

# **Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration**

**Meeting 7:** 29 August 2025

**Venue:** Custom House Dublin 1

**Time:** 11am – 3.30pm

**Attendees:** See Annex I

## **Meeting report**

The seventh meeting of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) on Nature Restoration took place on 29 August 2025. The Committee received presentations from Stephen Nolan (UNDP) and Graham Hopkins (NPWS) on the work to date of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Finance (FIWG). Updates were also provided on the progress of the other Interdepartmental Working Groups.

The Committee continued its discussion on potential priorities for decision-making, the core principles and the vision for the NRP and received an update on stakeholder engagement and future events.

### *1. Minutes / Governance / Matters Arising*

The minutes of previous meeting were discussed and a number of updates were agreed. Responses to follow up queries from the previous meeting were read and are to be added to the published version of the report of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Further engagement with DAFM Forestry and Coillte is required. Members were asked to send focused queries to the secretariat for forwarding to Bord Na Mona who are due to represent at next meeting.

### *2. Discussion about NRL funding*

Concerns had been raised at previous meetings regarding the funding for the implementation of the NRP in the context of the recent revision of the National Development Plan in which no

dedicated funding line appeared to be assigned to nature restoration. The view of the Committee remains that public funding is central to the delivery of the NRP and that funds must be ring fenced for this purpose.

The Chair advised she has had positive recent engagements with Minister O'Sullivan on the matter and had made strong representations regarding the importance of assurances on this front. A public statement from government on financial commitments to the NRL is necessary at this point. The Committee stressed that government needs to be up front in how the NRP is to be funded.

The importance of establishing new funding mechanisms in the farming sector beyond CAP was stressed. There was a discussion on how financing the NRP will involve a combination of State/EU funding as well as investment from the private and philanthropic sectors.

The Infrastructure Climate and Nature Fund had been identified from the outset as having a big part to play in the financing of the NRP and the committee outlined its disappointment and frustration at the nature element having been sidelined in the recently revised National Development Plan. Urgent clarification is required from government on this point.

Government funding mechanisms were discussed, and the point was raised that plans need to be costed properly before dedicated funding can be sought and secured.

### *3. Presentations from the Interdepartmental Working Group on Nature Restoration Finance - Stephen Nolan (UNDP and chair of the FIWG) and Graham Hopkins (NPWS)*

A presentation was given on the work of the FIWG who have met twice to date. The group's membership is drawn from the United Nations Development Program (who provide the Chair), Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Central Statistics Office, Dept. Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Dept. An Taoiseach, Dept. Climate, Energy & the Environment, Dept. Enterprise, Trade & Employment, Dept. Finance, Dept. Rural & Community Development & the Gaeltacht, National Economic and Social Council, National Treasury Management Agency, and National Parks and Wildlife Service (who provide the secretariat).

The main focus of the group is to assess the costs of implementing the Plan, to determine the funding streams that are currently available and to consider finance models that may be suitable

to bridge the finance gap. Phase 1 of its work programme covers the period to end October 2025 and involves an assessment of the current funding landscape. This includes public, private and philanthropic funding.

Phase 2 will commence when the outputs, which include costings, are received from the various technical working groups. The group will aggregate these data and provide more in depth financial assessments, including overall projected costs, for the report of the IAC and for the State's returns to the Commission.

The Chair is currently leading a series of bilateral meetings with key government departments/agencies and important bodies in the financial sector.

Attention was drawn to the NRP template which requires the State to report back to the commission on the estimated financial need to fund the plan and provide details on mechanisms explored to engage private finance as part of the overall solution.

Concerns were expressed at the non-involvement of Dept. Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (D/PENDR) in the group to date. The IAC Chair advised that she has raised this as an issue directly with Minister O'Sullivan.

A broad discussion on the work of the FIWG and in financing the plan more generally followed. The committee stressed its position that public funding must remain the backbone of how the NRP is delivered.

The FIWG Chair spoke on the advances the sector has made with climate finance and how this may serve as a model for accelerating private sector investment in nature finance. Climate and nature are increasingly being recognised as two sides of the same coin - the finance sector understands climate in terms of risk and its understanding of nature through the same lens is growing. It is hoped that the NRL as a Union-wide policy framework will operate as a catalyst for innovation in this area.

The IAC Chair reiterated that while it is important to understand where and when the finance sector will deliver on nature finance, the 2030 targets in particular will need to be dependent on public funding.

A discussion took place on the analysis being conducted by the FIWG during Phase 1. It was confirmed that the estimated costs of non-implementation will form part report of the group.

The FIWG Chair spoke of the opportunity for the Irish financial services sector to be a leader in the developing area of nature finance.

It was confirmed that future meetings of the FIWG will be aligned with those of the IAC and that a brief update will be provided for circulation with IAC materials.

#### *4. IAC submission to the draft EU Roadmap on Nature Credits consultation*

The IAC's submission to the draft EU Roadmap on Nature Credits consultation was discussed. The deadline for submissions is the end of September and the committee is in agreement that a group submission should be made. Hannah Hamilton had drafted a response, based on discussions at the previous meeting and to prompt discussion today.

Nature credits have been a recurring theme in this area for some time and it is acknowledged that while they cannot replace public funding, they may form part of the overall financial picture into the future. Nature credits have been controversial for NGO sector in particular.

Group members were asked to revert on the draft document no later than one week before the next meeting. Any issues that require clarification are to be sent to Hannah Hamilton by email.

#### *5. Initiating work on the IAC recommendations*

##### *Review Vision & Principles, sign off*

The Chair thanked everyone for their patience in arriving at an advanced draft. The content was discussed and further amendments were proposed. An updated version is to be circulated to the committee for final sign off at the next meeting.

The EU Commission has published the template for the National Restoration Plan which will be used to inform the structure of the IAC's recommendations.

##### *Overview of the NRL template*

Hannah Hamilton completed the overview of the NRP template commenced at the previous meeting but cut short due to time constraints. It was agreed that the IAC would begin with the responsibilities and stakeholder engagement sections of the template.

### *Discussion on draft recommendations*

All future meetings will include time set aside to progress this important element of the work of the committee. It was agreed as a general principal that the recommendations of the committee would be as few in number as possible, with room for expansion on each individual recommendation.

Input is required from the technical working groups on measures relating to specific articles, targets and measures, but in the meantime, the IAC can focus Part A of the template, and in particular, the *responsibilities* and *public participation and stakeholder engagement* sections.

It was stressed that the implementation of the NRP requires an all-of-Government approach. It was suggested that the current Interdepartmental Working Groups should be retained in some format after the publication of the Plan. The Committee also discussed the need for the monitoring of the NRP implementation to be reviewed under a robust structure, with suggestions for the IAC, Biodiversity Working Group or National Biodiversity Forum to incorporate this work. The discussion on the ongoing scoping exercise will be continued at the next IAC meeting in September and Hannah Hamilton will then develop a more detailed draft. The Chair noted that cross-departmental collaboration can on occasion be a challenge and that NPWS requires additional resourcing for this task. It was further noted that the Committee's prioritisation of their recommendations should not be constrained by the specific contents of the NRP template.

### *6. Brief update on other Stakeholder Engagement Planning & Events*

Reflections were provided on the Farming for the Future Leaders' Forum which took place on 9 July and was a very positive event. Information was shared about the Marine Ecosystems Leaders' Forum on 3 September - 68 people were registered to date. The Urban Ecosystems Leaders' Forum will be held in Dun Laoghaire on 10 September.

The Land Leaders' Forum which had been scheduled for 16 October will likely now take place in November, date to be confirmed.

Planning is well advanced for the Community Conversations – most dates and locations have been confirmed and will run over September and October. ACT/Hometree are facilitating. There are to be 10 events in total, eight of which will be in person and two online. One of the

in-person events and one of the online events will be hosted through Irish. The full list will be announced by the Minister next week and published on [restorenature.ie](http://restorenature.ie).

### *7. Review of Actions from Meeting*

Some future meeting dates were confirmed:

- 29 October
- 15 December

Committee members were asked to send any specific questions they would like to discuss with Bord Na Mona at the next meeting to the secretariat by 5 September.

A revised Vision and Principles document is to be sent to the committee in advance of the next meeting.

Next meeting to receive updates from the Land & Marine Working Groups and a presentation from Bord Na Mona.

## **Annex I – IAC Meeting 7 Attendees**

- Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin, Chair
- Eamon Carroll
- Dr Micheál Ó Briain
- Marina Conway
- Prof Tasman Crowe
- David Flynn
- Fintan Kelly
- Paul O'Brien
- Colm O'Donnell
- Norah Parke
- Linda Lennon
- Coilín O'Reilly
- Hannah Hamilton
- Graham Hopkins, NPWS
- Marcus Maginniss, NPWS
- Áinle Ní Bhriain, NPWS
- David Kerr
- Stephen Nolan UNDP