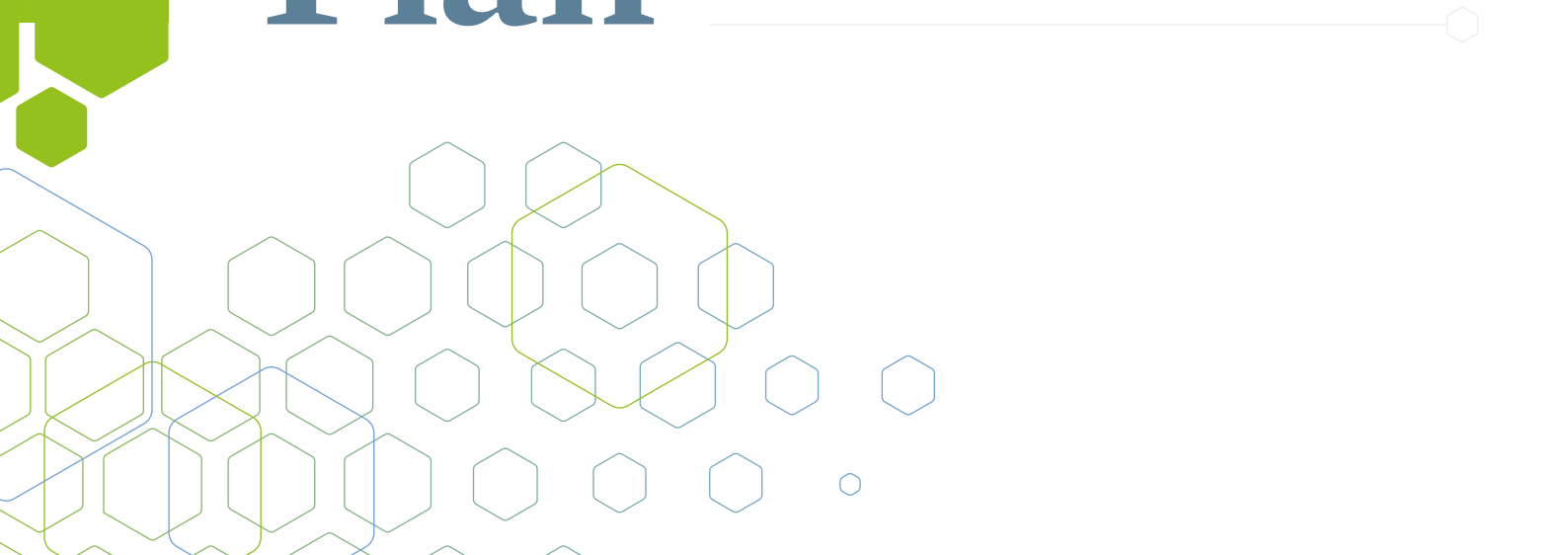


Strategic Plan

2024 - 2028





SETTING THE SCENE



The context for the work of the National Biodiversity Data Centre

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and encompasses the diversity that occurs at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels.

Human activity influences biodiversity, ecosystem function and the quality of ecosystem services that biodiversity supports. Climate change and biodiversity loss are global crises posing an existential threat to humanity.

In Ireland, the evidence shows that the complexity of our ecosystems is declining, and many species found in our country are endangered or under threat of extinction. Of the 3,466 species assessed under the Red List conservation assessment process, almost 24% are considered under threat of extinction.

The understanding, conservation and restoration of Ireland's biodiversity are key concerns for all sectors of society.



What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity, or biological diversity, is the term given to the variety of life on earth. It's an all-encompassing term to describe the genetic diversity that makes each individual life form unique, the diversity of different organisms that occur throughout the world and the rich diversity of ecosystems or landscapes that occur across the globe. Biodiversity policy also recognises the profound impact that human activities have had, and continue to have, on the world's ecosystems.

Ireland's biodiversity is determined by its geography, its location and its series of small islands, situated in a more extensive marine environment on the edge of the Atlantic, and influenced by a mild temperate oceanic climate. Much is yet to be learned about Ireland's marine biodiversity but what occurs within Ireland's territorial waters is part of a wider Atlantic system. The biodiversity that occurs in our terrestrial and freshwater environments is determined by factors such as the size of the island, the length of time the island has been isolated, its distance from a larger landmass and the range of climatic and geological conditions. Some species are endemic or near endemic to Ireland, some habitats have identifiably Irish characteristics, and the way in which these organisms and habitats interact ensures that Ireland's biodiversity is distinctive and unique.





The Vision

An Ireland where biodiversity is understood, appreciated and valued, and decisions that impact on biodiversity are informed by evidence and knowledge.

The Mission

In the National Biodiversity Data Centre, we work to ensure that the unique and intrinsic value of biodiversity to society and human well-being is recognised. We will make data and information on Ireland's biodiversity more easily accessible to better understand and inform its protection and restoration. We will work in partnership to support initiatives to increase people's understanding of, and engagement with, biodiversity, and the ways in which it can be maintained and enhanced.

Our Values



EVIDENCE

We recognise that biodiversity conservation is a science-based discipline and that best outcomes for conservation result from evidence-based actions based on accurate and accessible open data.

INNOVATION

We accept that new and innovative approaches to biodiversity data and information can help build societal support for the conservation of biodiversity.

COLLABORATION

We understand that initiatives co-designed and delivered in partnership, or with community involvement, can have most enduring impacts.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We commit to work with a diverse and inclusive network of interests, individuals and organisations to promote engagement, appreciation and conservation of biodiversity.

PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

We commit to operate to the highest standards of professional integrity, quality, transparency and accountability so as to maintain the trust of all stakeholders.

SUSTAINABILITY

We recognise the need to act with responsibility and a duty of care to ensure all activities of the National Biodiversity Data Centre minimise any adverse environmental impacts and contribute positively to delivering on the societal, economic and environmental pillars of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.





Strategic

Objectives

01

IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE ON IRELAND'S BIODIVERSITY

Serve as the national centre for acquiring, collating, managing, validating and making available data on Ireland's biodiversity, and track how biodiversity is changing over time.

GOAL

Establish the National Biodiversity Data Centre's position as the recognised national centre for data and information on Ireland's biodiversity.

Outcome – A recognised, authoritative national centre where data is compiled and coordinated so that high quality data on Ireland's biodiversity are freely available based on FAIR¹ principles.

GOAL

Develop a suite of data standards, tools and protocols to enable the sharing of high quality, standardised data, and to promote the interoperability of data sharing platforms within Ireland and internationally, underpinned by up to date taxonomic nomenclature.

Outcome – More usable and better quality data, on Ireland's biodiversity that is accessible to everyone while maintaining the safety of vulnerable species.

GOAL

Develop and maintain a national biodiversity digital infrastructure to meet Ireland's biodiversity data and information management needs.

Outcome – An integrated state of the art digital infrastructure that can be used by partner organisations to share and manage data to deliver better quality information resources.

GOAL

Advise on a national monitoring framework to improve the coordination of, and bring added value to, existing monitoring programmes, and identify additional monitoring needs.

Outcome – A well-structured and comprehensive national monitoring framework to track the state of biodiversity in Ireland.

GOAL

Develop the Centre's capacity to report on the state of Ireland's biodiversity across the terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments.

Outcome – Improved understanding and communication of the state of biodiversity and its trends through regular authoritative reports on the state of Ireland's biodiversity.

GOAL

Identify and improve knowledge of poorly understood aspects of biodiversity.

Outcome – Deliver improved knowledge on:

- Understudied taxonomic groups
- Soil biodiversity
- Marine biodiversity
- Nature restoration

1. The FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) describe how data should be organised to be more easily accessible, understood, exchangeable and reusable.



02

ASSIST BETTER EVIDENCE-BASED ACTIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

Promote the use of genetic, species and habitat data and biodiversity informatics in partnership with other organisations, to better inform best practice, policy and decision-making through innovative data analysis, interpretation and reporting.

GOAL

Create a Data Analytics Unit within the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Outcome – Improved capacity to manage, analyse and report on data to support targeted conservation action at national, regional and local level and to contribute to future scenario projections.

GOAL

Provide data, information and supports to local authorities, in particular to the Biodiversity Officer and Heritage Officer networks, and support the production of local biodiversity plans.

Outcome – Greater availability of data and information to inform evidence-based actions within the local authority structures and other local community biodiversity initiatives.

GOAL

Provide data to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and other government bodies to assist conservation management and inform decision-making.

Outcome – The provision of robust, high-quality data for use in conservation management and decision-making.

GOAL

Support the production of an integrated habitat, species and land-usage map for Ireland.

Outcome - Improved access to field-derived habitat data to identify habitat loss and improvement, support local community awareness, and inform public policies and decision-making.

GOAL

Collaborate with partners in Northern Ireland, in particular the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR), to promote the delivery of all-island approaches to biodiversity data.

Outcome – A strengthened relationship between CEDaR and National Biodiversity Data Centre to increase availability of data and improved knowledge of biodiversity across the island of Ireland.

GOAL

Support national reporting to the EU, all-island data reporting and international data reporting on aspects of Ireland's biodiversity.

Outcome – Ireland's strengthened contribution to biodiversity initiatives at the EU and international levels.

GOAL

Deliver national cross-sectoral action frameworks to assist the conservation of Ireland's biodiversity.

Outcome - Implementation of consistent and evidence-based biodiversity conservation actions, based on the best available data through production and dissemination of:

- an expanded and more ambitious All-Ireland Pollinator Plan
- a national Invasive Species Management Plan
- a framework to support businesses to deliver biodiversity actions
- a Farmland Biodiversity Actions Framework

03

PROMOTE THE USE OF BIODIVERSITY DATA FOR SCIENCE AND DECISION-MAKING

Support biodiversity data and informatics needs at the national, EU and international levels, particularly for research, policy development and decision-making.

GOAL

Serve as Ireland's Node of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).

Outcome – Data on Ireland's biodiversity contributes to global biodiversity science programmes and other international initiatives.

GOAL

Support the publication of biodiversity data to other EU and international initiatives that promote the conservation of biodiversity.

Outcome – Data on Ireland's biodiversity contributes to EU and international initiatives that seek empirical data.

GOAL

Develop a strategy better to engage with the scientific research community in Ireland and strengthen the links between research networks and citizen science.

Outcome – Improved biodiversity data flows between the National Biodiversity Data Centre, the Irish research community and citizen science networks.

GOAL

Provide advice to the Heritage Council and Minister to support policy development for natural heritage.

Outcome – Support given to the Heritage Council and the Minister, as requested, to assist in the development of natural heritage policy and in the implementation of biodiversity programmes.





04

STRENGTHEN THE CITIZEN SCIENCE AND RESEARCH NETWORK

Build capacity within the citizen science network to foster enjoyment, engagement with and appreciation of local biodiversity, promote life-long learning, and improve the quantity and quality of citizen science generated data on Ireland's biodiversity.

GOAL

Continue to support Ireland's biodiversity citizen science network and grow the existing national monitoring programmes managed by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Outcome – Enhanced knowledge on Ireland's biodiversity and ecosystem functions.

GOAL

Develop a National Biodiversity Citizen Science Strategy.

Outcome – A national framework for coordination and capacity-building across the citizen science sector and to expand the pool of expert recorders and researchers.

GOAL

Implement the Marine Biodiversity Citizen Science Strategy.

Outcome – Strengthened participation by citizen science in improving knowledge on Ireland's marine biodiversity.

GOAL

Develop a comprehensive and integrated digital platform to support the citizen science network.

Outcome – A strengthened and better-coordinated national network of volunteers.

GOAL

Provide the citizen science network with a life-long learning structure.

Outcome – A training and education programme to build capacity, supported by customised training resources.

GOAL

Build expertise in taxonomy, species identification and field skills and ensure excellent standards of data collection, data management and validation.

Outcome – A highly skilled network of professional and volunteer surveyors working to improve the knowledge on Ireland's biodiversity.

05

COMMUNICATE BIODIVERSITY

Communicate the value of Ireland's biological diversity and support evidence-based conservation and land-use actions across Irish society.

GOAL

Develop a Communications Strategy and Plan to communicate the identity of and promote the National Biodiversity Data Centre and the value of biodiversity with key target audiences.

Outcome – Greater understanding across different sectors of the National Biodiversity Data Centre's work and its key messages, including on the value of Ireland's biodiversity.

GOAL

Continue to produce high quality guides to communicate aspects of Ireland's biodiversity and evidence-based conservation actions.

Outcome – Tailored resources to improve knowledge and understanding of Ireland's biodiversity and encourage evidence-based actions for its conservation.





06

BUILD AN INNOVATIVE, AGILE AND ACCOUNTABLE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DATA CENTRE

to enable it to respond to emerging public policy needs and to strengthen the state's ability to address the biodiversity crisis.

GOAL

Build a strong and effective organisation to deliver on the priorities identified in the National Biodiversity Data Centre's Strategy.

Outcome – An organisation that is fit for purpose to address data and information needs on biodiversity in Ireland.

GOAL

Ensure the organisation values and empowers staff and promotes career progression.

Outcome – A team-based working environment that attracts and retains highly motivated, professional staff.

GOAL

Build organisational capacity and foresight capability within the National Biodiversity Data Centre to enable it to respond to emerging policy and programme needs.

Outcome – An innovative and agile organisation that can respond to new and emerging national priorities around biodiversity.

About

The National Biodiversity Data Centre

Following a decision of Government, the National Biodiversity Data Centre, which operated for many years as a programme funded by the Heritage Council, has been established as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Minister of State Malcolm Noonan T.D. made the announcement on 13 December 2022, coinciding with his attendance at the COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Centre's Board of Directors is chaired by John McCarthy, a former Secretary General of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, and also includes the following:

Professor Yvonne Buckley

(Heritage Council nominee) is Professor of Zoology at Trinity College Dublin, a Member of the Royal Irish Academy and Academia Europaea, and an Irish Research Council Laureate. She co-directs Nature+, the Trinity Centre for Biodiversity and Sustainable Nature-based Solutions, and leads a team of researchers and students seeking to understand the fundamental drivers of animal and plant population processes in a rapidly changing world.

Colette Byrne

(Heritage Council Nominee) is a former Chief Executive with Kilkenny County Council, having also served as Chief Executive in Offaly County Council. She has worked across all areas of Local Government services with urban and rural authorities and has a particular interest in provision of amenities, regeneration and repurposing of old buildings.

Ciara Carberry

(Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Nominee) is Director of Nature Conservation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. A senior civil servant with extensive experience in policymaking, legislation and governance, Ciara holds primary and postgraduate degrees in Botany and Environmental Science from Trinity College Dublin.

Dr Micheál Lehane

(Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Communications nominee) was appointed by Government as a Director with the Environmental Protection Agency in 2016 and is currently the Director for the EPA's Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring. Micheál is also the Chair of the Irish National Accreditation Board. He is a graduate of University College Cork.

**Dr Colm Lordan**

(Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine nominee) is Chair of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) Advisory Committee. Previously he was the Integrated Fisheries and Ecosystems Advice manager in the Marine Institute in Galway, Ireland where he worked for over 25 years developing fisheries and marine ecosystem assessments and advice.

Ted Massey

Ted Massey (Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine nominee) has worked in the Department of Agriculture in a diverse range of roles since 2001. His more recent work included involvement in the CAP reform negotiations as well as co-ordinating preparation of the environmental aspects of Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan. In 2022 he was promoted to the role of Senior Inspector responsible for the Department's Nitrates and Biodiversity Division, and is now responsible for the Department's Water and Air Quality Division.

Dr James Moran

(Heritage Council nominee) is a senior lecturer in Biology and Ecology in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment at the Atlantic Technological University, Galway. He leads the Agro-ecology and Rural Development (ARD) research group. James has worked in the applied ecology and agri-environmental management area for over 20 years as an advisor, researcher and academic, and concentrates on sustainable agricultural systems with a particular focus on the Common Agriculture Policy and improving agri-environment policy and practice.

Máire Ní Bhraonáin (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage nominee) is CEO of the Acorn Project, a non-profit organisation delivering nature-based learning and wellbeing programmes that empower communities to take action in ecological restoration through reconnection with their local wild spaces. Máire is an educator, forest school practitioner, herbalist, wild food forager and forest therapy guide with a background in public engagement and sociology.

Geraldine Tallon

(Heritage Council nominee) is a former Civil Servant, who worked in many different roles in the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, retiring as Secretary General of the Department in 2014. Since her retirement, she has undertaken a number of voluntary roles, including chairing the Taskforce on the future of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.



The National Biodiversity Data Centre is based at Beechfield House, SETU West Campus, Carriganore, Co. Waterford. It has an approved staff complement of 13 led by the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Liam Lysaght.

The main role of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, as set out in its Constitution, is to acquire, collate, manage, validate and make available data in respect of Ireland's biodiversity in order to document wildlife resources and monitor and record changes over time. In discharging that role, the Centre aims to support national initiatives to maintain and enhance biodiversity, including recording of species and habitat information relating to the terrestrial, freshwater, marine and wetland environments.

This is the Centre's first Strategic Plan, defining at a high level what it seeks to achieve in delivering on its mandate over the period 2024 – 2028. The Strategic Plan will be supported by a more detailed implementation plan, and progress will be reported in each the of Centre's Annual Reports.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is Ireland's Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Node





National Biodiversity Data Centre



Documenting Ireland's Wildlife

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



An tSeirbhís Páircanna Náisiúnta
agus Fladhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage