

What is the Nature Restoration Law?

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation, also known as the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), sets legally binding targets to restore natural spaces and species in Ireland and the EU, alongside deadlines for achieving them.

Across all Member States, over 80% of protected habitats are in “not good” condition. In Ireland, that number is 85% - so we all have a lot of work to do!

Implementing the NRL will increase biodiversity and make our ecosystems more resilient, helping to make sure that people can continue to benefit from the essential services they provide - things like nutrient cycling to improve soil fertility, the natural purification of water and air, better protection from flooding and drought, and stronger defences against pests and diseases.

The Regulation includes seven articles that apply to different habitats and species which fall under three themes – **land**, **sea** and **urban**. These are:

- **Article 4:** Terrestrial, coastal and freshwater habitats that are already protected under Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive.
- **Article 5:** Marine ecosystems.
- **Article 8:** Urban ecosystems.
- **Article 9:** Natural connectivity of rivers and natural functions of floodplains.
- **Article 10:** Pollinator populations.
- **Article 11:** Agricultural ecosystems.
- **Article 12:** Forest ecosystems.

Within the detail of these articles, specific targets are also set for a wide range of species including dolphins, sharks, butterflies and birds.

Who is developing the National Restoration Plan?

In November 2022, the Government agreed that the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) would coordinate the development of the National Restoration Plan, assisted by experts from other key government departments.

The NPWS is the Executive Agency within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in Ireland, with responsibility for nature conservation, wildlife protection and the presentation and preservation of our National Parks and Nature Reserves.

The NPWS will be working with a wide range of government departments, including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications as well as a range of State Bodies and Agencies.

It will also be drawing on the expertise of a wide range of stakeholders, through an open, transparent and thorough engagement process.



Click on the QR code for more information.

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NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páircenna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service



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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

The Nature Restoration Law

What you need to know



The NRL is in force – what next?

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation came into force on 18th August 2024. Because it's a Regulation rather than a Directive, it does not need additional national legislation. Instead, it applies directly.

While the NRL sets the targets, it is up to individual countries to decide how to achieve them. The Government has committed to ensuring all measures and schemes are voluntary for farmers and that participation will be well incentivised.

Ireland now has two years to develop a National Restoration Plan, and the Regulation itself sets out what has to be included. It will

- feature detail on our national restoration targets up to 2030, 2040 and 2050
- set a baseline from which progress can be measured, and
- identify the measures and actions that will be rolled out to achieve these targets.

Alongside the Plan, work will be undertaken to design schemes and incentives that will be available to any farmer who chooses to participate. The Government has committed to assessing the socio-economic impact of the Plan.

Throughout the development of the Plan, schemes and incentives, we will be engaging openly, transparently and thoroughly with all stakeholders in a spirit of partnership. Farmers will play an important role in this and their expertise will be called upon to inform the work.

The Facts

- **The NRL will bring opportunities for those who choose to participate.** The Government is committed to ensuring that nature restoration provides additional income streams for landowners and brings benefit to rural economies. Any restoration measures that landowners choose to participate in will be well incentivised and resourced, and Schemes and incentives will be designed in partnership with all stakeholders over the next two years, as part of the nature restoration planning process. The expertise of farmers will be called upon to help shape this.

- **A financial assessment will be conducted.** The legislation commits the EU to a) assessing the level of funding required to implement the NRL, and b) conducting an overview of financial resources available. The Government will carry out an examination of financial needs as part of the development of the plan.

- **The NRL will be funded.** Tens of thousands of Irish farmers are already taking part in voluntary nature restoration under existing schemes such as the CAP SP (ACRES Cooperation), LIFE Programmes, EIPs and NPWS Farm Plan Scheme. The NRL will build on what works, and develop new nature focused opportunities. The €3.15bn Climate and Nature Fund, which will be made available between 2026 and 2030 to pay for climate action and nature restoration projects, is expected to play an important role in the implementation of the NRL. Other funding models will also be examined as part of the development of the National Restoration Plan.

- **NRL activities will be voluntary.** Restoration measures in agricultural ecosystems are about bringing more nature back to farms, not about taking that land out of farming. In a lot of cases, active land management is necessary in order to restore nature. The Government is clear that all restoration measures will be voluntary for farmers.

- **The NRL will not force landowners to rewet their land.** The text of the Regulation is explicit that any rewetting of agricultural land will be voluntary for farmers and landowners. Following a softening of the peatland targets, Ireland has the discretion to define what we mean by rewetting for ourselves in line with our own national needs, as part of our National Restoration Plan. Farmers will have the opportunity to inform this. Furthermore, the Government is confident that 2030 NRL targets, at a minimum, can be met entirely on State lands.

- **The NRL will not affect CAP Payments.** Restoration measures will not negatively impact any existing CAP commitment, or any other scheme or incentive delivered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The CAP Regulations state clearly that the area eligible for direct payments is not reduced when subject to certain EU requirements relating to environmental protection, and remains eligible for direct payments.

