGE: IDENTIFICATION, MONITORING AND RESEARCH | | |
| <p>40. Prepare a prioritised and co-ordinated programme of inventories, surveys and research, and implement the first phase of the programme. Priority will be given to endangered or threatened habitats and species about which little is known, or which are of special conservation importance.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government National Platform for Biodiversity Research</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an active environmental research sector in Ireland. Research and services are carried out by the EPA and NPWS, who co-ordinate and work in partnership with environmental research underway by Government agencies and the third level sector on behalf of DEHLG. The environmental research base in Ireland has been fostered through the EPA's Environmental Research, Technological Development and Innovation Programme under the current NDP and through the biodiversity research programme managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The EPA programme has funded over 300 projects, involving more than 700 researchers in 15 third-level institutions here. The focus of the present EPA programme is to provide support to environmental policy in four key ways. Firstly, research is undertaken on priority environmental issues such as air and water quality, climate change and aspects of biodiversity. Secondly, large-scale projects are undertaken with key players in the different economic sectors – such as agriculture, forestry and transport – with the objective of guiding sustainable development. Thirdly, part – funding is provided in support of demonstration projects by Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) in the area of cleaner, greener, production processes, including waste prevention. This initiative is promoted by IBEC and projects have not only reduced waste and other emissions but, in doing so, have also shown how such measures can aid profitability. Finally, an environmental research centre of excellence is being developed within the EPA in close co-operation with the third-level colleges. The objective is to build capacity in the areas of environmental monitoring, research, data-handling, assessment, management, guidance and dissemination – in support of national planning. Within the NPWS a complement of 25 research staff manage a programme of research which supports in excess of 100 researchers. Most projects are regionally or nationally based, but some encompass the island of Ireland, involving North / South co-operation. |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Platform for Biodiversity Research has been established. The Secretariat to the platform is provided through a contract and is supported by NPWS and the EPA. A draft framework document has been developed setting out a framework for a biodiversity knowledge programme. The development of this document follows an important meeting of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research in Killarney in 2004 under Ireland's EU Presidency. At this meeting the research needs of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and its four action plans (Agriculture, Fisheries, Natural Resources, Economic Co-operation and Development) were considered. This document is currently being evaluated by the NPWS and the EPA. The National Botanic Gardens hosted a stakeholder meeting on 28-29th September, 2005, to initiate a consultation on the present red data book listing and the important areas of plant diversity. An amber list of species, denoting a "near threatened" category, will be developed from this meeting. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>41. Establish an Irish Biodiversity Database as part of the lead Department's Heritage Archive and provide links to other relevant databases.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is ongoing to transfer data on sites and rare and protected species into a standardised electronic database. The National Botanic Gardens will contribute data on threatened species of vascular plants and fungi. A database of biodiversity research projects was compiled by the National Platform for Biodiversity Research, which is co-funded by the EPA and DEHLG. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to ensure that all information in particular maps, can be accessed will be implemented.</i></p> |

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| <p>42. Put in place a national biological data management system to be coordinated by a National Biological Recording Centre.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Heritage Council Waterford Institute of Technology</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals have been accepted to establish a National Biological Record Centre under the aegis of the Heritage Council, in partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology and located on the property of that institution. Appropriate funding and management arrangements are being agreed between DEHLG and the Heritage Council. The National Botanic Gardens maintains a dataset of botanical records for all plant groups (except marine algae) and fungi. <p><i>The Comhar comment regarding the allocation of resources is noted and will be implemented as resources permit.</i></p> |
| <p>43. Strengthen the capacity of relevant State institutions to undertake work to broaden and consolidate our knowledge of wildlife species and to maintain biological records. Capacity building for taxonomic work will be a key focus.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action on this will be determined by the research agenda developed under Action 40. Theme 1 of the EPA's 2005 call for research development proposals is Capability Development, while Theme 1.2 calls for proposals in the area of Taxonomic and Systematics Research and Training. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>44. Establish a postgraduate studentship programme for research specially focused on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and put in place a programme to encourage the scientific community to focus their research efforts to a greater extent on biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Further action required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial discussions have been held in regard to sourcing funding for such a programme. The NPWS of DEHLG are funding a biodiversity PHD scholarship in 2005-7 through the Embark Initiative managed by the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology. The EPA is currently funding 7 PhDs in Biodiversity research, and postdoctoral fellowship applications are currently being evaluated. The recent call for proposals included a requirement of "cluster projects". The aim of this is to bring together a group of active researchers, staff and students within a well-resourced research environment. The intended outcome is that the successful project should provide an integrated research response to key biodiversity issues. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |

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| PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION | | |
| <p>45. Develop a targeted education and awareness strategy for the specific purpose of promoting the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Ireland.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Education and Science</p> | <p>Further action required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENFO, the environmental information service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government since 1990, has a staff of 13 and a budget of €800,000 per annum (excluding staff and building costs) for public environmental education and awareness activities. ENFO produces over 200 different leaflets and posters, of which 42 leaflets and 60 posters relate to biodiversity. Many of these are produced on the ENFO website (www.enfo.ie), which has a section devoted to biodiversity. All ENFO publications are available from the ENFO centre in Dublin, and from local authority offices and libraries countrywide. ENFO's drop-in centre in Dublin is open six days per week and includes exhibitions, workshops, a children's corner, and the largest public reference library of environmental material in Europe. A wide catalogue of biodiversity-related videos and DVDs is available to view in the ENFO centre, and for lending to schools and community groups countrywide. A range of ENFO exhibitions related to the conservation of biodiversity is available to local authorities and community groups across Ireland. ENFO's schools outreach programme, which has ecosystems and biodiversity as a main focus, has delivered presentations by young graduates in the biological sciences to over 150,000 primary and secondary school students in 950 schools nationwide in the past three years. All ENFO services and publications are free of charge. The Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) stream of the revised primary school curriculum covers biodiversity-related issues in three related subject headings: history; geography and science. The curriculum seeks, inter alia, to enable pupils to come to an understanding of the physical world and the relationship of people with the environment. At Junior Certificate level, a revised science syllabus was introduced in September 2004. A specific aim of this syllabus is to foster an appreciation of, and respect for, the environment. Important aspects of the syllabus include the importance of conservation, pollution control and waste management to the environment and the impact of humans on the environment. The geography syllabus aims to provide an awareness of the environmental phenomena and sensitive awareness of the natural environment. |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At Leaving Certificate level, the biology syllabus has a specific aim of developing an appreciation of nature and biodiversity. The geography syllabus aims to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the earth's resources – a critical issue in conserving biodiversity. The Green Schools Programme, administered by An Taisce, is playing an important role promoting environmental awareness in schools. There are almost 2000 schools in the State registered for this Programme. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>46. Develop an Internet-based national Clearing House Mechanism.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Further action required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A contract has been placed for the development of a national Clearing House Mechanism and it is expected that this will be in place by the end 2005. The National Botanic Garden's website (www.botanicgardens.ie) will host up-to-date census lists or checklists of Irish species, as well as information on their conservation status. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation under this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>EU, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL Participating in and fulfilling international endeavours in Ireland</p> | | |
| <p>47. Ireland will implement fully the CBD and relevant biodiversity-related conventions, etc. to which Ireland is already a Party (e.g. CBD, CITES, Ramsar, Bonn, Berne, Bats Agreement, International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, World Heritage Convention).</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officials from DEHLG are responsible for the co-ordination of cross-sectoral actions related to the implementation of a number of important biodiversity-related Conventions as cited in this action and attend the Conference of the Parties (COP) and associated working groups to these Conventions. National reports outlining progress in implementing these Conventions are co-ordinated and submitted by DEHLG to each Convention Secretariat. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of its EU Presidency responsibilities in 2004, Ireland promoted two major international biodiversity-related initiatives. Ireland co-ordinated the EU input to the Conference of the Parties on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The outcome of this co-ordination role was that all the policy positions of the EU at the Conference were successfully integrated into its decisions, thus contributing to meeting the CBD 2010 target on biodiversity. Ireland also organised a major Stakeholder Conference in May, 2004, in Malahide, at which the Malahide Message was adopted, with the intention of elaborating new and prioritised strategies and targets for the EC Biodiversity Strategy and for the achievement of the EC's biodiversity target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>48. Ratify the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA).</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Agreement was ratified by Ireland in 2003 and the first Irish national report on its implementation was submitted this year. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>49. Seek the adoption by the European Union and the subsequent extension to Irish waters of the provisions of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the North and Baltic Seas (ASCOBANS).</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government; Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions are ongoing with DCMNR in regard to ratification of ASCOBANS. Cetaceans already enjoy protection under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000, the 1992 EU Habitats Directive and the Whale Fisheries Act, 1937. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |
| <p>50. Ensure that the required measures are taken to enable the State to ratify Annex V to the 1992 OSPAR Convention on the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Areas.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annex V of this Convention was ratified by Ireland in 2003 <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>51. Ireland will seek to ensure, in co-operation with other relevant States, that the Greenland White-fronted Goose Conservation Plan is finalised, adopted and implemented.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions will be held with the Range States (UK, Iceland and Greenland) later in 2005. • NPWS maintains an annual national programme of censoring, catching, marking and re-sighting and co-operates internationally with other Range States in this regard. The information derived contributes to assessments of the Greenland White-Fronted Goose population and is available to inform further planned discussion on the conservation plan. • Target 2.2.1 of the Killarney National Park Management Plan 2005-9 commits NPWS to the continued monitoring of the Killarney flock of the Greenland White-fronted Goose four times each year. It is considered that the reduction of grazing pressures and associated disturbance on Ireland's bogs may encourage the species to continue to winter here. <p><i>There are no specific Comhar recommendations in relation to this Action</i></p> |
| <p>Contributing to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity Overseas</p> | | |
| <p>52. Biodiversity will be made a specific objective of ODA, and all support to, and co-operation with, developing countries shall take account of biological diversity.</p> | <p>Department of Foreign Affairs</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Co-operation Ireland (DCI) adopted a policy for environmentally sustainable development in May 2005, which will help to ensure that support through aid will take account of biodiversity in recipient countries. One of the guiding principles of this policy is that poverty reduction depends on good stewardship of the environment. Since degradation of natural resources increases the vulnerability of poor men and women, puts their livelihoods at risk and exacerbates poverty, sustainable management of these resources is critical. The goal of the policy is to promote environmentally sustainable development in developing countries. Under this policy, appropriate levels of analysis and assessment will be carried out to ensure that development programmes and policies do not result in harm to the environment, including biodiversity. • DCI will also continue to engage with key multilateral environmental bodies, as part of its commitment to resolving global environmental problems. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>53. Ireland will provide specific funding for biodiversity projects in developing countries and countries with economies in transition and for work which contributes to the identification, assessment and monitoring of the state of biodiversity at the global scale (€6.35 million (£5 million)).</p> | <p>Department of Foreign Affairs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCI recently announced an allocation of €50,000 to meet the costs of the participation of delegations from developing countries to attend meetings scheduled to take place between now and COP 8 of the CBD in March 2006. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |
| | | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Co-operation Ireland (DCI) provides funding to the Trust Fund of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). One of the priorities for support is the conservation of biological diversity in Africa (with an emphasis on monitoring of land cover, protected areas, and indigenous vegetation change). \$680,000 was allocated in 2003 on biodiversity-related projects. Through its bilateral programme, Development Co-operation Ireland supports an integrated watershed management project in Ethiopia and a coastal zone management project in Tanzania. Under the new policy, Development Co-operation Ireland will provide support to partner governments to integrate the principles of sustainable development into their national policies, in particular their Poverty Reduction Strategies. As part of its support to Civil Society in Central America, Development Co-operation Ireland is supporting programmes to assist communities to manage and protect Reserves for the preservation of biodiversity. Development Co-operation Ireland provides funding to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). This aims to contribute to sustainable agriculture for food security in developing countries. Part of the funding goes on the development of policy relating to the maintenance of stocks of plant species. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>54. Ireland will support the development of international law in accordance with the CBD.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Foreign Affairs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCI offers a number of Study Fellowship Awards annually to candidates from DCI's seven country programmes (namely Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Uganda and Zambia), to further their education in Ireland or within their own region. Fellowships are generally offered in areas which are particularly relevant to the development of the individual's home country. Examples of courses undertaken include, the Higher Diploma / M.Sc. Applied Science (Fisheries Management, Development and Conservation) in UCC and the Masters in Science & Agriculture (Rural Development & Environmental Resource Management) in UCD. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |
| | | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEHLG, as the lead Department for biodiversity in Ireland, inputs as necessary into international governance issues relative to the conservation of biodiversity. Under Ireland's Presidency in 2004, the EU committed itself to support the development of a new legal instrument, within the framework of the Law of the Sea Convention, that will provide for the conservation and management of marine biological diversity in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, including the establishment and regulation, on an integrated basis, of marine protected areas where there is a scientific case for establishing these areas. Development Co-operation Ireland provides funding to Trust Funds which facilitate developing States, and particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in their efforts to produce well researched submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and to participate in meetings of the UN open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (a total of €90,000 between 2002 and 2004). <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| European Union | | |
| <p>55. Continue to work with Member States and the Commission to secure the conservation of biodiversity across the Community.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ireland continues to play an active role in relation to the review and future orientation of the EC Biodiversity Strategy. |
| <p>56. Support the implementation, and future development, of the EC Biodiversity Strategy and other community initiatives to ensure they are successful and widely supported in providing for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two important Presidency meetings were held in Malahide and Killarney in May, 2004 as part of the review and possible reorientation of the Strategy. The outputs from these meetings were the <i>Malahide Message</i> and the <i>Killarney Declaration</i>. It is expected that the European Commission will bring forward concrete proposals on the re-orientation of the EC Biodiversity Strategy, drawing from the Malahide & Killarney texts • The EPA is participating in a European Research Area network called BiodivERsA. BiodivERsA is an ERA NET involving 19 major research funding agencies from 15 countries in Europe, with significant research funding in the field of terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity. The aim of BiodivERsA is to contribute to setting up such a mechanism, and its objective for the period 2004-2008 is to achieve an efficient trans-national research co-operation in the field of biodiversity research funding. With the aim of contributing to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, BiodivERsA will allow the funding agencies to collate existing activities, compare future strategies and recommendations of consultative bodies, and systematically explore opportunities for future collaboration. <p><i>There are no specific Comhair recommendations in relation to these Actions.</i></p> |
| TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS: AGRICULTURE | | |
| <p>57. Support policies and measures to adapt support mechanisms for extensive farming systems at EU and other levels which will preserve and promote bio-diversity and be environmentally sensitive.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAF support policies and measures to adapt support mechanisms for extensive farming systems at EU and other levels which will preserve and promote biodiversity and be environmentally sensitive. The Single Farm Payment Scheme, commenced in 2005, applies to all farmers. Implementation of cross compliance requires all applicants under the Single Farm Payment Scheme to maintain all their land in 'Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition' (GAEC) and comply with 19 Statutory Management Requirements. The DAF publication <i>The Single Payment Scheme – A Guide to Cross Compliance</i> specifies the standards required of farmers for the Single Payment Scheme including GAEC. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>58. The Department of Agriculture and Food will seek, in any future revisions of REPS, to ensure that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is a priority.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of other options are being considered for use of modulation funds, i.e. EU funds diverted from direct farm supports, for rural development measures under the recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. • The EPA is funding a research project entitled “ Monitoring, functional significance and management tools for the maintenance and economic utilisation of biodiversity in the farmed landscape (Ag-Biota)”. The objectives of this project are to establish a national network of monitoring sites in order to document the current status and future trends of change in biodiversity within agricultural land; identify key factors which define or limit biodiversity within contrasting farming systems; understand the ecology of populations in agro-ecosystems; and develop tools for the practical agronomic management and utilisation of biodiversity as well as assessment of the wider ecological and functional significance of changes in biodiversity. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action will be further considered.</i></p> |
| <p>58. The Department of Agriculture and Food will seek, in any future revisions of REPS, to ensure that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is a priority.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised REPS introduced on 1st June 2004 includes far greater emphasis on biodiversity, with specific actions for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity at farm level. (See also actions 29 & 32). DAF will seek to ensure, in any future revisions of REPS, that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is a priority. • A wildlife audit for every new entrant to REPS, as proposed by Comhar, would be impractical in terms of time and cost, as only a very detailed audit would be of any real value. The cost of preparing REPS plans and applications is already an issue with farmers and the farming social partners. • The EPA and DAF co-funded a desk study entitled “Identification of Environmental Variables for use in Monitoring for the Evaluation of the REPS” . Biodiversity is one of the main aspects addressed in this report. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action will be further considered.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>59. The Department of Agriculture and Food will engage in full and ongoing consultation with other parties including the lead Department, in relation to REPS and other biodiversity related issues and will take cognisance of environmental issues outside the immediate remit of the Department of Agriculture and Food when schemes are being devised or reviewed.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revised REPS was prepared following a comprehensive consultation process involving these other Government Departments, environmental groups, farm organisations and other stakeholders. These views and the issues raised were taken on board in the development of the revised Scheme in so far as possible or practical. In particular, Measure 4 on the retention of Wildlife Habitats and Measure A on the Conservation of Natural Heritage in REPS address issues of direct concern to DEHLG. DAF liaises with DEHLG in the development of farming prescriptions for designated areas, such as the Burren, blanket bogs, heaths and upland grasslands. A major initiative in which both Departments were involved was the preparation of the Commonage Framework Plans in respect of all commonage areas. In addition DEHLG plays an active role in the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) Rural Development Plan Monitoring Committee. Individual REPS plans are prepared by professional planners and examined and approved by DAF. A REPS plan is based on guidelines from the NPWS where such guidelines are available. The farming prescriptions for the Burren, blanket bogs, heaths and machairs included in the REPS specifications were developed by DAF in consultation with NPWS and the farming organisations. Where detailed prescriptions are not available, the REPS planner must consult the management plan prepared by NPWS for the site in question and incorporate its requirements in the REPS plan. Where neither of the above are available, the REPS planner must obtain an ecological report on the site, detailing the current condition of the site and the practices required to maintain it in an undamaged state. These maintenance practices must be incorporated into the REPS plan and followed by the farmer. DAF and DEHLG participate actively in the activities of “Networks for Nature,” which is a project run by environmental NGOs <p><i>The Comhar recommendation for formal involvement of NPWS, in REPS plans in Natura 2000 has been implemented.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>60. The Department of Agriculture and Food will set up a systematic evaluation process for REPS.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFCon Management Consultants carried out a Mid-Term Evaluation of REPS and this report was published in 2003. Its recommendations were taken into account in the introduction of a revised REPS in 2004, known as REPS 3. • A final evaluation will be carried out as required in the CAP Rural Development Plan 2000–2006. • Some work has been undertaken on compiling biodiversity baseline data through the Ag-Biota Research project. • The EPA and DAF co-funded a desk study entitled “Identification of Environmental Variables for use in Monitoring for the Evaluation of the REPS”. This report is very relevant to setting up an evaluation process for REPS. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action has been implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>61. Control overgrazing by the completion and implementation of the strategy involving the preparation of Commonage Framework Plans and by the implementation of other appropriate measures.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the Commonage Framework Plans (CFPs) have been completed and converted into electronic format for publication on the DAF website. DAF and NPWS intend to devise a model for monitoring of Commonage Framework Plans this year. For areas where plans were awaiting publication, on an interim basis DAF facilitated the lodgement of REPS plans under the existing stocking restrictions and such plans must be amended with the appropriate CFP destocking figure when it becomes available. • For the 2003/2004 premia years, farmers with commonage were paid premia only on the numbers permitted under the CFPs. Farmers in the new Single Payment Scheme will be required, as part of their cross-compliance obligations (see Action 57), to adhere to the stocking levels in the CFPs. • The NPWS has initiated a programme called the ‘LINNET’ (Land Invested in Nature – National Eco-Tillage) which involves the provision of sacrificial crops for wildlife. These crops are established on lands of low ecological value (former tillage fields, improved grasslands, waste-lands), and with minimum chemical input. These crops have proved successful in providing cover for birds. The plots are being monitored by NPWS field staff to determine wildlife usage and the scheme has been included as a measure in REPS 3. |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NPWS intends to devise a model for monitoring of Commonage Framework Plans this year. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation on this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>62. Establish a special operational biodiversity unit within the Department of Agriculture and Food to oversee biodiversity conservation in REPS and other programmes.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Biodiversity Unit has been established in DAF. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation on this Action</i></p> |
| <p>63. Enhance training in ecology and biodiversity conservation in the agricultural sector by for example, implementing a biodiversity awareness strategy for farmers, the provision of appropriate training for REPS planners and ensuring that modules on biodiversity are taught as part of courses in agricultural colleges and other relevant training schemes.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> REPS training for farmers and planners is based on the requirements and measures of the scheme, which now includes far greater emphasis on biodiversity actions. DAF participates actively in the activities of Networks for Nature, of which one of the objectives is to produce a booklet on standards for conservation, maintenance and cutting of hedgerows. Teagasc undertakes a range of relevant activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of mechanical hedge trimming courses Implementation of a biodiversity awareness strategy for farmers involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> countryside management series of information leaflets regular articles/features in farming publications Teagasc bi-monthly publication, “Todays Farm” farm walks Development of a module on ecology and biodiversity for delivery on training programmes for prospective farmers. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Certificate in Farming programme run by Teagasc, a number of modules incorporating biodiversity are taken, including Farming and the Environment, Farming and Biodiversity, Safe Use of Pesticide Products and Introduction to Crop Pesticides. Biodiversity is an integral part of other modules, for example the educational programme. The Heritage Council and Teagasc have agreed a collaborative approach to create awareness and disseminate examples of good practice in relation to the built and natural heritage of the Irish countryside <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action has been largely implemented and that of enhanced training for REPs planners will be addressed.</i></p> |
| <p>64. Ensure adherence to the guide on Good Farming Practice.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with the Good Farming Practice (GFP) rules is monitored through inspections carried out by DAF; internal cross-reporting within DAF, and external cross-reporting from/to the relevant law enforcement bodies. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action is noted and will be implemented as required.</i></p> |
| <p>TERRISTRAL ECOSYSTEMS: FORESTS Plantation Forests</p> | | |
| <p>65. Increase the target for total annual afforestation consisting of broadleaf species to achieve a target of 30% within five years.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The target for broadleaf planting is set at 30% to be achieved by the end of 2006. Broadleaf afforestation planting was 29% in 2004. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action is noted.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>66. Encourage the use of local provenances of native species and continue to support the nursery propagation of such material.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is being achieved through the Native Woodland Scheme and the afforestation scheme. The Native Woodland Scheme encourages the use of natural regeneration. Where planting is required, all stock must originate from suitable indigenous sources of native seed. Non-native species are excluded under the scheme. Native woodlands represent an indigenous seed source for native tree species, and their expansion will increase the supply of this valuable forest reproductive material for Ireland's ongoing broadleaf planting programme. Additional stands of native species have been identified and added to the National Register of Seed Stands. A system has also been put in place for the registration of seed collectors and the certification of seed for non-regulated native species. The Forest Reproductive Material (FRM) Directive (1999/105/EC) applies to all planting in the Forest Service Grant Schemes as well as to replanting obligations attached to Felling Licenses. The 2005 budget allocated to the Native Woodland Scheme has increased to €2 million. The emergence of the Irish Seed Saver Association as a non-governmental organisation working in this area is to be welcomed. It is understood that the Association has established a grain collection, a native apple collection and a vegetable seed bank with over 350 accessions. It is currently undertaking projects on the conservation & utilisation of native soft fruit species, other top fruit, hedgerow fruit, potatoes, brassicas and linseed. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>67. Introduce guidelines on forestry and biological diversity, and ensure their implementation as a mandatory condition of grant aid and revise other guidelines to enhance their role for biodiversity conservation.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forest Service's Forest Biodiversity Guidelines were published in July 2000. The Forest Biodiversity Guidelines focus on how best to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Irish forests, through appropriate planning, conservation and management. The Code of Best Forest Practice, the Forest Harvesting Guidelines and the Water Quality Guidelines also contain detailed biodiversity elements. Compliance with the Forest Biodiversity Guidelines, the Code of Best Forest Practice and the Forest Service suite of environmental guidelines is a condition of grant-aided projects. Compliance also extends to activities associated with felling licences. These guidelines apply to all afforestation schemes, irrespective of size. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be considered further.</i></p> |
| <p>68. Expand the existing forest and biodiversity research programme, including in association with COFORD, to obtain information on the biodiversity that plantation forests and native woodlands support.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) co-fund the BIOFOREST project. This five year project (2001-2005) aims to address gaps that exist in the current information on biodiversity in Irish plantation forests. The project's objectives include the creation of inventories of organisms known to have utility as biodiversity indicators. The project also sets out to identify features of habitat and landscape which may be used to predict biodiversity, in relative terms, over space and time. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to disseminate results will be implemented.</i></p> |
| <p>69. Continue to adapt the Forest Inventory and Planning System (FIPS) to ensure the conservation and enhancement of forest biodiversity, including the completion of the Irish Forests Soils Project.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forest Inventory has been designed to accommodate, amongst other aspects, the recording of forest biodiversity. The field part of the inventory has recently commenced. The Irish Forest Soils Project was carried out by Teagasc on behalf of the Forest Service and completed in 2004. The objective was to provide a series of digital maps indicating the best places to grow trees in Ireland <p><i>The Comhar recommendation to prioritise the dissemination of results will be implemented.</i></p> |

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| <p>70. Develop an Indicative Forest Strategy (IFS) approach, incorporating FIPS, GIS and the Forests Soils Project, to match the 'right tree in the right place'.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicative Forest Strategy, incorporating GIS and the Forest Soils Project is ongoing. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on greater linkages between IFS and local authorities will be implemented where appropriate.</i></p> |
| <p>71. The Forestry Inspectorate will encourage and promote the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forestry Inspectorate encourages and promotes the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. This is done through ensuring compliance with the Irish National Forest Standard, Code of Best Forest Practice and associated environmental guidelines, in particular those relating to forestry and biodiversity, forestry and water quality, and forestry and harvesting. Compliance with the Code of Best Forest Practice and the Forest Service suite of environmental guidelines is a condition of grant aided projects and of activities associated with a Felling Licence. The Forest Service holds meetings with the forest industry to (a) raise awareness of biodiversity and (b) ensure compliance with the Guidelines and the Code of Best Forest Practice. Forest Service inspections audit compliance with all grant aid and Felling License conditions, including those relating to biodiversity. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered.</i></p> |
| <p>72. Adapt the Amenity Woodland Scheme and the Urban Woodland Scheme to provide an enhanced role for the conservation of biological diversity.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NeighbourWood Scheme, introduced in July 2001, represented a complete restructuring of the former Urban Woodland Scheme and the Amenity Woodland Scheme. In providing funding under the scheme, an emphasis is placed on projects with a high broadleaf content, thereby enhancing the conservation of biological diversity. The scheme also encourages linkages with other trees, shelterbelts and woodlands, which aim to maximise the woodland's impact on the local landscape, reinforcing the role of urban trees and woodlands in providing a green network throughout the urban area. The scheme also encourages the retention of important habitats and historical features. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be considered.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>73. Continue to implement and enforce EU controls relating to (a) the marketing of forest reproductive material and (b) forest plant health.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions regarding the marketing of Forest Reproductive Material (FRM) are mandatory within the grant schemes and replanting conditions attached to Felling Licenses. • Under the Native Woodlands Scheme a system has been put in place for the registration of seed collectors and the certification of seed for non regulated native species. Also in relation to the Native Woodland Scheme, and for the purposes of conservation, additional stands of native species have been identified and added to the National Register of Seed Stands. • Forest Plant Health inspections are ongoing. • The 2004 national surveys for the 10 pests and diseases for which Ireland has protected zone status are complete. The 2005 survey is taking place in the second half of the year. This is a requirement under Council Directive 2000/29/EC and Commission Decision 92/70/EEC. • The 2004 national pine wood nematode survey is complete. The 2005 survey will be completed in 2005 (as required by Commission Decision 2002/757/EC). • The 2004 national survey for <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> is complete — the 2005 survey will be undertaken, as required by Commission Decision 2004/426/EC. (<i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> is the fungus that can cause the disease known as Sudden Oak Death.) <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>74. Review and upgrade the forest legislation as appropriate to inter alia provide for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and Coillte will be provided with new biodiversity responsibilities.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <p>The general scheme of a new Forestry Bill will be drafted in 2006.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of revising the Forestry Acts, including the biodiversity and conservation elements, will be informed by the policy review to be completed by the end of 2005. It is anticipated that the Heads of Bill will be submitted to Government for approval in the first half of 2006. • Coillte and the Forest Service both employ forest ecologists. Coillte are building in a 15% biodiversity requirement to their Forest Management Plans. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation under this Action is being implemented.</i></p> |

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| <p>75. Provide for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in all stages of the forest cycle, whether planning, planting or management, through the Code of Best Forest Practice which has been developed in conjunction with the Irish National Forest Standard and Environmental guidelines.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Code of Best Forest Practice, the Forest Biodiversity Guidelines and other related guidelines focus on how best to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Irish forests. This is done by appropriate planning, conservation and management through all stages of the forest cycle, including planting, management and harvesting. The EPA and COFORD co-fund the BIOFOREST project. One of the objectives of this project is to assess the efficacy of the Forestry and Biodiversity Guidelines and to make recommendations for their improvement. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered.</i></p> |
| <p>Native Forests</p> | | |
| <p>76. Introduce a Biodiversity Woodland Scheme. This Native Woodland Scheme will comprise two separate elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native Woodland Establishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed at encouraging the development of new native woodlands on both isolated greenfield sites and sites contiguous to existing woodland cover. Target of 15,000 ha of new native woodland set, plus 1,000 ha of riparian woodland. Native Woodland Conservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed at protecting and enhancing existing native woodlands through appropriate proactive silvicultural management. Target of 15,000 ha of existing native woodland (plus 1,000 ha of existing riparian woodlands) will be enhanced. | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Native Woodland Scheme was introduced in July 2001 with the aim of encouraging the proactive protection and expansion of Ireland's native woodland resource and associated biodiversity, using appropriate "close to nature" silviculture. The scheme provides financial support for landowners to protect and enhance both existing native woodlands and to establish new native woodlands. The 2005 allocation for the scheme is €2 million. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action is noted.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>77. Encourage, in conjunction with the Peoples Millennium Forests Project, the planting and management of 600 ha of native Irish Broadleaf trees.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented (target exceeded)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the millennium celebrations, over 1,500 acres (circa 600 ha) of native woodlands was designated as “Peoples Millennium Forests”. The forests include newly-planted areas that have been using native Irish seed. The 16 forests also include the restoration of native woodlands that have been in existence for 200 years or more. The targets were all successfully achieved and, indeed, exceeded with the co-operation of Coillte, AIB, the National Millennium Committee and Woodlands of Ireland. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action.</i></p> |
| <p>78. Develop a classification system and undertake an inventory of broadleaved woodlands in Ireland.</p> | <p>Department of Agriculture & Food (Forest Service)</p> | <p>Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This classification system has been designed and the inventory, which is co-funded by the Forest Service, is being undertaken by NPWS. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation regarding the dissemination of results and the protection of ancient woodland sites will be considered further.</i></p> |
| <p>INLAND WATERS AND WETLANDS</p> | | |
| <p>79. Maintain and expand the catchment-based national strategy for the protection and improvement of water quality in rivers and lakes by the establishment by Local Authorities of comprehensive projects for river basin management in relation to all inland and coastal waters, and groundwaters. These projects will provide a major input, to be complemented by other appropriate measures by other public authorities, to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and the achievement of at least “good status” in relation to all waters.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Basin District Projects have been established in relation to all regions as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – South-Eastern Region (Barrow, Nore, Suir, Slaney river basins and others), – March 2002 – Shannon River Basin District (Shannon and others) – November 2002 – Eastern River Basin District (Avoca / Vartry, Boyne, Dartry, Dodder and Liffey and others) – April 2003 – Western River Basin District (Lough Arrow, Carrowmore, Conn, Corrib, Mask and Rivers Bonet, Clare, Robe, Moy, and Owenmore river basins and others) – March 2004 – South Western River Basin District (Rivers: Bandon, Blackwater (Munster), Lee and Laune rivers and the Lakes of Killarney) – Oct 2004 |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Characterisation and Analysis Reports were published on 22 December 2004. A Summary Report on the Characterisation and Analysis of Ireland's River Basins was sent to the European Commission on 22 March 2005, meeting the deadline laid down in the Directive. These Characterisation and Analysis Reports give a comprehensive description of each River Basin District (RBD) and set out the baseline data for moving forward with implementation of the Directive. They identify all water bodies of different ecological types e.g. different types of lakes and stretches of river. The identified range of individual water bodies includes 383 groundwater, 4,465 river, 217 lake (greater than 50 hectares) 197 transitional (estuarine) and 107 coastal water bodies. The reports provide an analysis of the characteristics of river basin districts, undertake a review of the impact of human activity on the status of waters and provide an economic analysis of water use in accordance with the requirements of Article 5 of the WFD. The economic analysis is a new and interesting look at water resources from a different perspective i.e. their economic value for activities such as recreation, tourism, industry, agriculture, drinking water etc, and the related costs. • The EPA has funded and is currently funding a number of research projects directly related to the WFD. Reports published to date are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preparation for the EU Water Framework Directive – Water Framework Directive – Water Status: Identification and ranking of Nature Conservation Designated Areas – O'Riain & Duff, – Water Framework Directive – A desk study to determine a methodology for the monitoring of the morphological condition of Irish Rivers – P. Ginnity, – Water Framework Directive – an assessment of the mathematical modelling in its implementation in Ireland – Ken Irvine, – Water Framework Directive – Development of a methodology for the characterisation of unpolluted groundwater – Buss • The EPA's 2005 call for proposals calls for the following research,: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ecology – Develop and improve understanding of the relationship between significant pressures identified in the article 5 risk assessment and ecological status. This should take cognisance of the on-going EU REBECCA project (relationships between ecological and chemical status of surface waters). – Measures – provide a critical appraisal of the effectiveness of existing measures and develop guidance on methodologies to evaluate measures. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy Issues – Evaluate the links between WFD and the other relevant environmental legislation. - Monitoring – Evaluate methods to optimise monitoring networks to meet the needs of the WFD. • The EU Nitrates Directive aims to protect water quality against pollution from agricultural sources, with a primary emphasis on better management of livestock manure and other fertilisers. The Directive has been implemented in Ireland since 1991 by a wide range of measures including – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extensive monitoring of waters - development and dissemination of a Code of Good Agricultural Practice to Protect Waters Against Pollution by Nitrates (1996) - promoting good agricultural practice in numerous ways e.g. grants for farmyard waste facilities, and - measures taken by the farming sector <p>Ireland is now in the process of establishing and implementing an Action Programme of measures to give full effect to the Directive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised national Nitrates Action Programme for Ireland was formally submitted to the EU Commission on 29 July 2005. The four-year programme will come into operation countrywide on a phased basis commencing 1 January 2006. Regulations are currently being developed by the Department, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Food, to give legal effect to the programme. The draft Regulations will be submitted for public consultation. <p>The Regulations will provide for a range of measures differentiated by zone to protect waters against pollution from agricultural sources and to strengthen the application of good agricultural practice. The Regulations will, inter alia, provide for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set periods when land application of fertilisers is prohibited - limits on the land application of fertilisers - livestock manure storage requirements, and - monitoring of the effectiveness of measures. |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| | | <p>The national Nitrates Action Programme and the Regulations will be a key component in Ireland's ongoing efforts to protect and enhance water quality, aquatic ecosystems and water-dependent terrestrial ecosystems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next phase of work in the period 2005 - 2006 will focus on the further characterisation of the water bodies, the establishment of comprehensive monitoring systems, the establishment of environmental quality objectives and the specific programme of measures which will be put in place to achieve them. • The National Parks & Wildlife Service of DEHLG, in close co-operation between the communities of South County Waterford and Waterford County Council, has undertaken a pioneering initiative using Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICWs) in the Annestown Stream Valley. This initiative, which has been extended by NPWS to other locations in Ireland, is an ecological restoration project. The objective is to create a rich array of habitats and diverse biota while also improving water quality as a first priority. • In addition to its direct role in preserving environmental standards and abating pollution, the Water Services Investment Programme also contributes to the promotion of the Department's policies on bio-diversity in a number of ways. As part of the Department's general supervision of the Programme, the opportunity will continue to be taken to increase its potential in this area, for example by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensuring that stand-by generators at treatment plants are capable of running on bio-fuel – requiring landscape planting associated with new schemes to employ native species – raising the profile of energy efficiency as a key criterion in tender assessment to promote energy recovery and on-site energy production in wastewater treatment plants and energy reduction in the case of water treatment. – maintaining the policy of landspreading of sewage sludge in accordance with nutrient management plans |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>80. Ensure that all significant drainage, including both initial drainage and maintenance drainage, will require assessment of its implications for biodiversity, and particularly for wetlands.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Office of Public Works</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The success of the ICW initiative has led to the establishment of a joint Ireland – Wales project under the EU INTERREG 111A programme. The project is entitled “Integrated Constructed Wetlands; A viable option for effluent treatment, sustainable rural development and job creation”. The Steering Group for this project held its first meeting on 1 February, 2005, and implementation is ongoing. The intention is to establish at least three exemplar ICWs in Wales, as well as other new units in Ireland, and to monitor and compare developments. Total funding available for this initiative for work in Ireland is €203,000 over 3 years. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation regarding the implementation of the complementary requirement of the Water Framework Directive and the Ramsar Convention will be considered further.</i></p> <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning permission or consent from the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is required prior to drainage of wetlands in SACs, SPAs and designated NHAs. Flood Relief Schemes proposed by OPW include an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which addresses a broad range of environmental aspects. In relation to arterial drainage maintenance, the OPW have committed to carrying out Ecological Assessments (EcA) on a series of species and habitats, including some wetlands, as listed in annex 2 and annex 1 of the 1992 Habitats Directive. Studies are underway on four specific species and a number of EcA have been initiated. Protocols are in place with the NPWS, Central Fisheries Board (CFB) and Regional Fisheries Boards in relation to communications on the annual maintenance programme. The Environmental Drainage Maintenance Programme (EDM) being undertaken by the Central Fisheries Board on behalf of the OPW is carrying out scientific studies on specific flora and fauna on which maintenance can impact and is following through with recommendations on mitigating measures. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation regarding maintenance of existing drains being specifically provided for in SAC management plans is being implemented. Further consideration will be given to the remainder of the recommendation.</i></p> |

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| <p>81. Produce guidelines for drainage and wildlife.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Office of Public Works</p> | <p>Implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPW engineering and outdoor staff received training in environmental awareness and environmentally sensitive channel maintenance through an ongoing programme developed in conjunction with the Central Fisheries Board. Following on from this, the first set of guidelines on best practice have issued to all machine units. Implementation of the guidelines is being continually audited. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action is noted.</i></p> |
| <p>82. Consider initiatives which could be employed to enhance the conservation of freshwater fish species and communities including the need to designate sites for the conservation of important fish communities.</p> | <p>Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government Department of Communication, Marine and Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twelve SACs, covering several thousand kilometres of river channel and estuary, have been designated for the conservation of the lamprey species. A national monitoring programme for lampreys is being developed and investigations of the association of lampreys with water quality are underway. Four large SACs which incorporate all known breeding areas for the twaite shad have been designated. NPWS and the Environment and Heritage Services of Northern Ireland have jointly commissioned an all-Ireland Species Action Plan for the pollen. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action is noted.</i></p> |
| <p>83. Ensure waters will primarily be stocked with indigenous species, including by reviewing the situation in regard to the translocation of fish between catchments and producing appropriate guidelines or other necessary regulations.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources;</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The question of fish stocking / translocation is undergoing continuous review within the Fisheries Boards with the intention of developing standard policy. The Marine Institute provides advice and support to the Fisheries Boards' overall stocking policies and review of these policies. In addition to the work undertaken by Boards, salmon rearing and stocking is carried out by the Institute, the ESB and some private fisheries. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered</i></p> |

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| <p>84. Draw up a strategy for the use of machine cutaway and cutover raised bogs as wetland or woodland habitats</p> | | <p>Implementation Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NPWS has carried out a number of restoration projects on areas of cutaway bog. In larger areas of cutaway bog a number of wetland habitats have been created. Further projects in this area will continue during the coming years. These areas will act as carbon sinks and can have a positive impact against climate change. A number of sites have also been used for the LINNET programme (see action 61) which has successfully provided habitats for a number of bird species. Bord na Móna has created a number of wetland habitats on areas of cutaway bog. They have identified that approximately 50% of their current landholding will have a future use as wetland habitats for wildlife. Research on this area is continuing and liaison between Bord na Mona and NPWS on the future use of such sites is ongoing. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered</i></p> |
| MARINE AND COASTAL | | |
| <p>85. Prepare and adopt a National Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy making specific provision for the conservation of biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCMNR is continuing work on determining the optimal approach to following through on the EU recommendations on the implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) strategy in Europe. Environmental policies, including conservation of biodiversity, will be one of the key areas to be encompassed in any ICZM strategy or strategies that may be developed. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered</i></p> |

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| <p>86. The Marine Institute and the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards will advance the conservation, as well as the sustainable use, of biodiversity, through the establishment of biodiversity units, the provision of appropriate legislative responsibilities and other measures.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fisheries Boards have identified, in relation to a “National fisheries environment and biodiversity programme,” that their objective is to deliver quality specialist chemical analysis and advisory service for input to national and international databases. The key deliverables identified are quality water laboratory analysis and a national catalogue of water trace elements. Many of the work programmes of the Marine Institute are designed to monitor the status of a wide range of marine biological systems. The Institute has re-organised its marine data services to upgrade the collation, analysis and provision of key marine datasets to outside agencies and individuals. The Marine Institute is involved in a wide range of national and international co-operative research programmes which will support the objective of sustaining biodiversity in marine ecosystems. The Marine Institute are involved in a process with the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) for the development of frameworks for the implementation of the ecosystem approach in the marine area. The Marine Institute recently commissioned an overview of climate change impacts and their possible implications for the marine environment. This report will be published shortly and should assist in identifying the areas where additional research is urgently required. The report will also emphasise the need to incorporate the possible effects of climate change into any future biological models. Fundamental to this process are the changes which climate change will bring to biodiversity and the development of predictive ecological models which will take account of various future temperature scenarios. The Marine Institute has established a range of training programmes for Marine and Countryside guides. Ecological awareness is a major component of these programmes. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |
| <p>87. Develop a National Marine Biodiversity Resources Database as part of the National Biological Data Management System.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is ongoing to transfer data on sites and on rare and protected species into a standardised electronic database. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>88. Enhance surveys and research on marine biodiversity, through the implementation of a prioritised programme of surveys and mapping of marine benthic species and communities.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marine Institute has worked with NPWS on the broadscale mapping of 5 priority marine SACs. The field survey work has been completed and 5 reports prepared. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |
| <p>89. Introduce national measures to research and reduce adverse effects of marine fisheries on biodiversity, and within the EU, continue seeking to ensure the Common Fisheries Policy and marine fisheries provide for the conservation of fish species and marine biodiversity generally.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Total Allowable Catches (TACS) and national quotas are negotiated by the EU Council of Ministers under the Common Fisheries Policies. The underlying strategies of limiting and targeting fishing efforts are designed to ensure that particular species are protected from over-fishing and the resultant collapse of populations. Underpinning the checks and balances which the TACS and quotas impose are the principles set out in the action plan for fisheries in the EC Biodiversity Strategy. An Irish Coral Task Force has been established, comprising representatives from NPWS, Marine Institute, DCMNR, Heritage Council, Irish Sea Fisheries Board (BIM), Naval Service, Geological Survey of Ireland, UCG and UCED. The objectives of the Task Force are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to determine the level of impacts from fishing on coral reefs in Irish waters to identify the appropriate legal instruments for use in implementing conservation measures to protect corals in Irish waters to liaise with relevant policy makers and managers An EU funded project entitled “Marine Protected Areas as a Tool for Ecosystem Conservation and Fisheries Management” (PROTECT) is due to commence in 2005. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action is noted.</i></p> |

| ACTION | DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | STATUS |
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| <p>90. Draw up Guidelines and a Code of Best Practice on Aquaculture and Biodiversity.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCMNR applies best practice principles to the regulation of aquaculture and is obliged to take account of environmental issues, including the protection of habitats and species, when deciding on the licensing of projects. DCMNR requires that all applications for the cultivation of finfish, e.g. Salmon, be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS is required, inter alia, to assess the impact, if any, of the proposed aquaculture on the local flora and fauna and, if any adverse impacts are anticipated, to propose suitable mitigation measures to minimise those effects. All license applications are forwarded to the Development Applications Division of DEHLG BIM have produced the Ecopact Code of Practice for Irish Aquaculture Companies and Traders. BIM has recently put forward a proposal for a study of the carrying capacity of bays. This proposal is currently awaiting evaluation by the Aquaculture Selection Board for funding under the NDP. This proposal would aim to develop methodologies to assess sustainable levels of aquaculture in coastal waters, by taking account of such factors as currents, tidal exchange rates, nutrient levels and the actual geophysical factors unique to individual bays. The objective is to develop a system which can be used to determine the most effective locations for aquaculture of different types, thus avoiding unviable areas and thereby controlling and reducing the affects of aquaculture on the marine environment. <p><i>The Comhar recommendation on this Action will be further considered.</i></p> |
| <p>91. Continue, and where necessary, enhance, in line with relevant EU and international instruments (e.g. the OSPAR Convention), existing programmes and measures to control and monitor pollution of coastal and marine ecosystems.</p> | <p>Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources</p> | <p>Implementation ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2003 a publication entitled “National Environmental Monitoring Programme for Transitional, Coastal and Marine Waters: A discussion document” was prepared jointly by the Marine Institute, EPA, Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) and DEHLG. The Marine Institute has participated in Working Groups with a view to advancing the EU strategy document in relation to the protection and conservation of the marine environment. <p><i>There is no specific Comhar recommendation in relation to this Action</i></p> |



RED SQUIRREL

In 2005 a Species Action Plan will be prepared for the Red Squirrel which is under threat from the Grey Squirrel. The Red Squirrel SAP will be a joint project with the Environment Heritage Service in Northern Ireland



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