PRESS RELEASE

Government must urgently fund nature restoration as 90% of Ireland's EU-protected habitats are in unfavourable condition, warns Climate Change Advisory Council

- **Council criticises lack of dedicated funding for nature restoration in Budget 2027**
- **Restoring Ireland's natural environment could deliver almost €33bn in socio-economic benefits by 2050 and strengthen protection against flooding, coastal erosion and other climate impacts.**

Wednesday 4 November:

Publishing the *Biodiversity* chapter of its Annual Review 2026 today, the Climate Change Advisory Council has criticised the Government's failure to commit adequate funding for nature restoration in Budget 2027. No specific allocations for nature restoration have been made through the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund, despite the need to urgently reverse biodiversity loss and prepare Ireland for the growing impacts of climate change.

The latest conservation assessments show that 90% of Ireland's EU-protected habitat types and 42% of protected species are in unfavourable conservation status, with the majority of protected habitat types continuing to decline.[1] Reversing this decline requires immediate action to tackle the pressures driving biodiversity loss, alongside sustained investment to restore habitats.

The Council says Ireland's natural habitats must be recognised and invested in as critical natural infrastructure. Healthy wetlands and floodplains help absorb and store excess rainfall, while coastal dunes and saltmarshes provide natural defences against erosion, sea level rise, and storm surges. As these habitats deteriorate, communities lose protections that complement built flood and storm defences.

There is also a strong economic case for investment. Ireland's draft National Restoration Plan estimates that ecosystem restoration and re-establishment could deliver €32.9 billion in socio-economic benefits between 2024 and 2050, against estimated costs of €5.8 billion. These benefits include reduced flood risks, improved water quality, increased carbon sequestration and healthier ecosystems.

Funding for the National Parks and Wildlife Service has increased in recent years, with €112 million allocated for 2027. While welcoming this investment, Ireland's investment gap for biodiversity protection and restoration is estimated at €700

[1] National Parks & Wildlife Service, 'The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland', 2025. Accessed: Sep. 16, 2026. [Online]. Available: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/article-17-report-2025-volume-1.pdf

million per year and a dedicated, long-term funding programme to deliver the National Restoration Plan is urgently needed.

The Council is calling for multi-annual funding commitments, greater investment in nature-based measures and financial supports for farmers and landowners to restore and manage habitats. With more ecologists and conservation specialists currently needed to support existing work, restoration efforts would also support further skilled employment creation in rural Ireland.

Professor Yvonne Buckley, Member of the Climate Change Advisory Council, said:

"Nine in ten of Ireland's EU-protected habitat types are in unfavourable condition. We know how serious the problem is, yet we still haven't committed the long-term funding needed to turn things around.

There is a clear business case for this investment into biodiversity and nature restoration efforts. Without functioning and restored ecosystems, Ireland will suffer economically, ecologically and socially.

The increase in funding for the National Parks and Wildlife Service is welcome but it is not enough. While we also welcome the commitment of €715 million to the Office for Public Works for flood-risk management between 2026 and 2030, we need to see the same level of ambition when it comes to restoring the wetlands, peatlands and coastal habitats that help protect communities across Ireland. Nature is critical infrastructure that helps us to achieve our climate mitigation and adaptation targets with many co-benefits. It is not an optional extra."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR:

- The draft National Restoration Plan estimates €32.9bn in socio-economic benefits against €5.8bn in restoration costs between 2024 and 2050. These are modelled estimates, not direct financial returns to the State.
- The Government has committed €715m to flood-risk management through the OPW's National Development Plan Sectoral Plan 2026–2030.

If you have any questions or are seeking further comment, please do not hesitate to contact: Mark Harrington (mark.h@springboardcommunications.ie or +353 86 128 3843)

The Climate Change Advisory Council will publish Sectoral Reviews throughout the year. The publication schedule below is subject to change and indicative only:

Chapter	**Published**
Our Changing Climate	**Published 1st April 2026**
Electricity	**Published 13th May 2026**

Transport	**Published 17th June 2026**
Built Environment	**Published 29th July 2026**
Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use (AFOLU)	**Published 9th September 2026**
Preparing for Ireland's Changing Climate	**Published 29th September 2026**
Industry and Waste	**Published 14th October 2026**
Biodiversity	**Published 4th November 2026**
Cross Sectoral	**Mid November 2026**
Irish Translation of Summary document	**Mid November 2026**