



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# National Biodiversity Action Plan Compliance Details

DCEE Marine Usage Licence  
Application

**2026**

Prepared by the Department of  
Climate, Energy and the Environment  
[gov.ie](http://gov.ie)

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# 1 Introduction

Ireland has adopted a plan-led approach to achieving its offshore wind targets. The Minister for the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) has commissioned the preparation of a Marine Usage Licence (MUL) application to conduct and support marine surveys in the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP), including geophysical, geotechnical, metocean, and biological surveys. Surveying for marine data is a crucial step in the preparation for Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS) auctions. Providing extensive, accurate, and high-quality data helps inform and de-risk auctions, leading to more stable energy prices for consumers.

The programme is funded for further data collection in 2026 and is being developed over a multi-year period, focusing on three SC-DMAP sites: Lí Bán (Area B), Manannán (Area C) and Danu (Area D), regional level surveys will occur through the wider DMAP area and Tonn Nua (Area A). Survey activity will also include transit lines from Cork Harbour and corridors between the sites, with certain works extending across the wider SC-DMAP area where required. The proposed surveys will utilise standard marine geophysical, geotechnical and benthic sampling methods, together with fixed and towed passive acoustic monitoring, to inform seabed characterisation and environmental baseline information for the future development of offshore wind projects.

## 2 National Biodiversity Action Plan

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to the ways in which we value and protect nature. It is Ireland's primary statutory policy instrument for biodiversity conservation, prepared under the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

It implements actions within the framework of five strategic objectives to halt biodiversity loss, protect ecosystems, and integrate biodiversity considerations into all sectors, while addressing new and emerging issues:

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

- Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

## **3 Compliance with NBAP Objectives**

### **3.1 Objective 1: Adopt a whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach for Biodiversity**

DCEE has collaborated extensively with other Agencies and Departments (Marine Institute, NPWS, GSI) through a cross-departmental Project Board and Marine Ecology Working Group to ensure that survey specifications detailed within this MUL application cover a multitude of marine data needs (including species monitoring) to ensure data is collected once and used often. This will aid in protecting biodiversity by reducing the number of survey vessels required to collect essential marine data and minimising effects on marine mammals and birds. This has been detailed further in DCEEs MUL application, particularly in the Supporting Information for Appropriate Assessment, Natura Impact Statement and Annex IV risk assessment.

### **3.2 Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs**

All survey works are temporary and incorporate embedded mitigation to avoid disturbance to species. No habitat loss will occur as a result of the survey works, and the measures uphold conservation objectives of existing sites and species.

### **3.3 Objective 3: Secure Nature's Contribution to People**

The rationale for the project is that by gathering all necessary data, ORE projects are substantially de-risked, leading to, all else being equal, greater competition and lower bid prices. This, in turn, will lead to more stable electricity prices for consumers. The survey works also contribute to the timely delivery of ORE and subsequent contribution towards Ireland's ORE targets, and the decarbonisation of Ireland's electricity system which contributes to climate change mitigation, a key driver of biodiversity resilience, benefiting both people and nature.

### 3.4 Objective 4: Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity

The survey works provide essential marine data to address knowledge gaps in offshore ecosystems. This data will contribute to implementation and monitoring obligations. The Regional Level Surveys will support implementation and monitoring of the SC-DMAP and help inform potential cumulative and in-combination assessments at project level for development permission applications within Maritime Areas B, C, and D

### 3.5 Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland’s Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

Data is critical to advancing Ireland’s renewable energy goals and securing its energy future. Ireland has ambitious targets (5GW of offshore wind by 2030, 20GW by 2040) and the meeting of these targets will hinge on comprehensive data and surveys to assess site feasibility, environmental impacts, and logistical considerations. This work supports EU Biodiversity Strategy targets and international reporting commitments, ensuring Ireland’s global contribution is strengthened.

## 4 Compliance with NBAP Policies

The NBAP is structured around policies, objectives, outcomes, targets and actions. Table 1 sets out all marine-relevant items and demonstrates consistency with the proposed survey project.

**Table 1:** Compliance with NBAP policies

Policy/Programme	Compliance Statement
EU Green Deal	The proposed SI works will aid in facilitating the deployment of offshore renewable energy and therefore contribute to the EU Green Deal goal for climate neutrality by 2050, while ensure the protection and restoration of biodiversity with the inclusion of safeguards within the project plans.
UN Convention on Biological Diversity	The SI is consistent with CBD principles: they are precautionary, proportionate, designed to avoid impacts,

	and contribute new data for sustainable management of marine resources.
UN Sustainable Development Goals	The project contributes positively to SDG 13 by enabling offshore renewable development, and to SDG 14 by ensuring marine ecosystems are protected during survey activities.
EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030	The project avoids adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites and provides ecological baseline data that support marine monitoring, consistent with the Strategy's aims.
Birds Directive	The NIS concludes that there will be no likely significant effects for special conservation interest (SCI) bird species with mitigation measures proposed in place.
Habitats Directive	Mitigation measures ensure no significant effects. The NIS and Annex IV Risk Assessment confirm no likely significant effects.
Water Framework Directive	Pollution prevention measures in place and all vessels used are MARPOL compliant and minimal seabed disturbance ensure there is no deterioration in water status.
Nitrates Directive	Not applicable. The SI works do not generate nutrient inputs and have no interaction with this Directive or Programme.
Marine Strategy Framework Directive	The project includes comprehensive underwater noise mitigation and a strict zero-litter policy. These ensure no conflict with GES objectives
EU Nature Restoration Law	The project will generate high-quality data on marine habitats and species that can inform Ireland's compliance with restoration targets once the Regulation is adopted.
Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework	There will be no habitat loss as a result of the project, strict mitigation measures are integrated to prevent disturbance,

	and generate baseline data, all of which contribute to Ireland's delivery of the Framework.
OSPAR Convention	The survey programme is consistent with OSPAR principles by applying strict controls on underwater noise, pollution prevention, and waste management. While the surveys are not designed for OSPAR reporting, they align with Ireland's commitments to reduce pressures on marine biodiversity and the wider North-East Atlantic environment.
Wildlife Act	The project is designed to avoid contravention of the Acts. Mitigation measures ensure compliance with species protection and habitat safeguards.
Climate Action Plan, Climate Act	The project directly supports the Climate Action Plan by enabling offshore renewable development. At the same time, mitigation ensures biodiversity is not compromised.
River Basin Management Plan	Consistency with RBMP objectives is demonstrated through the Compliance with Objectives of the Water Framework Directive, which confirms no deterioration of water body status and no hindrance to achieving good ecological and chemical status.
Marine Protected Areas Bill	The project is consistent with the Bill's aims: they avoid impacts on existing protected sites and may provide new ecological data that can inform designation, monitoring and management of future MPAs

## 5 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures have been integrated into the project to ensure that to ensure there are no adverse effects on designated sites or species (as detailed in the Natura Impact Statement and accompanying environmental reports). Key pressures outlined include habitat disturbance, underwater noise, invasive alien species and pollution.

- **Special Protected Areas** - The NBAP places strong emphasis on protecting seabirds and waterbirds through the conservation of Natura 2000 sites and the expansion of the protected area network. Although the SI works are temporary and localised, vessel movements and survey activity have the potential to cause short-term disturbance if not carefully managed. Nonetheless, the NIS concludes for all Special Protection Areas no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site will occur, alone or in combination.
- **Marine mammals** - The NBAP highlights the importance of reducing underwater noise and safeguarding marine species. Geophysical and geotechnical surveys could generate underwater noise audible and potentially injurious to marine mammals, but mitigation protocols have been designed to keep risk well below significant thresholds:
  - Pre-start monitoring for relevant equipment;
  - A Ramp-Up Procedure is in place for relevant equipment Soft-start/ramp-up of equipment where possible to allow animals to move away, and restart protocols after breaks and if three are any breaks in sound output (for a period greater than 30 minutes) then all pre-start monitoring and ramp-up procedure will be undertaken.
  - The acoustic monitoring outlined in the survey plan will contribute to the monitoring of marine mammals, providing essential data to safeguard these species by giving a greater understanding of their distribution and movements in the Irish coast.
- **Invasive Alien Species** - To prevent the spread of invasive alien species, all vessels undertaking the work under the MUL will be compliant with MARPOL regulations.
- **Pollution and Habitat Integrity** - The project as proposed does not have the potential to affect the existing baseline Ecological quality status of any waterbody, and is therefore, compliant with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

## 6 Conclusion

The proposed survey works within the SC-DMAP have been assessed with full consideration of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2023-2030). The survey works are proportionate, precautionary, and ecosystem based. They also take into account European directives (outlined in Table 1) with the consideration of European site protections, the control of introduction and spread of invasive species and pollution reduction. This has been done

through the inclusion of mitigation measures (i.e. MMO/PAM protocols for mammals, biosecurity, waste and spill controls)

The proposed survey works will strengthen marine data evidence base and support Ireland's biodiversity commitments by integrating biodiversity into planning and decision-making. The surveys will generate high-quality ornithological, marine mammal, benthic and fisheries datasets that directly strengthen Ireland's biodiversity evidence base.

All survey works uphold the statutory biodiversity duty under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 to have regard to the NBAP, and they ensure that the proposed maritime usage is fully consistent with national biodiversity policy.