CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Nature Restoration Regulation (EU) 2024/1991

Fact Sheet

Published in June 2026

Disclaimer: *This series tracks the progress of EU Green Deal legislation, providing point-in-time updates on how each law is being adopted into national law and the implementation status of specific article-level measures. This publication was compiled by the Climate Secretariat who are solely responsible for the content and any views expressed therein. It does not necessarily represent the views of the Council.*

EU's Nature Restoration Regulation 2024/1991	
Link	➢ EU Regulation 2024/1991 on Nature Restoration
Summary	➢ The EU regulation on nature restoration (EU 2024/1991) came into effect on 18th August 2024. ➢ The regulation aims to put in place restoration measures to cover, as an EU target, at least 20 % of the EU's land and 20 % of sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. ➢ It sets out restoration obligations and targets out to 2050 with interim milestones for 2030 and 2040 specific to: o terrestrial, coastal and freshwater habitat types and habitats of species in these areas; o marine habitats and habitats of marine species; o urban ecosystems; o river connectivity and floodplains; o pollinators; o agricultural ecosystems; o forest ecosystems. ➢ The regulation is a key deliverable under the EU Biodiversity Strategy and seeks to build on and complement obligations set out in the Birds Directive, Habitats Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Water Framework Directive. ➢ Member States must submit a National Restoration Plan to the European Commission and publish the plan, showing how they will deliver on the targets. Ireland's national restoration plan must be submitted to the European Commission before 1st September 2026, after which it will be reviewed by the Commission and revised to address observations and comments received. ➢ National Restoration Plans must be reviewed and revised in 2032 and 2042. ➢ Member States have to monitor and report to the Commission, their progress in implementing the obligations and meeting the targets of the regulation by 30 June 2028 and at least every three years thereafter. ➢ Every 6 years, the European Environment Agency will provide to the Commission an EU-wide technical overview of the progress towards meeting the targets and fulfilment of the obligations. Every 6 years the Commission will report to the European Parliament and Council of the European Union on the implementation of the regulation.

1. Introduction

This factsheet provides an overview of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, which came into force on the 18th August 2024. The regulation is a key element of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which was adopted in 2020 as part of the Green Deal. The main aims of the regulation are to:

1. Protect and ensure the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient ecosystems across the land and sea areas of the EU.
2. Contribute to the EU's overarching objectives on climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation and land degradation neutrality.
3. Enhance food security.
4. Meet the EU's international commitments.

The regulation aims to put in place restoration measures to cover, as an EU target, at least 20% of the EU's land and 20% of sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

Restoration is defined as the process of actively or passively assisting the recovery of an ecosystem in order to improve its structure and functions, with the aim of conserving or enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, through improving an area of a habitat type to good condition, re-establishing favourable reference areas, and improving a habitat of a species to sufficient quality and quantity. Examples of restoration measures are listed in annex 7 to the regulation and have been included as annex 1 to this document.

The structure of the regulation is outlined in the table below:

Chapters	**Articles**
I. General Provisions	1. Subject matter 2. Geographical scope 3. Definitions
II. Restoration Targets and Obligations	4. Restoration of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems 5. Restoration of marine ecosystems 6. Energy from renewable sources 7. National defence 8. Restoration of urban ecosystems 9. Restoration of the natural connectivity of rivers and natural functions of the related floodplains

		10. Restoration of pollinator populations 11. Restoration of agricultural ecosystems 12. Restoration of forest ecosystems 13. Planting three billion additional trees
III.	National Restoration Plans	14. Preparation of the national restoration plans 15. Content of the national restoration plan 16. Submission of the draft national restoration plan 17. Assessment of the national restoration plan 18. Coordination of restoration measures in marine ecosystems 19. Review of the national restoration plan
IV.	Monitoring and Reporting	20. Monitoring 21. Reporting
V.	Delegated and Implementing Acts	22. Amendment of annexes 23. Exercise of the delegation 24. Committee procedure
VI.	Final Provisions	25. Amendment to Regulation (EU) 2022/869 26. Review 27. Temporary suspension 28. Entry into force
	Annexes	1. Coastal and freshwater ecosystems – habitat types and groups of habitat types referred to in Article 4 (1) and (4) 2. Marine ecosystems – habitat types and groups of habitat types referred to in Article 5 (1) and (2) 3. Marine species referred to in Article 5 (5) 4. List of biodiversity indicators for agricultural ecosystems referred to in Article 11 (2) 5. Common farmland bird index at national level 6. List of biodiversity indicators for forest ecosystems referred to in Article 12 (2) and 12 (3) 7. List of examples of restoration measures referred to in Article 14 (16)

2. Scope

Articles 4-12 sets out the scope of the regulation and the restoration targets and obligations for Member States. These targets and obligations are specific to:

- Terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems;
- Marine habitats;
- Urban ecosystems;
- River connectivity and floodplains;
- Pollinators;
- Agricultural ecosystems;
- Forest ecosystems.

As part of achieving these targets and obligations, Member States are also required to contribute to the EU level commitment of planting 3 billion additional trees by 2030.

2.1. Terrestrial, coastal, freshwater and marine ecosystems

For terrestrial, coastal and freshwater habitat types (listed in Annex I to the regulation and aligned with the Habitats Directive) and for marine habitats (listed in Annex II and aligned with the Habitats Directive) , EU Member States must take measures to:

- Improve to good condition areas of habitat types that are not in good condition, with targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050;
- Re-establish habitat types in areas where they no longer occur;
- Restore areas of habitats of species covered by the Birds Directive or the Habitats Directive and the marine species listed in Annex III of the regulation to ensure the long-term survival of the species;
- close the knowledge gap about the distribution and condition of those habitats.

In these habitat types, Member States must also:

- Put in place measures to ensure that areas subject to restoration continue to improve until good condition is reached, and do not subsequently significantly deteriorate once they have reached good condition or, for habitats of species, sufficient quality;
- Endeavour to put in place measures to prevent significant deterioration in areas of habitat types that are already in good condition or that are needed to reach the targets set out in Articles 4 and 5.

2.2. Urban ecosystems

Member States have to ensure:

- There is no net loss in the total national area of urban green space or of urban tree canopy cover in urban ecosystem areas by 2030;
- An increasing trend in the total national area of urban green space after 2030, and, in each urban ecosystem area, an increasing trend of urban tree canopy cover, until satisfactory levels are achieved.

2.3. River connectivity and floodplains

Member States have to:

- Make an inventory of artificial barriers to the connectivity of surface waters and identify barriers to be removed to contribute to the restoration of habitats and habitats of species and to fulfil the EU-level objective of restoring at least 25,000 km of rivers to free-flowing rivers by 2030;
- Remove barriers in accordance with their national restoration plan, giving priority to obsolete barriers;
- Implement complementary measures to improve the natural functions of the related floodplains by 2050;
- Ensure that, once restored, the natural connectivity of rivers and the natural functions of the related floodplains are maintained.

2.4. Pollinators

Member States have to:

- Improve pollinator diversity and reverse the decline of pollinator populations by 2030;
- Achieve an increasing trend of pollinator populations after 2030 until satisfactory levels are achieved.

2.5. Agricultural ecosystems

Member States are required to take measures that aim to:

- Achieve an increasing trend at the national level, until satisfactory levels are achieved, of at least two out of the following three indicators:
    - grassland butterfly index,
    - stock of organic carbon in cropland mineral soils,

    - share of agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features;
- Ensure that the common farmland bird index reaches specified levels;

- Restore drained peatland currently in agricultural use by at least 30 % by 2030 (of which at least a quarter must be rewetted), 40 % by 2040 and 50 % by 2050 (of which at least a third must be rewetted).

2.6. Forest Ecosystems

Member States have to put in place measures to:

- Achieve an increasing trend in the common forest bird index at the national level until satisfactory levels are achieved;
- Achieve an increasing trend at the national level, until satisfactory levels are achieved, of at least six out of the following seven indicators:
    - standing deadwood,
    - lying deadwood,
    - share of forests with uneven-aged structure,
    - forest connectivity,
    - stock of organic carbon,
    - share of forests dominated by native tree species,
    - tree species diversity.

3. National Restoration Plans

3.1. Timelines

Each Member State shall submit a draft of the national restoration plan to the EU Commission by 1 September 2026. The Commission shall assess the draft national restoration plan within 6 months of its receipt in cooperation with each Member State. Member States are required to take into account observations from the Commission in its final national restoration plan, which is to be finalised, published and submitted to the Commission within six months of receiving observations from the Commission.

The national restoration plan shall cover the period up to 2050, with intermediate deadlines corresponding to the targets and obligations set. National restoration plans are to be reviewed and revised in 2032 and 2042.

3.2. Content

The content of the national restoration plan is outlined in Article 15 and shall include, amongst others, the following elements:

- Quantification of the areas to be restored to meet the restoration targets set out and indicative maps of potential areas to be restored.
- Description of the restoration measures planned, or put in place, to meet the restoration targets and fulfil the obligations set out in and a specification regarding which of those restoration measures are planned, or put in place, within the Natura 2000 network.
- Account of the indicators for agricultural ecosystems chosen and their suitability to demonstrate the enhancement of biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems.
- Account of the indicators for forest ecosystems chosen and their suitability to demonstrate the enhancement of biodiversity in forest ecosystems.
- A description of how the Member State will contribute to the commitment of planting at least 3 billion trees by 2030 at EU level.
- Monitoring of the areas subject to restoration, the process for assessing the effectiveness of the restoration measures put in place and for revising those measures where needed to ensure that the targets and obligations set out are met and fulfilled, respectively.
- Estimated co-benefits for climate change mitigation and land degradation neutrality associated with the restoration measures over time.
- Foreseeable socio-economic impacts and estimated benefits of the implementation of the restoration measures referred.
- Dedicated section setting out how the national restoration plan considers: (i) the relevance of climate change scenarios for the planning of the type and location of restoration measures; (ii) the potential of restoration measures to minimise climate change impacts on nature, to prevent or mitigate the effects of natural disasters and to support adaptation; (iii) synergies with national adaptation strategies or plans and national disaster risk assessment reports; (iv) an overview of the interplay between the measures included in the national restoration plan and the national energy and climate plan.
- Estimated financing needs for the implementation of the restoration measures, which shall include a description of the support to stakeholders affected by restoration measures or other new obligations arising from this regulation, and the

means of intended financing, public or private, including financing or co-financing with Union funding instruments.

- An indication of the subsidies which negatively affect meeting of the targets and the fulfilment of obligations set out in this regulation.
- A summary of the process for preparing and establishing the national restoration plan, including information on public participation and of how the needs of local communities and stakeholders have been considered.

3.3. Monitoring, Review and Reporting

- National restoration plans must be reviewed and revised in 2032 and 2042.
- Member States have to monitor and report to the Commission, their progress in implementing the obligations and meeting the targets of the regulation by 30 June 2028 and at least every three years thereafter.
- Every 6 years, the European Environment Agency will provide to the Commission an EU-wide technical overview of the progress towards meeting the targets and fulfilment of the obligations. Every 6 years the Commission will report to the European Parliament and Council of the European Union on the implementation of the regulation.

3.4. Financing

There remains considerable uncertainty with regard to financing the implementation of this regulation at both the EU and national level.

Article 21 (7) of the regulation states that the EU Commission shall, in consultation with Member States, submit a report to the EU Parliament and Council by August 2025 containing an overview of the financial resources available at EU level for implementing this regulation and an assessment of the funding needs and gaps and proposals for measures to address these gaps in the multi-annual financial framework post 2027. This report is not publicly available.

While it is required for Member States to include an overview of the measures in the national restoration plan and the national Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) strategic plan, the regulation states that the preparation of national restoration plans should not imply an obligation for Member States to re-programme any funding under the Common Agricultural

Policy, Common Fisheries Policy or other agricultural and fisheries funding programmes or instruments under the multi-annual financial framework from 2021-2027.

At national level, Article 15 (3) (u) requires Member States to estimate financing needs for the implementation of the restoration measures and the means of the intended financing, including public and private sources and co-financing with EU funding instruments. A financial needs assessment, commissioned by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and the Irish Research Council and published in 2024, estimated that additional annual expenditure of €463.5 million is required to support the achievement of the initial targets of the Nature Restoration Regulation out to 2030. In this context, it is notable that no specific funding was allocated to nature restoration through the Infrastructure, Nature and Climate Fund.

3.5 Exemptions and Flexibilities

The contested process to finalise the regulation led to considerable weakening of the initial proposal, with a lowering of specific targets (also compared to the EU Biodiversity Strategy), the incorporation of choices of indicators for Member States in several areas, reducing monitoring and reporting obligations and reducing financial opportunities for restoration. There are also important exemptions and flexibilities with the regulation.

Article 27 allows for the temporary suspension of the application of provisions for the restoration of agricultural ecosystems if an unforeseeable, exceptional and unprovoked event occurs that has severe EU-wide consequences for the availability of land required to secure sufficient agricultural production for EU food consumption.

With regard to the restoration of organic soils in agricultural use constituting drained peatlands, Article 11 (4) allows for restoration measures on peat extraction sites and other land uses, including rewetting, to be counted under the broader restoration targets.

Articles 6 and 7 describe that renewable energy projects (Article 6) and national defence (Article 7) are presumed to be in the overriding public interest. This means that they can be exempted from the continuous improvement and non-deterioration requirements for priority habitats set out in Articles 4 and 5. The renewable energy plans need to be subjected to a strategic environmental assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC) and an environmental impact assessment (Directive 2011/92/EU).

4. Process and Key issues in Ireland

Process

An Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration was established in November 2024 to:

- Make recommendations to the Minister on what should be included in Ireland's National Restoration Plan;
- Assess the implications of delivering these recommendations; and
- Ensure that all voices are heard during the deliberative process.

The participatory process to develop the National Restoration Plan has included the creation of a Leader's Forum – first convened in March 2025 with thematic workshops for stakeholders from key sectors and a Community Conversations programme designed to deliver a locally-led, nationwide engagement model.

Technical interdepartmental working groups were established to focus on land, sea and urban themes, and are responsible for establishing baselines, datasets, indicators, restoration measures and monitoring frameworks. A finance working group was established to consider the financial aspects of the national restoration plan, including socio-economic impact evaluation, optimisation of existing programmes and new financial mechanisms.

The Independent Advisory Committee completed its work and published its recommendations on 29th April 2026 [1]. The draft of the National Restoration Plan was issued for public consultation on 3rd June 2026.

Key Issues

- The 2025 Article 17 report on the implementation of the Habitats Directive found that 90% of Ireland's EU protected habitats are in unfavourable conservation status, with 51% showing deteriorating trends. This will require a major turnaround to improve these habitats to good condition.
- DHLGH should ensure that targets and measures in the National Restoration Plan for the restoration of ecosystems at land and sea are ambitious and support the

[1] Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration Recommendations

achievement of the national climate objective. Several targets are highly aggregated across the EU and Ireland should be ambitious in contributing to these targets such as planting of 3 billion additional trees and restoring at least 25,000km of rivers into free-flowing rivers by 2030. It should show similar ambition in agriculture and forest ecosystems restoration as targets in these areas have been limited to showing an increased trend in selected indicators.

- Most of the targets in the EU Nature Regulation require high quality baseline data. It is critical that high quality and updated baseline data is developed for the indicators and targets outlined in this regulation to properly inform the National Restoration Plan's measures and targets.
- Considerable investment in capacity and systems will be needed to establish baselines and regular monitoring and to determine satisfactory levels for many of the regulation's indicators. The importance of geographic information systems, remote sensing technologies, artificial intelligence and citizen science as the basis for monitoring systems is highlighted in the regulation.
- Effective design and implementation of the National Restoration Plan will require substantive restoration measures in areas outside of Ireland's protected area network. The Programme for Government commits to the prioritisation of actions on state lands and outlines that all measures under the Nature Restoration Regulation will be completely voluntary for farmers.
- Outcomes for climate can be maximised by restoring carbon store habitats such as peatlands and native woodlands. Restoration can also provide effective mitigation and adaptation solutions, which is one of the Nature Restoration Regulation's overarching aims.
- It needs to be ensured that no-one is left behind in the changes and transition towards land use that support restoration needs. This requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach to designing and implementing the National Restoration Plan.
- Existing policies at local and national level which set out plans for restoration, urban greening for nature, and nature-based solutions can facilitate achieving goals of the Nature Restoration Regulation through incorporation of these actions into the National Restoration Plan.
- The focus on urban ecosystems offers the opportunity to address the development and expansion of urban green space and urban tree canopy in urban areas through

a systematic programme of work. This also offers the opportunity to better integrate urban green space and nature-based solutions into buildings and infrastructure.

- It continues to be unclear how implementation of the National Restoration Plan will be financed at both EU and national levels. It is concerning that no specific funding was allocated at the national level to nature restoration in 2026 through the Infrastructure, Nature and Climate Fund.

Annex 1: List of examples of restoration measures

1) Restore wetlands, by rewetting drained peatlands, removing peatland drainage structures and discontinuing peat excavation.
2) Improve hydrological conditions by increasing quantity, quality and dynamics of surface waters and groundwater levels for natural and semi-natural ecosystems.
3) Remove unwanted scrub encroachment or non-native plantations on grasslands, wetlands, forests and sparsely vegetated land.
4) Apply paludiculture[2].
5) Re-establish the meandering of rivers and reconnect artificially cut meanders or oxbow lakes.
6) Remove longitudinal and lateral barriers, such as dikes and dams; give more space to river dynamics and restore free-flowing river stretches.
7) Re-naturalise riverbeds and lakes and lowland watercourses by, for example. removing artificial bed fixation, optimising substrate composition, improving or developing habitat cover.
8) Restore natural sedimentation processes.
9) Establish riparian[3] buffers, such as riparian forests, buffer strips, meadows or pastures.
10) Increase ecological features in forests, such as large, old and dying trees (habitat trees) and amounts of lying and standing deadwood.
11) Work towards a diversified forest structure in terms of, for example, species composition and age, enable natural regeneration and succession of tree species.
12) Assist migration of provenances and species where it may be needed due to climate change.
13) Enhance forest diversity by restoring mosaics of non-forest habitats such as open patches of grassland or heathland, ponds or rocky areas.
14) Make use of 'close-to-nature' or 'continuous cover' forestry approaches; introduce native tree species.

[2] Paludiculture is the productive land use of wet and rewetted peatlands that preserves the peat soil and thereby minimises CO^2 emissions and subsidence. It comprises various agricultural production systems that target the production of plant or animal-based commodities while the below ground biomass are kept under permanently wet, peat-conserving and potentially peat-forming conditions.
[3] Riparian refers to transitional areas adjacent to rivers and streams such as river banks.

15) Enhance the development of old-growth native forests and mature stands, for example, by abandonment of harvesting or by active management which favours development of autoregulatory functions and appropriate resilience.
16) Introduce high-diversity landscape features in arable land and intensively used grassland, such as buffer strips, field margins with native flowers, hedgerows, trees, small forests, terrace walls, ponds, habitat corridors and stepping stones, etc.
17) Increase the agricultural area subject to agro-ecological management approaches such as organic agriculture or agro-forestry, multicropping and crop rotation, integrated pest and nutrient management.
18) Reduce grazing intensity or mowing regimes on grasslands where relevant and re-establish extensive grazing with domestic livestock and extensive mowing regimes where they were abandoned.
19) Stop or reduce the use of chemical pesticides as well as chemical and animal manure fertilisers.
20) Stop ploughing grassland and introducing seeds of productive grasses.
21) Remove plantations on former dynamic inland dune systems to re-enable natural wind dynamics in favour of open habitats.
22) Improve connectivity across habitats to enable the development of populations of species, and to allow for sufficient individual or genetic exchange as well as for species' migration and adaptation to climate change.
23) Allow ecosystems to develop their own natural dynamics for example by abandoning harvesting and promoting naturalness and wilderness.
24) Remove and control invasive alien species, and prevent or minimise new introductions.
25) Minimise negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem, for example by using gear with less impact on seabed.
26) Restore important fish spawning and nursery areas.
27) Provide structures or substrates to encourage the return of marine life in support of the restoration of coral, oyster or boulder reefs.
28) Restore seagrass meadows and kelp forests by actively stabilising the sea bottom, reducing and, where possible, eliminating pressures or by active propagation and planting.
29) Restore or improve the state of characteristic native species population vital to the ecology of marine habitats by conducting passive or active restoration measures, for example, introducing juveniles.

30) Reduce various forms of marine pollution, such as nutrient loading, noise pollution and plastic waste.
31) Increase urban green spaces with ecological features, such as parks, trees and woodland patches, green roofs, wildflower grasslands, gardens, city horticulture, tree-lined streets, urban meadows and hedges, ponds and watercourses, taking into consideration, inter alia, species diversity, native species, local conditions and resilience to climate change.
32) Stop, reduce or remediate pollution from pharmaceuticals, hazardous chemicals, urban and industrial wastewater, and other waste including litter and plastics as well as light in all ecosystems.
33) Convert brownfield sites, former industrial areas and quarries into natural sites.