



CLIMATE
CHANGE
ADVISORY
COUNCIL

ANNUAL REVIEW 2026



**Preparing
for Ireland's
Changing Climate**

Annual Review 2026: Preparing for Ireland's Changing Climate

Submitted to the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment
on 25 September 2026

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Summary for All

Key observations

Ireland's climate adaptation planning does not match the scale and urgency of increasing climate risks. Prolonged rainfall and Storm Chandra in January 2026 caused significant flooding of homes, businesses and transport networks, and exposed persistent vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure. Unprecedented summer temperatures in 2026 highlighted increasing risks to water supply, agricultural production, health systems and vulnerable communities.

The updated sectoral adaptation plans fall short of the ambition and urgency needed to address growing climate risks. They are not costed, lack committed funding and measurable targets, and actions are not consistently aligned with priority risks. Key gaps remain, notably the absence of sectoral adaptation plans for the Built Environment and Planning and Finance sectors, despite their exposure to climate-related risks. The continued absence of the proposed Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme – a commitment in the 2025 Programme for Government – is a critical gap in immediate recovery and 'build back better' support for citizens and businesses. The Council welcomes the establishment of the Climate Adaptation Taskforce and Flood Insurance Protection Gap Working Group, to focus attention on addressing systemic barriers to adaptation and on developing solutions to address the availability and affordability of flood insurance in Ireland.

Key recommendations

Adaptation planning

The Government should promote flexible approaches within the planning system so that decision-makers can adapt as understanding of emerging risks improves. Sectors should expedite the development of adaptation outcome indicators and systems to assess whether adaptation measures are improving resilience. The Government needs to move from reactive to proactive adaptation and develop a standardised method of costing actions, including delayed actions and inaction, so that investment needs can be assessed and actions prioritised. The three coastal change management pathfinder projects included in the Programme for Government should be expedited and serve as exemplars for addressing critical resilience issues for vulnerable communities.

Flood resilience

The Government should strengthen resources and technical expertise across all organisations involved in flood risk management in Ireland. The Office of Public Works and local authorities need the expertise and staffing necessary to accelerate delivery of major flood relief schemes and the expanded Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. Regular updates on project implementation should be provided to improve transparency and shared learning across local authorities and communities. The Government should also strengthen capacity for flood forecasting and early warning systems, and establish permanent community resilience programmes covering prevention, preparedness, protection and recovery. The Government should move beyond pilot projects and scale up nature-based approaches across rural catchments and urban and coastal areas.



Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CCMP	coastal change management plan
CER	Critical Entities Resilience
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DAPPs	dynamic adaptive policy pathways
DCEE	Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DPENDR	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
DZ	decarbonising zone
LACAP	local authority climate action plan
NCCRA	National Climate Change Risk Assessment
NDFEM	National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management
NDP	National Development Plan
NFFWS	National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service
NRP	National Restoration Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
OPW	Office of Public Works
SAP	sectoral adaptation plan
SVI	social vulnerability index
WASITUS	Weather Attribution Science Irish Operational User Service
WMO	World Meteorological Organization



Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Summary for All	iv
Abbreviations	vi
Key observations	viii
Key recommendations	x
1. Introduction	1
2. Progress on previous Climate Change Advisory Council recommendations	1
2.1. Local and community resilience	1
2.2. Planning and skills	3
2.3. Managing coastal change	4
2.4. National climate damage register	7
3. Update on relevant international and EU-related policy developments and implications for adaptation and resilience in Ireland	8
3.1. Belém Adaptation Indicators	8
3.2. Integrated framework for European climate resilience and risk management	8
3.3. EU Critical Entities Resilience Directive	9
3.4. EU Nature Restoration Regulation	10
3.5. EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034	10
4. Analysis and discussion of key themes of focus	11
4.1. Towards more climate-resilient development pathways	11
4.2. Enhancing resilience to flood events	12
4.2.1. Flood relief schemes delivery	14
4.2.2. Capitalising on multi-sectoral nature-based approaches	17
4.2.3. Strengthening early warning systems for flood events	20
4.2.4. Appropriate zoning of land for development	21
4.2.5. Individual- and community-level preparedness, protection and recovery	21
4.2.6. Flood insurance gap	22
4.2.7. Health and social impact assessments	22
4.2.8. Pluvial flooding	24
4.3. Adaptation governance and monitoring frameworks	25
Appendix 1	27
References	30



Key observations

- ▶ Ireland's critical infrastructure remains vulnerable to extreme weather events and climate shocks. Recent events, including Storm Chandra and the prolonged rainfall experienced in January and February 2026, have demonstrated the continued vulnerability of the Transport and Built Environment sectors to flooding. Storm Chandra also caused considerable damage to residential and commercial properties, and disruption to travel and the transport of goods, underlining the urgent need to accelerate investment in the climate proofing of existing critical infrastructure and the built environment.
- ▶ The summer of 2025 was the warmest on record in Ireland,^a and unprecedented temperatures were again recorded in the summer of 2026. The national maximum temperature record for May 2026 was exceeded by more than 2°C, an event that it has been shown would not have been possible without climate change. Heatwaves and droughts are becoming an increasingly impactful climate risk in Ireland, requiring increased adaptation action across health, water supply, agriculture, vulnerable populations and the built environment.
- ▶ The Council reiterates its substantial disappointment with the second iteration of sectoral adaptation plans (SAPs), published in November 2025. The updated plans continue to fall significantly short of the level of ambition and urgency required to achieve a climate-resilient economy, articulated in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Amendment Act of 2021. In particular, the Council is concerned by the lack of costing and committed funding, gaps between planned actions and risk levels, and the lack of climate-resilient baselines, outcome-oriented indicators and measurable targets.
- ▶ The Council reiterates that gaps remain in the adaptation planning landscape that need to be urgently filled. In particular, the absence of dedicated SAPs for the Built Environment and Planning sector, led by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and for the Finance sector, led by the Department of Finance, represents a significant gap, given the increasing exposure of residential, commercial and public buildings and financial systems to climate-related risks and shocks. Given the absence of SAPs, the Council strongly encourages these and other departments, including the Departments of Social Protection, Defence, and Education and Youth, to carry out detailed climate change risk assessments to inform greater consideration of climate risks and adaptation measures in these sectors. In the next round of SAPs, it is absolutely critical that these sectors produce substantive, costed and actionable SAPs.

^a See Annual Review 2026: Our Changing Climate in 2025 for further information on Ireland's changing climate in the context of broader global climate changes.



- ▶ The Council reiterates its considerable disappointment about the continued lack of progress in establishing the proposed Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme, as committed to in the Programme for Government 2025.^b The absence of a permanent, streamlined and appropriately resourced scheme remains a critical gap in recovery support for households, communities, farmers and businesses affected by extreme weather events in their immediate aftermath, when needs are often acute.
- ▶ The Council welcomes the establishment of the Climate Adaptation Taskforce in October 2025 as an important step towards strengthening governance, financing, coordination and oversight of climate adaptation across Government. The taskforce provides a mechanism for cross-cutting issues to be examined at a higher level than the National Adaptation Steering Committee. The involvement of senior officials from key Government departments and agencies has the potential to strengthen accountability, coordination and strategic direction across the adaptation system. It is critical that the role of this process be recognised and prioritised within Government both logistically and financially if Ireland is to move from reactive to proactive measures to ensure a climate-resilient country.
- ▶ The Council welcomes the increased focus at both the national and EU levels on strengthening climate resilience and removing systemic barriers to adaptation governance, including the publication of the National Climate Change Risk Assessment and the National Strategy on the Resilience of Critical Entities 2026–2029.
- ▶ The forthcoming EU Climate Resilience and Risk Management Framework presents an important opportunity to support a more strategic, coordinated and integrated approach to climate resilience across sectors and governance levels, while strengthening cooperation on shared climate risks across jurisdictions.
- ▶ The Council welcomes the establishment of a dedicated Flood Insurance Protection Gap Working Group to examine long-term solutions to the growing challenges associated with flood insurance availability and affordability in Ireland. It is critical that the Government adopt and act on the findings without delay once the work is completed.

^b The 2025 Programme for Government committed to the development of an Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme to help households, community organisations, farmers and businesses manage the impacts of extreme weather events.



Key recommendations

Climate-resilient planning

1. The Government, through its Climate Adaptation Taskforce, should promote the integration and use of a dynamic adaptive policy pathways approach within the broader planning system to support flexible decision-making under uncertainty, identify adaptation tipping points and enable timely adjustment of adaptation measures as climate risks evolve.

Flooding

Flood relief schemes

2. The Government should strengthen the technical expertise and increase the human resource capacity of the Office of Public Works (OPW) and local authorities to address system constraints and support the timely design, planning and delivery of major flood relief schemes and the recently expanded Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme.
3. The OPW should enhance the information available through the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme database by working with local authorities to provide more regular updates on project statuses, timelines, key documentation and expected outcomes. Enhancing the consistency and timeliness of reporting on Minor Works Scheme projects would improve transparency, accountability and knowledge-sharing across local authorities and communities.

Early warning systems

4. The Government Task Force on Emergency Planning Subgroup for Stage 2 of the National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service should develop a dedicated programme of work for the development and operationalisation of localised flood forecasting and associated early flood warning systems, including data systems and equipment, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and capacity-building needs.
5. The Government should support the National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service programme of works by strengthening the technical expertise and capacity of the National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service to deliver early flood warning systems and flood emergency responses in Ireland.



Community resilience

6. Local authorities, in collaboration with the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management and the Office of Emergency Planning, should establish permanent community resilience programmes, building on the existing role of community emergency hubs, to strengthen community resilience across the emergency management cycle, including prevention, preparedness, protection and recovery.

Nature-based approaches

7. The Council recommends that the Government move beyond the pilot-scale use of nature-based measures and that the Climate Adaptation Taskforce support their systematic integration across catchments and within urban and coastal areas. Agri-environment funding schemes should include specific criteria to encourage measures that increase water storage capacity and reduce surface water run-off in appropriate locations, recognising the substantial co-benefits for water quality, biodiversity, habitat restoration, carbon sequestration and flood resilience.

Impact assessments

8. Local authorities, the Health Service Executive, the Department of Social Protection, the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management, and the Office of Emergency Planning should improve post-flood impact assessments through the systematic identification, recording and quantification of the social and health impacts of flood events, including impacts on vulnerable populations. This should be supported by the development and maintenance of regularly updated registers of vulnerable individuals and households in flood-prone areas to support targeted preparedness and post-event support during extreme weather events.

Pluvial flooding

9. The OPW should prioritise targeted research on pluvial flooding to improve understanding of how the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall events is placing pressure on existing drainage systems, to inform the development of more resilient design standards and flood risk management approaches.

Sectoral adaptation plans

10. The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE), with support from the Climate Adaptation Taskforce, should convene a national process to identify the most relevant adaptation outcome indicators for each sector, and ensure that the necessary systems are in place to establish baselines, monitor trends and set quantitative targets for future SAPs.



11. DCEE and the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation should develop a costing and budgeting methodology and guidance for identifying and budgeting adaptation expenditure across public bodies, including assessing the costs of inaction and delayed adaptation. A standardised approach is needed, as the continued absence of comprehensive costing in SAPs limits the ability of the Government to assess investment needs, prioritise actions and monitor implementation.
12. DCEE should lead the development and deployment of an Irish adaptation case study database, drawing on the Australian Adaptation Database as an example, to support learning and knowledge-sharing and build a community of practice.

Coastal change management

13. The Inter-Departmental Group on Coastal Change, chaired by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, should expedite the development of coastal change management plans at the appropriate spatial level and integrate a strategic approach to planned relocation in vulnerable areas. Coastal change management plans should include adaptation pathways across short-, medium- and long-term time frames and the establishment of clear climate indicators and trigger points to guide coastal adaptation decisions. A strategic approach to planned relocation should be undertaken for properties vulnerable to coastal flooding and erosion.
14. The three coastal change management pathfinder projects referenced in the Programme for Government 2025 should be expedited and serve as exemplars for at-risk communities on how to adapt to the impacts of coastal erosion.



1. Introduction

Under the National Climate Objective, Ireland needs to become climate resilient by no later than 2050. In the revised National Adaptation Framework, published in 2024, resilience is defined as 'the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic ways of functioning, and a capacity to adapt to stress and change'.^[1] Adaptation action builds climate resilience. Adaptation refers to a change in natural or human systems in response to the current or expected impacts of climate change. Adaptation measures reduce vulnerability to climate impacts, strengthen resilience and, where appropriate, enable opportunities arising from a changing climate.

Ireland's adaptation policy framework has advanced significantly in recent years, with the publication of the revised National Adaptation Framework^[1] and local authority climate action plans (LACAPs) in 2024,^[2] followed by the first National Climate Change Risk Assessment (NCCRA)^[3] and ten updated sectoral adaptation plans (SAPs)^[4] in 2025. A dedicated Climate Adaptation Taskforce was convened in October 2025 to increase senior-level governance for climate adaptation.^[5] A step change in ambition is now required to move beyond adaptation planning to its implementation.

It is the Council's view that the updated SAPs do not reflect the level of urgency required, that committed funding to support their implementation remains insufficient and that national outcome-based indicators are needed to effectively monitor adaptation progress. The Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme, a Programme for Government 2025^[6] commitment, has not yet been established, leaving citizens poorly supported in the immediate aftermath of events. There has also been slow progress in developing coastal change management plans (CCMPs) and associated pathfinder projects.

The 2026 Adaptation Annual Review has a strong focus on flood risk management, including pluvial, fluvial and coastal flooding. Storm Chandra and prolonged rainfall in January 2026 demonstrated the continued vulnerability of Ireland's critical infrastructure to extreme weather and flood events, and highlighted shortcomings in preparedness, response and the capacity of existing drainage systems to cope with increasingly intense rainfall (see [Box 3](#)).

To help inform this sectoral focus, the Secretariat's Resilience Team carried out semi-structured interviews with members of the Adaptation Committee and representatives from Met Éireann with flood-related expertise. Their insights have helped shape this year's Review. Key areas analysed include the delivery of flood relief schemes; flood forecasting and early warning systems; zoning and land use planning; the assessment of health and social impacts; and flood resilience at the household and community levels. The Review also highlights the potential of nature-based approaches to mitigate flood risk while delivering wider environmental and social benefits.

2. Progress on previous Climate Change Advisory Council recommendations

2.1. Local and community resilience

In its 2025 Annual Review, the Council recommended that long-term dedicated funding be provided to make climate action roles in local authorities and climate action regional offices permanent.^[7] The Government did not allocate this funding in Budget 2026, which is a missed opportunity, although it is noted that a business case for making these positions permanent has been developed and is subject to consideration by the Public Sector Reform Oversight Group.



The temporary nature of the contracts of climate action staff and corresponding high levels of staff turnover are considered major risks to the delivery of the LACAPs, including the Community Climate Action Programme and decarbonising zones (DZs).^[7] While the recently announced funding for local authority climate action is to be welcomed,^[8] its delivery will remain at risk unless and until the key expertise needed to implement climate action and resilience measures is retained through permanent and dedicated funding.

The Council also previously recommended the establishment of specific seed funding mechanisms for climate resilience measures in DZs, noting the absence of an established funding mechanism to support DZ activation.^{[7]a} The Council notes the provision, following Budget 2026, of a new fund of €1.5 million to assist local authorities with their DZs,^[8] in addition to a new €2.5 million European Regional Development Fund scheme for local projects on adaptation or the protection of biodiversity and green infrastructure in DZs in the northern and western regions.^[9] Further funding of approximately €230,000 has been secured from the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion for a large-scale spatial research and analysis project to gather valuable information on the DZ initiative and put forward recommendations to inform DZ policy.^[10]

The Decarbonising Zones Advisory Group^[10] has highlighted the valuable learning opportunities that this funding provides in relation to project delivery and take-up by local authorities. The Advisory Group is also supporting shared learning and showcasing measures by inviting local authorities, at each meeting, to present their experiences of implementing DZs on the ground.^[10] Fit-for-purpose monitoring and evaluation by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) of DZ climate actions will be vital in sharing best practice and building capacity. While the Council welcomes the provision of dedicated funding, it is concerned that the level of funding to date is grossly inadequate to meet the ambition expected of DZs. Implementation at scale will require significant additional investment beyond existing local authority resources, and the Government needs to increase budgetary provision substantially to ensure the success of the DZs.

Recent analysis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights the critical role businesses can play in delivering adaptation solutions, driving innovation and facilitating knowledge transfer. The analysis highlights the importance of public policy in mobilising the private sector's contribution to building resilience in the real economy.^[11] Sustained public funding will therefore need to be combined with policy mechanisms that can use public investment strategically to unlock the necessary private sector investment.

The Council has repeatedly emphasised the need to enhance community and individual preparedness for extreme weather events based on systematic reviews of the impacts of and response to such events, and has recommended the designation and resourcing of resilient local emergency response hubs. A review of the Storm Éowyn coordinated response was published in October 2025,^[12] giving rise to 27 recommendations across 4 thematic areas: response coordination; communication of safety and other relevant information to the public; humanitarian support in communities; and resilience of critical infrastructure and essential services. Following this review, a workshop aimed at strengthening severe weather and flood plans was attended by all local authorities in November 2025, and they are now tasked with reviewing and updating these plans for review by the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) in 2026.^[13]

a A DZ is a spatial area identified by each local authority in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures are identified. The concept gives local authorities the mandate to take risks, innovate and develop demonstrator projects, which can then be replicated nationally if successful. See <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/decarbonising-zones/>.



Guidance on community support centres was issued by NDFEM to all local authorities in June 2025 and subsequently updated in December 2025.^[13,14] The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage recently confirmed that procurement of mobile generators for rapid deployment by local authorities has taken place, and that funding has been provided to all local authorities to install a changeover switch that can be used with the mobile generators to further enhance resilience.^[13]

The Council welcomes these practical steps but notes with considerable concern that the implementation plan for the review of Storm Éowyn has still not been published. This is urgently needed to translate the recommendations into actionable plans, with owners and timelines for delivery of actions, and to ensure that their implementation is monitored and reported publicly. Delays in publication and enactment of the findings are leaving households, communities and business vulnerable to the impacts of the weather extremes that climate change is making ever more frequent and severe.

The Council also previously recommended that departments and agencies leading the SAPs identify the funding required to support local climate adaptation measures, and that the revised National Development Plan (NDP) should translate national priorities into local climate resilience projects, including actions identified in the LACAPs. Financial resources for adaptation remain insufficiently specified in the updated SAPs, with no clear costing of activities, no indication of investment needs and no clear commitment regarding available funding to support implementation in most cases. While the revised NDP^[15] includes significant investment in major infrastructure, including water, transport, energy and housing, there is still no national fund to support local climate adaptation measures specifically.

The Council also recommended the development of statutory planning guidelines to integrate future climate projections and adaptation measures into regional and local development plans. This does not appear to have been progressed, and the absence of a Built Environment and Planning SAP remains a substantial barrier to increasing the climate resilience of Ireland's buildings and planning system. The Council notes with considerable concern that these are significant gaps that risk undermining the delivery of local adaptation actions.

Recognising that many extreme weather events have already become both more frequent and more severe, the Council also recommended that the Government establish the planned Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme before the 2025/26 storm season. The Council is extremely disappointed at the lack of progress in this regard. This remains a critical gap in recovery for supporting households, communities, farmers and businesses affected by extreme weather events.

While the expanded Emergency Humanitarian Flooding Scheme, opened after Storm Chandra struck in February 2026,^[16] is welcome, it does not amount to a permanent, appropriately resourced and streamlined scheme as envisaged in the commitment in the Programme for Government 2025.^[6] The Council reiterates that it is critical to move from piecemeal, post hoc reactive responses on an event-by-event basis to a proactive framework that enables speedy provision of support to impacted communities and businesses based upon objective qualifying criteria and using streamlined applications.

2.2. Planning and skills

The Council has previously emphasised the need for ambitious targets, impactful and fully costed actions, and measurable adaptation indicators in the revised SAPs. The publication of the updated SAPs in November 2025^[4] provided a critical opportunity to move from planning to implementation of effective adaptation measures that enhance Ireland's resilience to climate change. However, as



outlined in a letter from the Council to the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment in December 2025,^[17] the Council is extremely disappointed that this opportunity may have been missed. There remains deep uncertainty around the levels of finance available to support meaningful adaptation action, and there is no clear costing of the activities included in the vast majority of the SAPs.

Departments responsible for implementing the SAPs urgently need advice on and central Government support for the development of effective and consistent costing methodologies to support future adaptation planning and budgeting. It is also unclear how the risks identified in the NCCRA^[3] are reflected in the prioritisation of actions within the SAPs. Furthermore, despite being a mandatory requirement in the SAP guidelines, there is a lack of high-level, outcome-oriented indicators, and actions in most cases are not sufficiently specific and lack the necessary milestones to monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness. These concerns remain significant and must be addressed as a priority if the SAPs are to provide the basis for delivery and evaluation of effective climate resilience outcomes.

The Council also previously recommended that lead departments and agencies urgently conduct comprehensive skills and resource gap analyses to identify and address the climate adaptation skills needed across all sectors, including in semi-state agencies and the private sector. The ongoing exercise being led by DCEE to assess capacity and skills across Government for climate change adaptation is a welcome development. It will be important for this work to be translated into a clear programme of action to address any gaps that are identified.

The Council also welcomes the strengthened governance mechanisms evident in the development of the SAPs through expanded core and planning teams and good stakeholder engagement. A systemic approach will require all sectors to consider the implications of adaptation within their own sector, and interdependencies with other sectors, including those that do not have a SAP in place.

2.3. Managing coastal change

The Council has repeatedly called for the development of a comprehensive national programme of coastal management measures to protect and preserve coastal areas at the local and regional scales. The report of the Inter-Departmental Group on National Coastal Change Management Strategy^[18] was published in 2023 and provides the basis for a long-term strategy for integrated coastal change management in Ireland. An inter-departmental steering group on coastal change,^[19] chaired by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), was subsequently established to progress the strategy recommendations, including the development of a national set of CCMPs to provide the necessary framework to guide short-, medium- and long-term coastal management and investment decisions. As outlined in the strategy, the recommended development of CCMPs, which may transcend local authority areas, will require an appropriate policy framework to underpin and guide potential management options.

The Council notes that work is ongoing, led by the OPW, on data collection, analysis and coastal hazard and risk assessments to support the preparation of evidence-based CCMPs,^[20] including the publication of Flood Risk Management Plans in 2018,^[21] based on the preceding Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment^[22] and the National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme.^[23]

Geological Survey Ireland is delivering the Coastal Change Assessment Project,^[24] comprising two elements – the National Shoreline Change Assessment, which analyses past trends of coastal change, and the Coastal Vulnerability Index – to assess coastal vulnerability to sea level rise, in particular due to erosion and/or inundation. In parallel, the OPW has developed the Past Coastal



Erosion Database^[20] to assist in identifying which areas of the Irish coast may have been prone to coastal erosion and to what extent. This has been launched for local authorities, which are populating the database for their administrative areas prior to making it available to the public.

The OPW is also developing predictive coastal erosion hazard mapping^[25] that will set out areas that may be prone to erosion in the future (2050, 2080 and 2130) under different climate change scenarios. Similar to the OPW flood maps, the predictive coastal erosion maps will form the basis for associated risk assessments and management planning, and should inform sustainable planning and development. An update on the National Coastal Change Management Strategy provided in October 2025^[26] by DHLGH indicated that, at that time, the OPW pilot coastal erosion mapping study was substantially complete (it was completed in December 2025 (OPW, personal communication, July 2026)) and the National Coastal Erosion Hazard Mapping programme is due to commence in 2026. Timely delivery of this work will be important to strengthen the national evidence base for coastal risk management, adaptation planning and the prioritisation of future interventions.

The Council welcomes the announcement in August 2025 of an increase in funding supports available to local authorities under the OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme.^[27] The upper financial threshold for each approved project has been increased significantly from €750,000 to €2 million, to allow for an increase in the scale of works encompassed by the scheme, including nature-based approaches. In addition, the recently published document 'Coastal Change Management: A Practical Resource' provides a roadmap to support local authority staff in addressing coastal change management issues through evidence-based planning and response.^[28] Together, these should support local authorities in making effective use of the increased funding and help to strengthen local delivery.

Despite this progress, no CCMPs have been published, and the proposed pathfinder schemes committed to in the Programme for Government 2025^[6] have not yet commenced. In response to a parliamentary question in February 2026, the Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPENDR) confirmed that the 15 recommendations outlined in the report of the Inter-Departmental Group on National Coastal Change Management Strategy have been approved by the Government for implementation and, as part of this, it is envisaged that a number of coastal erosion pilot projects will be progressed.^[20] The Council is concerned that progress is far too slow given the scale and urgency of the risks facing exposed coastal communities.

Coastal erosion is already impacting Ireland's coastline. Residents in Rosslare reported worsening impacts of coastal erosion and properties being at risk in April 2026,^[29] noting that storms of increasing frequency and severity have had devastating effects at Rosslare Strand and Ballyhealy Beach. Storm Claudia in November 2025, Storm Bram in December 2025 and Storm Chandra in January 2026 have all exacerbated the loss of beach and dune material to the sea, and some residents fear their property will not survive another winter. Coastal erosion is also threatening the remains of hundreds of ancient forts around Ireland's coast, including on the Copper Coast, County Waterford, which is particularly rich in archaeology.^[30] In some locations there has been at least 25 metres of erosion since around 1840.^[30]

Recent research commissioned by the Climate Change Advisory Council, 'Managing Coastal Risks in Ireland: Towards Strategies That Integrate Planned Coastal Relocations',^[31] highlights that Ireland is not adequately prepared for future coastal risks and concludes that proactive long-term planning is more cost-effective and socially equitable than emergency responses after disasters occur. The research recommends the development of CCMPs, incorporating adaptation pathways, clear



climate indicators and trigger points for decision-making, improved coastal risk mapping and data collection, dedicated funding mechanisms, pathfinder relocation projects and meaningful community engagement.

As reflected in the 2026 Built Environment Review,^[32] the Council recommends that the Government expedite the development of CCMPs at the appropriate spatial level. CCMPs should include adaptation pathways across short-, medium- and long-term time frames and the establishment of clear climate indicators and trigger points to guide coastal adaptation decisions. A strategic approach to planned relocation should be undertaken for properties vulnerable to coastal flooding and erosion. The three pathfinder projects referenced in the Programme for Government 2025^[6] should be expedited and serve as exemplars for at-risk communities on how to adapt to the impacts of coastal erosion. These projects could build on the case study provided by the Maharees Conservation Association in Dingle, County Kerry (Box 1).^[33]

Box 1: Case study – the Maharees Conservation Association and Dingle Hub

The Maharees Conservation Association^[33] is a volunteer-led community organisation that works to protect and preserve the unique coastline, sand dunes, biodiversity and heritage of the tombolo of Maharees on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry. Established in 2016 in response to severe coastal erosion and storm damage, it brings local people together to take practical action to safeguard their community. Through nature-based approaches such as marram grass planting, dune fencing, awareness campaigns and community engagement, the association has helped strengthen coastal resilience while protecting important habitats and local heritage. Its work has delivered benefits for both people and nature, supporting biodiversity, reducing erosion risks, raising environmental awareness and helping to protect a landscape that is vital for local livelihoods, recreation and tourism.

Also based on the Dingle Peninsula, Dingle Hub^[34] is a non-profit community enterprise that connects local and national partners to develop collaborative solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and rural sustainability challenges.

Through Neart na Machairí (Creative Coastal Resilience),^[35] a 2-year initiative led by the Maharees Conservation Association in partnership with Dingle Hub and supported by Creative Ireland, the Maharees community developed a community-led climate adaptation plan. The initiative brought together community members from diverse backgrounds to co-create a shared learning journey and vision for adapting to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Together, the Maharees Conservation Association and Dingle Hub are excellent examples of community leadership, demonstrating how local knowledge, volunteer commitment and collaborative action can build resilience, strengthen communities and deliver meaningful climate adaptation at the local level.



Figure 1: Marram grass planting on beach dunes by the Maharees Conservation Association.

(Source: Ray Buckley, a Maharees Conservation member.)

2.4. National climate damage register

The Council has previously recommended the establishment of a national climate damage register to monitor and record the economic, social and environmental impacts of extreme events to support more robust preparedness and planning for future extreme events.^[36] The Council has highlighted the need for greater collaboration across Government and agencies, building on initiatives such as the Weather Impact Register (WIRE) app^[37] and existing loss and damage data collected by insurers and semi-state bodies. Some SAPs include commitments to strengthen the monitoring, recording and reporting of climate change impacts. The 2025 OECD Economic Survey for Ireland^[38] also recommended the creation of a national climate damage register.

A 2-year project working towards the development of a national climate damage register will commence in Q4 2026, supported by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Climate Change Advisory Council. The project will be incorporated into the Weather Attribution Science Irish Operational User Service (WASITUS) event attribution project.^[39]



3. Update on relevant international and EU-related policy developments and implications for adaptation and resilience in Ireland

3.1. Belém Adaptation Indicators

At the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in November 2025, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the Belém Adaptation Indicators under the Global Goal on Adaptation process.^[40] The indicators represent the first globally agreed set of indicators for tracking progress on resilience and adaptation. They are intended to strengthen the assessment of progress towards climate resilience across sectors including water, food and agricultural production, ecosystems, infrastructure, cultural heritage and human health.

The indicators are explicitly voluntary, country-driven, non-prescriptive and non-punitive, and are not intended to provide a basis for comparison between parties or to create additional reporting burdens. They are intended to inform national approaches to tracking adaptation action and progress, and countries are encouraged to test the quantitative and qualitative indicators in consultation with relevant practitioners and other stakeholders. Consideration is now being given to how these indicators could inform the development of national adaptation monitoring and reporting frameworks in Ireland.

As part of this process, DCEE has sought technical input from relevant sectors in Ireland on the usefulness and quality of these indicators for measuring resilience at the national level, on assumptions relating to data availability and on any indicators that raise issues of significant concern. The Council recommends that DCEE, with support from the Climate Adaptation Taskforce, convene a national process to identify the most relevant adaptation outcome indicators for each sector. Having these indicators in place for each sector would help to improve the monitoring and evaluation of progress in implementing adaptation actions and help to establish baselines and targets in the next iteration of the SAPs.

3.2. Integrated framework for European climate resilience and risk management

The European Commission is developing a new integrated framework for European climate resilience and risk management,^[41] which is expected to be adopted before the end of 2026. This is intended to help Member States prevent and prepare for the growing impacts of climate change, and to establish a more ambitious, comprehensive and coherent EU approach to climate resilience and preparedness.

The framework is being informed by the work of the Reflection Group on Mobilising Climate Resilience Financing,^[42] which presented its final report in December 2025. The report highlighted the growing economic impact of climate events, which caused estimated losses across the EU of €208 billion between 2021 and 2024, and stated that delayed action will increase the economic and societal burden on governments, businesses and communities. The need to scale up climate resilience investment, including mobilising private sector finance, was highlighted as both necessary and an opportunity. The report stressed the importance of reliable climate data, accessible risk information, insurance coverage for residual risks and standardised resilience metrics. A 2026 study commissioned by the European Commission estimated that the EU, its Member States and the private sector should invest about €70 billion annually until 2050 to adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change.^[43]



Suggested initiatives include a climate resilience project pipeline to help local authorities access financing, an EU-wide digital platform for blended finance and an EU observatory on insurability to enhance risk awareness. This framework could have important implications for the implementation and financing of Ireland's adaptation policy framework, including the new SAPs and LACAPs, by increasing the need to link climate risk assessment with investment planning and measurable resilience outcomes.

The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, in its report 'Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change: Recommendations for an Effective EU Adaptation Policy Framework',^[44] recommends that the framework put forward five recommendations to guide ongoing EU policy processes:

1. mandate and harmonise climate risk assessments across EU policies and Member States using common climate scenarios and methodological standards,
2. adopt a common reference for adaptation planning, preparing for climate risks consistent with 2.8°C to 3.3°C of global warming by 2100 (consistent with estimates of current mitigation policies), complemented by the use of more adverse scenarios for stress-testing,
3. establish a clear vision for a climate-resilient EU by 2050 and beyond, supported by sectoral strategies and measurable adaptation targets,
4. embed fair and just climate resilience considerations across EU policies, programmes and investments, supported by monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms,
5. mobilise public and private investment in adaptation and develop a more coherent approach to managing the growing costs associated with climate impacts.

The Council considers that the forthcoming EU adaptation framework presents an important opportunity to support a more strategic, coordinated and integrated approach to climate resilience across sectors and governance levels, while strengthening cooperation on shared climate risks across jurisdictions.

3.3. EU Critical Entities Resilience Directive

The EU Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive^[45] places new obligations on Member States to strengthen the resilience of essential services and critical infrastructure against a wide range of threats, including climate change, flooding, cyber risks and extreme weather events. In Ireland, the Department of Defence published the National Strategy on the Resilience of Critical Entities 2026–2029 to support implementation of the European Union (Resilience of Critical Entities) Regulations 2024.^[46]

The strategy aims to strengthen governance, preparedness, risk assessment, interdependency analysis and business continuity planning across 11 sectors, including energy, transport, water, health and digital infrastructure. Under the CER framework, Member States were required to identify critical entities by July 2026 following the completion of national risk assessments and sectoral resilience evaluations.^b

The national strategy outlines how Ireland will identify critical entities and support them in conducting risk assessments in line with the National Risk Assessment 2024,^[47] and oversee the implementation

b Responsibility for identifying and overseeing critical entities rests with the competent authorities designated for each of the 11 sectors.



of suitable resilience measures. An oversight of the National Risk Assessment 2024 is its limited consideration of the health-related impacts of climate change. It focuses on vector-borne diseases and does not consider the wider impacts of climate on health, such as those associated with flooding and heat.

The European Commission is expected to continue publishing supporting guidance and delegated acts during 2026–2027 to assist implementation across Member States. The critical role that the Department of Defence has in the development and implementation of the National Strategy on the Resilience of Critical Entities underlines the importance of sectoral adaptation planning for the Department of Defence, which currently does not have a SAP and, in particular, the need for effective cross-sectoral planning.

3.4. EU Nature Restoration Regulation

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation entered into force in August 2024 and established legally binding restoration targets for degraded ecosystems across land and sea.^[48] It aims to enable the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient nature, and contribute to achieving the EU's climate mitigation and adaptation objectives. Under the regulation, Member States are required to submit a draft National Restoration Plan (NRP) to the European Commission by 1 September 2026 and a final NRP by September 2027, showing how they will deliver on the targets for each defined ecosystem up to 2030, 2040 and 2050. Ireland was one of seven Member States to submit their draft NRP by 1 September; however, this has not been made publicly available.^c

The first public consultation on Ireland's draft NRP was launched on 3 June 2026,^[49] following stakeholder and citizen engagement through the Leaders' Forum and Community Conversations, and work by the Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration, the recommendations of which were published in April 2026.^[50] The draft NRP estimates that in Ireland over 7,431 km² of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems covered under Article 4 of the regulation are currently in a degraded condition. It estimates the restoration and re-establishment costs over the period 2024–2050 at just under €5.8 billion, with an uncertainty range of €2.6 billion to €11 billion.

The socio-economic benefits of the restoration and re-establishment are estimated to be €32.9 billion, with an uncertainty range of €16.9 billion to €45.7 billion, and include flood mitigation and water regulation; increased resilience to climate-related disturbances such as droughts, fires, pests and diseases; and protection against coastal and inland erosion. This significantly strengthens the policy and investment case for ecosystem-based adaptation in Ireland.

3.5. EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034

The European Commission presented its proposal for the 2028–2034 EU Multiannual Financial Framework in July 2025, amounting to almost €2 trillion, or 1.26% of the EU's gross national income on average between 2028 and 2034.^[51] The proposal identifies 'protecting people and building preparedness and resilience' as one of the six strategic priorities for the next budget period.^[52] It acknowledges the increasing frequency of natural and human-induced disasters, and commits to providing faster, more efficient and flexible tools to respond to future challenges and crises. The proposal includes almost €400 billion in loans to Member States, to be triggered when severe crises hit the EU, and €10.7 billion in common funding for civil protection and health emergency preparedness.^[53]

^c The seven Member States that submitted their draft NRP on time are Austria, Bulgaria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.



New national and regional partnerships will fund targeted investments in all areas of preparedness, including extreme weather and power outages, tailored to local needs. The proposal is now subject to negotiation with Member States and the European Parliament until 2027, before coming into force in 2028. This will have important implications for the financing and implementation of Ireland's adaptation policy framework by determining the availability and conditionality of EU funding for climate resilience and preparedness, including risk reduction and emergency response.

4. Analysis and discussion of key themes of focus

4.1. Towards more climate-resilient development pathways

The adoption of climate-resilient development pathways is needed in the face of escalating and increasingly systemic climate risks. The Council focused its 2026 Adaptation Committee Workshop on potential pathways to climate resilience, and subsequent round-table meetings with key stakeholders were held on the barriers to these pathways and the measures needed to enhance the uptake of this approach.

The workshop, held on 15 April 2026, brought together national and international experts to explore, using the serious game designed by Deltares Institute,^[54] how thresholds, indicators and adaptive pathways can support climate adaptation planning under uncertainty across key sectors in Ireland. A central focus of the workshop was the use of dynamic adaptive policy pathways (DAPPs).^[55] A workshop report was published on the Council's website,^[56] and the Council plans to commission further research in 2026 to promote greater adoption of adaptive pathways in Ireland.

Key observations arising from the workshop include the following:

- ▶ Adaptive pathways provide a flexible framework for long-term decision-making. DAPPs can sequence actions over time, link decisions to thresholds and signals, and reduce the risk of maladaptation while preserving future options.
- ▶ Monitoring, thresholds and review mechanisms are as important as the adaptation actions themselves. Effective implementation of adaptive pathways depends on clear monitoring systems, agreed indicators and well-defined trigger points.
- ▶ Real-world application shows that adaptive pathways are already emerging in Ireland. Case studies from flood risk management and the Water sector illustrate that elements of adaptive pathways thinking are being applied in practice. The need for shared learning across sectors was repeatedly highlighted.
- ▶ Climate services are critical enablers of adaptive planning and decision-making, supporting the translation of climate science into decision-relevant information through indicators, thresholds, warning levels and climate services platforms.

Recent research commissioned by the Council on risks and uncertainty in infrastructure planning^[57] found that climate risk and adaptation are not yet sufficiently or systematically embedded within planning, development and regulatory processes for critical infrastructure, and that long-term climate resilience planning remains underdeveloped. The report identifies DAPPs as a particularly relevant approach for long-lived infrastructure assets where uncertainty, high costs and the risk of maladaptation make irreversible decisions difficult. It also notes that a large proportion of Ireland's operational critical infrastructure was designed to standards that did not account for future climate conditions, and recommends commissioning systematic, network-wide climate vulnerability assessments across all major critical infrastructure sectors.



The Council recommends that the Government, through its recently established Climate Adaptation Taskforce, promote the integration and use of dynamic adaptive pathways approaches within the broader planning system to support flexible decision-making under uncertainty, identify adaptation tipping points and enable timely adjustment of adaptation measures as climate risks evolve.

Box 2: Climate Ireland Adaptation Network working groups

In June 2026, the Climate Ireland Adaptation Network working groups published four reports on the technical definitions of resilience, just resilience, resilient decision-making and resilience indicators.^[58] They were developed through a collaborative process involving adaptation practitioners from Government departments, local authorities, state agencies, academia and other organisations, who shared their views, practices and perspectives around key challenges for adaptation in Ireland.

The reports call for the establishment of a national resilience objective supported by reference climate trajectories; dynamic adaptive policy pathways; the integration of justice and equity principles throughout adaptation planning and implementation; stronger coordination and governance across national, sectoral and local levels; and the development of a national indicator hierarchy to monitor climate hazards, impacts, adaptation implementation and resilience outcomes across sectors.

4.2. Enhancing resilience to flood events

The impacts of Storm Chandra served as a stark reminder of the vulnerability of the built environment and transport network to flooding events. The impacts of this storm, summarised in Box 3, prompted the Council to undertake an in-depth analysis of some of the key measures needed to enhance resilience to flood events. The analysis was based on interviews with experts and *ex officio* agencies represented on the Adaptation Committee and working on different aspects of flood risk management. The interviews were structured around key issues of interest, including flood relief schemes, early warning systems, the application of nature-based measures, and individual and community-based resilience initiatives.

Box 3: Initial lessons from Storm Chandra

Storm Chandra passed over Ireland on 26 and 27 January 2026, bringing strong winds and heavy rainfall after a prolonged wet period, with many rivers already approaching or exceeding bank-full conditions.^[59] Met Éireann warned in advance that heavy and persistent rain would fall on already saturated ground, increasing the risk of coastal, surface and river flooding, with potential for wave over-topping and flooding in low-lying coastal areas due to strong onshore winds and high waves.^[59] The south-east and east of the country were particularly affected, with some areas recording three to four times their average rainfall over the period 22–28 January.^[60]



In Enniscorthy, County Wexford, the storm led to the flooding of 32 residential properties and 42 commercial properties, and the closure of seven schools.^[61] Significant impacts were also felt by several communities throughout South Dublin, with flooding experienced at Grange Park, a 'major event' declared on the M50 due to flooding and roads becoming impassable, with knock-on disruption to Dublin Bus services.^[62]

Insurance Ireland estimates that the storm resulted in almost €26 million in insurance claims, ranking 20th in terms of insured damage resulting from weather events in Ireland so far this century.^[63] On 30 April 2026, in response to the flooding from Storm Chandra, the Minister of State with responsibility for the OPW announced the approval of €6.6 million for eight local authorities, to introduce interim flood protection measures.^[64]

Key reflections from Storm Chandra include the following:

- ▶ **Flood protection measures need to be accelerated in areas that are already known to be exposed to significant flood risk.** The worst impacts of storm Chandra were felt in locations such as Enniscorthy, which has experienced seven flood events since 2000.^[61] Although the design of a flood defence scheme for the town was initiated in 2015, construction has not yet commenced due to environmental concerns and planning issues.^[61] In April 2026, it was announced that the OPW has provided €2.6 million in funding for interim flood protection measures in Enniscorthy, which are expected to be in place by October 2026.^[61,64]
- ▶ **Volunteer and community support played a vital role in the storm response.** Civil Defence volunteers across Counties Louth, Wexford, Monaghan and Wicklow assisted with evacuations, welfare checks on affected households, transport for medically vulnerable individuals, sandbag distribution, and establishment and staffing of community rest centres, alongside community volunteers.^[65] This underlines the importance of building capacity and strengthening resources within volunteer groups and communities, while also recognising that voluntary and community response cannot act as a substitute for planned investment in flood protection, resilient infrastructure and risk reduction.
- ▶ **Transport networks remain vulnerable to flooding, with impacts extending beyond immediate disruption to longer-term repair costs.** Storm Chandra caused road closures and widespread disruption to public transport services, including bus and rail services. Many national, regional and local roads suffer from inadequate drainage capacity, and the Department of Transport reported that over 300 roads were damaged and around 50 rendered impassable during Storm Chandra.^[66] The eight worst-impacted local authorities required €59 million for repairing regional and local roads damaged by the storm.^[67]
- ▶ **There is a need to improve local flood risk communications and national flood forecasting capability.** Flooding in the wake of Storm Chandra led to criticism from within Government and affected communities regarding the clarity, timing and localisation of flood risk communications.^[68–70]
- ▶ **A rapid attribution study by WASITUS^[71] concluded that, while the 1-day rainfall associated directly with Storm Chandra was 'not particularly remarkable', the 7-day rainfall accumulation was 9% higher than it would have been in a –1.3°C cooler pre-industrial climate.** It further concluded that this level of rainfall accumulation over a 7-day period is now almost three times more likely to occur than in a pre-industrial climate, shifting from a 1 in 150-year event to a 1 in 60-year event.



4.2.1. Flood relief schemes delivery

The OPW's major flood relief schemes are the main mechanism for providing flood protection for cities, towns and villages. These schemes are supplemented by the OPW's Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, which provides funding to local authorities for studies, projects and works to address local flood risk and coastal erosion issues through local solutions.

The OPW has played a leading role in embedding climate risk and adaptation measures within flood risk modelling that takes an adaptive pathways approach to the design of new flood relief schemes. Flood relief schemes are designed to withstand 1 in 100-year fluvial flood events or 1 in 200-year coastal flooding, and all new flood relief schemes are now designed to be readily adaptable to modification in the future.

Since 2018, as part of a prioritised, phased approach to scheme delivery, the OPW has trebled the number of schemes at the design, planning or construction phases to approximately 100 schemes.^[72] To support delivery at this scale, the OPW operates a partnership model with local authorities. Under this model, the majority of flood relief schemes are led by local authorities, which act as sponsoring agencies under the Infrastructure Guidelines, while the OPW acts as the approving authority. The OPW provides funding, technical support and project oversight. Project steering groups comprising representatives of the OPW and the relevant local authority are typically established for major schemes, and a memorandum of understanding sets out the roles and responsibilities of both parties in relation to project delivery.^[73]

To support this delivery model, the OPW funds some 50 local authority engineering staff, who manage the day-to-day delivery of flood relief schemes nationwide.^[74] In addition, a Local Authority Forum, established in 2021, meets up to four times each year and brings together executive and senior executive engineers involved in the delivery of flood risk management projects across local authorities, many of whom are funded by the OPW.

The OPW invests approximately €100 million annually in flood relief schemes, with 56 major schemes completed to date, protecting over 13,500 properties and avoiding estimated financial damages of approximately €2 billion.^[72] These flood relief schemes have also made a substantive contribution to enhancing the public realm and delivered wide-ranging positive impacts on businesses and residents in towns that had previously been subject to regular flooding events. Many of these towns, such as Bandon,^[75] Clonmel,^[76] Mallow^[77] and Skibbereen,^[78] have avoided flood damage from severe recent storms.

Box 4: Case study – the Templemore Flood Relief Scheme

The Templemore Flood Relief Scheme was completed in 2024 and involved diverting the River Mall through a new 750-metre channel, constructing culverts and embankments, and widening the existing river channel to reduce flood risk in the town and surrounding areas (Figure 2). The scheme provides flood protection for approximately 100 properties and addresses a long history of severe flooding, including major events in 1968 and 2000, with the latter resulting in damage to approximately 40 properties. Following the completion of feasibility studies, extensive public consultation and the necessary planning procedures, construction was initiated in 2017 with the OPW as the lead authority.



A key feature of the project was the integration of biodiversity measures through the OPW Biodiversity Action Strategy. Around 160 ecological enhancements were incorporated into the scheme to support local habitats while maintaining flood protection objectives. Approximately 40 measures focused on the river environment, including a two-stage channel design to support fish populations and the installation of spawning gravels for species such as salmon, trout and brook lamprey. The remaining measures supported terrestrial biodiversity through mammal passages, bat roosts, bee nesting areas, shelter for otters and bird nesting spaces.

The project demonstrates how flood protection infrastructure can be delivered alongside environmental conservation. The scheme received the Environmental Engineering Project of the Year award at the 2024 Engineering Excellence Awards.



Figure 2: The River Mall in Templemore.
(Source: OPW.)

The Council is very concerned by protracted delays in the execution of flood relief schemes. Eight years after being prioritised for development, 30 of the 54 major flood relief schemes identified through the 2018 national flood risk assessment remain at Stage 1 (preliminary design), the first stage of a five-stage delivery process.^[79] This is particularly significant given that completing flood relief schemes takes an average of 11 years. The key sources of delays are considered to be the complex planning and legal process linked to public objections, judicial review processes and environmental requirements; the high volume of schemes; and capacity shortages within the OPW, local authorities and the wider market in this technical area.

While amendments to the Planning Act are likely to expedite and reduce the number of judicial reviews of schemes, ensuring community-level acceptance of schemes is still of key importance. It is also noted that staffing levels at An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly An Bord Pleanála) have increased by more than 50% since 2021,^[80] but decision-making time frames within the planning



system remain too long. The scale and complexity of the schemes' delivery highlight the importance of effective governance, adequate technical capacity and clear coordination across all relevant stakeholders. The Council recommends that the Government strengthen technical expertise and increase the human resources capacity of the OPW and local authorities to address system constraints and support the timely design, planning and delivery of major flood relief schemes.

Box 5: Case study – the Clonakilty Flood Relief Scheme

Clonakilty has extensive experience of the threat of flooding from both coastal and fluvial sources, most recently in 1995, 2009, 2012 and 2015. Clonakilty Bay is a designated European site under the Habitats Directives and is of international importance for its intertidal and estuarine habitats and its waders and wildfowl population.

The solution involved the design of upstream flood storage areas that made use of the natural topography of the land to reduce flood risk in the town. An embankment was constructed to store some 400,000m³ of floodwater. The embankment incorporates a single sluice, a spillway and a fish pass to accommodate the movement of fish (Figure 3).

Tidal defences include flood walls and road raising, along with storm water pumping stations to ensure that rainwater falling behind the defences does not cause a flood risk. River banks were raised between the fluvial storage and tidal defences to permit design flow contained within the river banks. The design of the scheme avoids impacts on the Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area in Clonakilty Bay, while allowing an acceptable height of flood defence walls within the town.

The operation and upkeep of the Clonakilty Flood Relief Scheme is being undertaken by Cork County Council in partnership with the OPW, and the scheme provides protection to 296 properties.



Figure 3: Clonakilty coastal defences.

(Source: OPW.)



Since the introduction of the OPW's Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme in 2009, some €70 million in funding has been approved for over 900 projects, providing protection to some 8,000 properties.^[81] The Council welcomes the announcement in August 2025 of an increase in funding supports available to local authorities under this scheme (see *Section 2.3*).^[82]

The OPW has also increased its contribution to approved projects to 90% of the first €300,000 and 95% of approved funding above this amount.^[82] In addition, revised benefit–cost requirements should enable a broader range of projects to qualify for support, helping to accelerate the delivery of locally important flood mitigation and coastal protection measures.

Information on active and completed major flood relief schemes is publicly available through Floodinfo,^[83] with individual scheme websites providing regular project updates, newsletters, key documents and project information for the general public. While a public database exists for projects funded under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme,^[84] the level of detail and frequency of updates vary.

The Council recommends that the OPW enhance the information available through the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme database by working with local authorities to provide more regular updates on project statuses, timelines, key documentation and expected outcomes. Enhancing the consistency and timeliness of reporting on Minor Works Scheme projects would improve transparency, accountability and knowledge-sharing across local authorities and communities.

4.2.2. Capitalising on multi-sectoral nature-based approaches

The role of nature-based approaches in enhancing resilience to a range of climate hazards, including flooding, drought, coastal erosion and sea level rise, is increasingly recognised. The consideration and promotion of nature-based measures in infrastructure projects to manage future flood risks are highlighted as best practice in Phase 2 of the Land Use Review.^[85]

Nature-based approaches across rural, urban and coastal landscapes have an important role to play, complementing traditional engineered defences while delivering wider environmental and social benefits. They can provide significant co-benefits for water quality, sediment management, biodiversity, habitat restoration and carbon sequestration. The Council recommends that the Government move beyond the pilot-scale use of nature-based measures and that the Climate Adaptation Taskforce support their systematic integration across catchments and within urban and coastal areas.

In terms of nature-based approaches in the rural environment and upper catchments, natural water retention measures have a key role to play in improving water quality, creating habitats and reducing/delaying the onset of peak flow rates downstream during flooding events in small catchments. In 2022, a list of prioritised natural water retention measures for Ireland was identified through the Natural Water Retention Measures Working Group, including re-wetting drained organic lands, engineered basins, ponds and ditches, floodplain restoration, river re-meandering, removal of dams and other longitudinal barriers, riparian fencing and planting, and appropriate afforestation initiatives.^[86]

In 2026, the OPW completed a mapping exercise to identify areas nationally where the application of different types of nature-based measures might be appropriate.^[87] These maps have been used to prioritise strategic areas for funding under the Forestry Programme's Forests for Water grant scheme, which supports the planting and maintenance of native forests for the protection of water and aquatic ecosystems and the expansion of alluvial forests.^[88]



This type of approach should be expanded so that stronger incentives for the full range of natural water retention measures are provided to farmers and landowners in targeted strategic areas through agri-environment schemes^d and financial programmes that will be established to support implementation of the NRP for the EU Nature Restoration Regulation. These schemes should include specific criteria to encourage measures that increase water storage capacity and reduce surface water run-off in appropriate locations, recognising the benefits for water quality, biodiversity, habitat restoration, carbon sequestration and flood resilience.

At the urban level, the application of nature-based approaches to flooding is prioritised in the majority of LACAPs and is also supported through the National Strategy for the Nature Based Management of Urban Rainwater and Urban Surface Water Discharges.^[89] These both focus on the delivery of actions to promote the application of sustainable urban drainage schemes and the design and transformation of urban landscapes by integrating planted areas to store and treat rainwater run-off prior to discharging it back into the urban drainage system.

These measures have good potential to reduce risks from pluvial flooding. However, limited information is available on progress in implementing these approaches across local authorities and the impact of these measures in reducing run-off, improving water quality and enhancing biodiversity in urban areas. This should be systematically reported on and monitored through the LACAP monitoring and evaluation undertaken by DCEE and through the steering committee overseeing the National Strategy for the Nature Based Management of Urban Rainwater and Urban Surface Water Discharges.

In addition to reducing flood risk, urban nature-based approaches contribute to mitigating the urban heat island effect through increased vegetation cover, shading and evapotranspiration, helping to moderate temperatures in built-up areas.^[90] This is becoming increasingly important as Ireland experiences more frequent and intense heat events. Ireland recorded unprecedented temperatures during May and June 2026,^[91,92] with the national maximum temperature record for May exceeded by more than 2°C, which a WASITUS rapid assessment study found would not have been possible in a pre-industrial climate.^[93]

The Council welcomes the Government's June 2026 announcement of €5 million in funding through the Local Authority Water Programme's Nature-based Solutions Programme to support local authorities in delivering projects that help manage surface water, enhance biodiversity and reduce flood risk in urban areas.^[94] However, an enhanced programme of support is needed for local authorities to retrofit areas in the urban public realm (streets, footpaths, parks, estates, squares, bridges, and public buildings and facilities) with nature-based measures to improve resilience to pluvial flooding, mitigate urban heat and deliver co-benefits for urban biodiversity and human wellbeing more widely through the transformation of grey streets into vibrant green and flowering active travel corridors.

At the coastal level, there is a need for the scaled-up deployment of nature-based approaches in coastal and marine areas to strengthen protection against coastal erosion and flooding. The expansion of semi-natural habitats such as dunes, salt marshes and marine sea grasses in vulnerable coastal areas to support their protection from the risks of coastal erosion and sea level rise needs to be prioritised in development plans and in funding supports such as the OPW's Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. The Council notes that there is a working group to promote nature-based approaches under the Inter-Departmental Group on Coastal Change, and these approaches should be prioritised for funding through the implementation of CCMPs and the NRP.

^d These schemes include the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme, Eco-Scheme, the Farming for Water European Innovation Partnership and the Farm Plan Scheme of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Box 6: Case study – the Grey to Green project in Sheffield

The Grey to Green project in Sheffield in the UK^[95] is an award-winning urban regeneration initiative that transformed a heavily paved city-centre corridor into a multifunctional green space designed to support climate adaptation, flood management and urban resilience. The scheme integrated nature-based approaches into the urban land space with extensive planting, rain gardens, street trees and sustainable drainage systems, creating an attractive public space while helping to manage surface water and reduce flood risk (Figure 4).

Phase 2 of the project, completed in 2020, was assessed as having delivered a 561% increase in biodiversity value. The introduction of multilayered, drought-tolerant planting attracts pollinators and enables birds, bats and insects to move more easily through the city centre. At the same time, specially designed flowerbeds have been shown to capture pollutants, including oils, heavy metals and microplastics, helping to prevent contaminants from entering the drainage system and the River Don, and protecting the biodiversity of the river's habitat.

Increased vegetation also contributes to urban cooling, improves air quality and acts as a carbon sink. In addition, the creation of the green corridor has encouraged walking and cycling while providing opportunities for recreation and social interaction. Lastly, from an economic perspective, the project has supported significant regeneration, with new office, hospitality and residential developments taking place in the area.

The Grey to Green project illustrates how nature-based approaches can provide a cost-effective and multifunctional approach to climate adaptation, delivering flood resilience while generating broader benefits for communities, biodiversity and quality of life.



Figure 4: Sheffield Green to Grey project.

(Source: Dr Helen Hoyle, Lecturer in Healthy Urban Landscapes, University of Sheffield, UK.)



4.2.3. Strengthening early warning systems for flood events

Early warning systems are essential in reducing the impacts of flood events by enabling timely preparedness and response. The Early Warnings for All initiative led by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)^[96] has four key pillars: (1) disaster risk knowledge; (2) detection, observation, monitoring, analysis and forecasting; (3) warning dissemination and communication; and (4) preparedness and response capabilities.^[97] The initiative aims to ensure that everyone on Earth is protected by early warning systems by the end of 2027.

The OPW has led the development of the overall National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service (NFFWS) through Stage 1 of its implementation. Met Éireann has led progress in the area of the flood forecasting pillar through the establishment of a flood forecasting centre, which is a constituent part of the broader NFFWS. The NFFWS is being delivered on a phased basis. At Met Éireann's Flood Forecasting Centre, a team of hydrometeorologists analyses hydrological, oceanographical and meteorological information to produce flood forecasts and guidance specifically for local authorities and state emergency responders.^[98] Stage 1 of the NFFWS was completed in December 2023 and ensures that national coastal and catchment-level river flood forecasts and advisories are now issued to local authorities daily.

Stage 2 aims to deliver more detailed, localised and impact-based forecasting to support effective response and public warning systems – pillar 3 of the WMO's Early Warnings for All initiative. The development of Stage 2 of the NFFWS is being examined by a subgroup of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.^[99] Current NFFWS systems have important limitations. Flood forecasting, pillar 2 for the forecasting element, is delivered at broad spatial (county) scales and is not yet sufficiently localised to support community-level or property-level decision-making or associated direct public warnings, and requires additional technical expertise and resources to move from broad spatial-scale to community- and local-scale forecasts. For the other elements of pillar 2, Government investment in additional observation and monitoring is required. In addition, local vulnerability information, pillar 1, is not fully integrated into forecasting outputs, limiting the ability to translate hazard information into actionable risk communication.

Once localised flood forecasting has been developed, publicly available OPW flood maps,^[100] which provide information on flood extents and depths for a range of flood event magnitudes, could be used by local authorities, in conjunction with their local knowledge of vulnerable individuals and communities, to support more effective emergency response and risk communication.

The Council welcomes the Government's approval to proceed with the procurement of a new national Cell Broadcast Public Warning System.^[101] This system will allow emergency alerts to be sent directly to mobile phones in affected areas during major incidents, including severe weather events, ensuring the public can receive timely, reliable information when it is most needed.

Strengthening early warning systems will require continued investment in data, modelling and monitoring infrastructure, including the expansion of hydrometric gauge networks and communication infrastructure to deliver flooding information to the public. Greater integration of forecasting, local vulnerability assessment and emergency response systems will be required, alongside improved communication strategies to ensure warnings are clear, trusted and actionable.

There is also a need to strengthen national capacity in hydrometeorology and oceanography, given the current shortage of expertise and limited availability of specialised postgraduate courses in Ireland. This capacity is essential for modelling complex and compound flood risks, improving forecasting and early warning systems, and supporting local-scale flood risk management. Met Éireann is also actively exploring the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in flood



forecasting methodology systems, and this could play a significant role in the development of a localised flood early warning system.

The Council recommends that the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning Subgroup for Stage 2 of the NFFWS, chaired by the Office of Emergency Planning, develop a dedicated programme of work to address barriers to the development and operationalisation of localised flood forecasting and associated early warning systems, covering data systems and equipment, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and capacity-building needs.

4.2.4. Appropriate zoning of land for development

DHLGH, in conjunction with the OPW, developed guidelines on the planning system and flood risk management (2009),^[102] which set out the considerations regarding flood risk that local authorities need to take into account in the planning process. The guidelines are underpinned by the precautionary principle, which emphasises avoiding development in areas potentially at risk of flooding, particularly where uncertainty exists regarding future climate impacts and flood exposure.

The OPW plays a role in reviewing high-level planning documents, submitting comments to local authorities and forwarding these to the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) to ensure that it is aware of these observations. Recently, the OPW has been providing training to local authority planners on how to read and interpret flood maps, identify flood risks and understand key issues to consider in planning decisions.^[103]

Recent figures provided by the OPR indicate that 288 flood-prone sites were proposed for rezoning by councillors over the past 6 years,^[104] highlighting the continued need to strengthen the integration of flood risk considerations into spatial planning decisions.

Local authorities are in the process of reviewing and updating their development plans to significantly increase zoned land capacity for housing.^[105] The Council stresses that rezoning decisions should be guided by the most recent flood risk mapping, relevant planning guidelines and the precautionary approach. Building in flood-prone areas places those communities in positions of precarity and must be avoided.

4.2.5. Individual- and community-level preparedness, protection and recovery

Individual and community preparedness, prevention, protection and recovery with regard to flood events should be one of the Government's main priorities. Communities, businesses and households need to be supported and empowered to prepare for flood risks.

Existing initiatives, including the OPW's Plan Prepare Protect guidance for householders^[106] and the annual Be Winter Ready public awareness campaign,^[107] coordinated by the Office of Emergency Planning, provide useful information on preparedness and response measures. However, a significant gap remains at the individual property level, where many households lack clear, accessible and locally relevant information on their specific flood risk and the practical measures that can be taken to reduce it. More support should be provided for property-level interventions, including flood-resistant construction, improved drainage, installation of flood barriers and adaptive design. Such measures can significantly reduce damage, support faster recovery and improve the overall resilience of homes and businesses.

To enable this, households and businesses should be provided with clear, tailored guidance on appropriate resilience measures, including indicative costs and expected benefits. Financial supports, such as targeted grants or low-interest loans with distinct adaptation criteria, may also



be required to ensure that these measures are accessible, particularly for vulnerable households and those in high-risk areas.

Local authorities are central to interpreting flood forecasts, communicating risks to the public, coordinating emergency responses and engaging with communities. The Council recommends that local authorities, in collaboration with NDFEM and the Office of Emergency Planning, establish permanent community resilience programmes, building on the existing role of community emergency hubs^[14] to strengthen community resilience across the emergency management cycle, including prevention, preparedness, protection and recovery.

This should include guidance on emergency planning, distribution of information on flood risk, hosting of local preparedness training, and targeted outreach to vulnerable households and populations in high-risk areas. These programmes could also play an important role in streamlining access to insurance and financial supports following flood events for households and businesses, enabling more effective recovery. It is also important to note the potential of these hubs in supporting communities in the face of extreme heat events.

4.2.6. Flood insurance gap

The flood insurance gap refers to the shortfall between total economic losses caused by flooding and the proportion of those losses that are insured. Properties facing repeated flood or coastal erosion risks often experience rising premiums, excess payments, restricted cover or withdrawal of insurance altogether. In Ireland, 5% of buildings, or around 1 in 20 properties, have limited access to flood insurance, with over half of this protection gap concentrated in Counties Dublin, Cork, Louth, Clare and Kildare.^[108]

The average annual cost of inland flooding in Ireland is currently estimated at approximately €101 million, with around 89% of losses linked to properties with limited or no insurance cover.^[108] The Central Bank of Ireland has emphasised that addressing the flood protection gap will require coordinated action across Government, insurers, regulators, local authorities and communities. The Council welcomes the Government's establishment of a dedicated flood insurance protection gap working group, which will bring together Government departments, agencies, insurers and other key stakeholders to examine long-term solutions to the growing challenges associated with the availability and affordability of flood insurance for households and businesses in Ireland.^[109]

4.2.7. Health and social impact assessments

Flooding also has significant and often under-recognised social impacts. These include disruption to education, employment and community services, health impacts and loss of income. Flood events can weaken social cohesion, particularly where communities experience repeated events, and can contribute to longer-term inequalities, as vulnerable households often face greater barriers to recovery, including limited financial resources, reduced access to insurance and lower capacity to undertake repairs or adaptation measures. Flooding is also a major driver of disaster-related displacement globally, accounting for a substantial share of all disaster displacements.^[110]

Research commissioned by the Council highlights that flooding has significant and long-lasting impacts on mental health and should be treated as a public health priority within climate adaptation planning.^[111] The report finds that flooding can have significant and long-lasting psychological impacts, including anxiety, stress, trauma, depression and social isolation, particularly for vulnerable populations and communities repeatedly exposed to flood events. The report recommends that climate adaptation policy and flood risk management adopt a more integrated public health approach, including improved collection of post-flood health and social impact data, stronger coordination



between emergency response and health services, and targeted psychological support for vulnerable groups.

The research also highlights the importance of community engagement, clear risk communication and long-term recovery supports. The NCCRA also stresses the potential for exacerbated mental health impacts on individuals affected by flooding.^[9] The Council notes that the SAP for the Health sector^[112] includes actions for mental health services to engage in assessing which population cohorts are most vulnerable to flooding impacts.

The Council is concerned that there is currently no comprehensive national register or assessment framework for identifying and assessing the vulnerability of different population groups to the social, economic and health impacts of flooding. The lack of such an assessment increases the risk of suboptimal outcomes, whereby those most in need of protection, often among the least visible and most vulnerable in society, are systemically overlooked.

In addition, the Council is concerned that the NDFEM review conducted for Storm Éowyn^[113] did not adequately assess the public health dimensions of the event. It did not incorporate a public health risk assessment, include any health impact data or give consideration to indirect and cascading health impacts arising from prolonged disruption across other sectors, including the Water, Communications, Transport and Electricity sectors. This is a significant limitation, as future preparedness must be informed by a clear understanding of the impacts of extreme weather events on vulnerable and medically dependent households. While the review states that 'further exploration of the area of vulnerability, the identification of vulnerable persons and the management of personal information is warranted', this falls considerably short of a clear, targeted and actionable recommendation, particularly in the absence of a published implementation plan.

The Council recommends that local authorities, the Health Service Executive, the Department of Social Protection, NDFEM and the Office of Emergency Planning improve post-flood impact assessment through the systematic identification, recording and quantification of the social and health impacts of flood events, including impacts on vulnerable populations. This should be supported by the development and maintenance of regularly updated registers of vulnerable individuals and households in flood-prone areas to support targeted preparedness, warning and post-event support for extreme weather events.

Those most affected by climate risks are not always the most visible or vocal, and many vulnerable groups may remain unidentified under conventional consultation and planning processes. There is therefore a need for proactive approaches to identifying, measuring and monitoring vulnerability, including the use of indicators and targeted engagement. As climate change impacts risk deepening existing inequalities,^[114] adaptation policy and planning should place greater emphasis on addressing underlying social vulnerabilities and ensuring that resilience measures are designed and delivered equitably across society.

Box 7: The social vulnerability index tool

A University College Cork-led project has developed a social vulnerability index (SVI) to improve understanding of how climate change impacts different groups and communities across Ireland. The SVI tool supports users to assess a community's vulnerability to climate hazards and impacts such as flooding, extreme heat and drought events.^[115] By identifying social, economic and demographic factors that influence vulnerability, the index can help



policymakers and decision-makers target adaptation measures where they are most needed (Figure 5).

The tool compiles inhabitant census data for a robust set of social, economic and environmental indicators, such as housing quality, unemployment rate, social networks and average education levels, to analyse the vulnerability of a given community to climate change.

Cork city is testing the tool to plan future city adaptation measures and to raise awareness of how climate impacts affect people differently.



Figure 5: Visual representation of the SVI for flooding in Cork, alongside dimension-specific representations (top left: sensitivity; bottom left: adaptive capacity; top right: enhanced exposure; bottom right: overall vulnerability).

(Source: D. McCullagh *et al.* ^[115] Reproduction licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution CC by 4.0 licence; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Resolution of lower right quadrant showing Social Vulnerability Index 2022 improved from original.)

4.2.8. Pluvial flooding

Increased rainfall intensity and instances of pluvial flooding are posing new challenges for local authorities and other stakeholders such as Uisce Éireann, the Department of Transport and the different transport agencies. Pluvial flooding events are more difficult for local authorities to plan for, as they can occur in areas that were never previously flooded and can arise simultaneously across multiple locations. Pluvial flooding occurs when the volume of rainfall exceeds the capacity of urban storm water drainage systems or the ground to absorb it. This excess water then flows overland, ponding in natural or man-made hollows and low-lying areas or behind obstructions. This occurs



as a rapid response to intense rainfall before the floodwaters eventually enter a piped or natural drainage system. This type of flooding is driven in particular by short, intense rainstorms.

The use of nature-based approaches in urban areas is considered particularly beneficial and cost-effective in support of efforts to enhance resilience to pluvial flooding. Examples of nature-based approaches for urban stormwater management include green roofs, ponds, rain gardens and permeable pavements. These measures can increase the retention, evaporation and infiltration of intense rainfall events before they reach drainage infrastructure. The Council recommends that the OPW prioritise targeted research on pluvial flooding to improve understanding of how increasing rainfall intensity and frequency places pressure on existing drainage systems, to inform the development of more resilient design standards and flood risk management approaches.

4.3. Adaptation governance and monitoring frameworks

The Council welcomes the establishment of the Climate Adaptation Taskforce in October 2025,^[5] recognising the need for stronger interdepartmental governance structures, improved coordination and enhanced oversight of adaptation actions at the highest levels of Government. The taskforce provides a mechanism for cross-cutting issues to be examined at a higher level than the National Adaptation Steering Committee. It supports cross-government discussion of climate risks, implementation barriers and system-wide resilience challenges. The involvement of senior officials provides an opportunity to strengthen accountability, coordination and strategic direction across the adaptation system.

The Council recommends that DCEE, with support from the Climate Adaptation Taskforce, convene a national process to identify the most relevant adaptation outcome indicators for each sector and ensure that the necessary systems are in place to establish baselines, monitor trends and set quantitative targets for future SAPs. DCEE, together with DPENDR, should also develop methodology and guidance for identifying and budgeting adaptation expenditure across public bodies, including assessing the costs of inaction and delayed adaptation. A standardised approach is needed, as the absence of comprehensive costing in SAPs limits the ability of the Government to assess investment needs, prioritise actions and monitor implementation.

The Australian Adaptation Database^[116,117] demonstrates how a centralised repository of adaptation case studies can support practitioners and policymakers by providing access to real-world examples of adaptation action, lessons learned and good practice. The database focuses on collecting and categorising adaptation activities across different scales, sectors and geographical locations. An Irish equivalent could help strengthen institutional learning, improve knowledge exchange across sectors, support monitoring and evaluation, and contribute to the development of a national adaptation community of practice. The Council recommends that DCEE progress the development and deployment of an Irish adaptation case study database, drawing on international good practice such as the Australian Adaptation Database, to support learning, knowledge sharing and the development of a community of practice.

To ensure the Adaptation Scorecard aligns with the updated policy framework, the Council is undertaking a full review of its design and implementation. This review is assessing the updated policy framework, including the SAPs and LACAPs, to ensure the categories of assessment remain accessible, reliable and relevant to the organisations being assessed, and to enable a more effective review of local government performance. It is examining international best practice and is supported by ongoing stakeholder engagement involving Government departments, state agencies and local authorities responsible for climate adaptation action. This will ensure relevance, accessibility and robustness, and support stakeholder buy-in.



Following this review, the Adaptation Scorecard will be renamed the Adaptation Action Assessment, reflecting a stronger focus on assessing the implementation and effectiveness of adaptation actions and supporting shared learning and the identification of good practice across sectors and local authorities. As this review is ongoing, no Adaptation Scorecard is provided as part of this 2026 Annual Review. The first Adaptation Action Assessment will be undertaken in late 2026 and will be reported in early 2027.



Appendix 1

Box 8 summarises key adaptation and resilience recommendations drawn from individual sectoral reviews published ahead of this Adaptation Review and as part of the 2026 Annual Review.

Box 8: Adaptation and resilience recommendations across the Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2026

These sectoral recommendations from across the CCAC Annual Review 2026 are critical for strengthening climate adaptation capabilities and climate resilience in Ireland; however, they are not explored in further detail within this Adaptation Review. Please refer to the relevant sectoral review for further information.^[118]

Electricity sector

(Review published 13 May 2026.)

- ▶ The Health and Safety Executive, Uisce Éireann and telecommunications operators should urgently increase investment in large-scale, low-emissions backup electricity solutions for water, telecommunications and health infrastructure, which are especially vulnerable to cascading risks from power outages during extreme weather events.
- ▶ To support household resilience and grid stability, the Government should reintroduce a grant for domestic battery storage and the installation of changeover switches as part of Budget 2027, prioritising low-income households, people registered as medically vulnerable and those most exposed to power outages.
- ▶ In 2026, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland should begin piloting the retrofitting of selected Community Support Centres to install renewable electricity generation capacity and electricity storage, equipping them with reliable and environmentally sustainable backup power solutions. These centres should act as leading examples of effective backup power deployment during electricity outages.
- ▶ The Government should urgently approve the Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Bill to provide for the establishment and maintenance of forestry corridors and strengthened vegetation management measures, improving the resilience and operational safety of the electricity networks. ESB Networks should also ensure the urgent implementation of a transparent national programme of afforestation and hedgerow renewal and nature-friendly management of forestry corridors to mitigate (both on- and off-site) the loss to biodiversity and habitat disturbance caused by its timber clearance programme and support its goal of being nature-positive by 2030.

Transport sector

(Review published 17 June 2026.)

- ▶ The Department of Transport should finalise and publish the updated National Ports Policy, ensuring that adaptation and climate risk planning are fully mainstreamed to



guide the operations, planning, infrastructure investments and decision-making of commercial ports. Each port should be required to adapt to extreme weather events and sea level rise.

- ▶ To increase the resilience of local and regional roads, the Department of Transport, in collaboration with DPENDR, should review the annual programme of regional and local road grant allocations with a view to identifying effective solutions for increasing investment and the deployment of technologies and approaches to enhance the climate resilience of regional and local roads. At the national level, Transport Infrastructure Ireland should conduct a vulnerability mapping exercise and update drainage-related asset management guidance and design manuals for national roads so that they reflect NCCRA data and recent research on the effectiveness of current drainage design standards in withstanding future rainfall volumes.
- ▶ Iarnród Éireann and the Department of Transport should ensure that comprehensive and decision-grade climate risk assessments and climate-proofing measures are undertaken for major projects prioritised under the Rail Project Prioritisation Strategy and for vulnerable sections of the rail network.

Built Environment sector

(Review published 29 July 2026.)

- ▶ The Council recommends that DCEE urgently publish the delayed draft National Building Renovation Plan, ensuring that it includes a clear plan for the phase-out of fossil fuel boilers by 2040, as required under the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. The plan should address aspects of climate resilience, including flood protection, improved water use efficiency, indoor thermal regulation and building improvements, to reduce vulnerability to extreme wind events.
- ▶ The Council recommends that the Government expedite the development of CCMPs, supported by three pathfinder schemes, as identified in the Programme for Government 2025, in priority vulnerable areas. The CCMPs should determine the most appropriate adaptation options for identified at-risk coastal areas, and a strategic, proactive approach to planned relocation should be undertaken for properties vulnerable to coastal flooding and erosion.
- ▶ The Council recommends that DHLGH revise the Built Environment and Planning sector scoping exercise and develop a structured programme of work to ensure the department is in a position to develop and implement a SAP for the Built Environment and Planning sector in the next SAP cycle.

Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector

(Review published 9 September 2026.)

- ▶ The Council recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) develop a digital land-parcel-specific climate resilience and risk management decision support tool over the next 12 months to assist farmers in understanding future climate impacts, risks and possible opportunities, and provide practical support



for on-farm management options. This could be integrated into other increasingly used farmer decision support tools, such as AgNav and PastureBase Ireland, as appropriate.

- The Council recommends that DAFM review the potential for Irish horticulture production to reduce the risk to food security, given Ireland's high reliance on the importation of fruit and vegetables, in the context of climate change risks to the supply chain. The review should include existing horticulture support schemes and supports for primary horticulture producers.



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