

# **Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration**

**Meeting 4:** 30 June 2025

**Venue:** Custom House Dublin 1

**Time:** 11am – 3.00pm

**Attendees:** See Annex I

## **Meeting report**

The fifth meeting of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) on Nature Restoration took place on 30th June 2025. There were presentations from Marina Conway of Hometree on forestry restoration and reestablishment and from Rebecca Jeffrey of NPWS on the NRP template. The Chair welcomed Hannah Hamilton, who has been contracted to provide support to the IAC, and Graham Hopkins who will be supporting the Finance Independent Working Group (FIWG).

The Committee also continued its discussion on potential priorities for decision making, the core principles and the vision for the National Restoration Plan (NRP) and received an update on stakeholder engagement and future events.

### 1. Minutes, Governance review of work to date

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed. A Proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference that provided for the nomination of a specific substitute for each participant of the Committee had been circulated in advance and this was agreed.

Representation from the marine sector at the Committee was discussed, with concerns raised about unease in the sector in the absence of specific updates. It was agreed that invitations to representatives of the marine sector to the forthcoming Marine Leaders' Forum would be issued as a matter of urgency and that the IAC would have a marine specific theme at a future meeting. The proposed date of the Marine Leaders' Forum was confirmed as Monday 15<sup>1</sup> September (to prevent a diary clash with the ploughing championships).

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<sup>1</sup> This date was subsequently moved to 3 September for logistical reasons

Committee members were reminded that documents received from the various advisory groups are to be considered as draft versions only and are not for sharing beyond the Committee until they have been approved by the Working Groups.

## 2. Presentations:

Marina Conway of Hometree gave a presentation on *Forestry - Challenges and Opportunities in the NRL*. This involved a comprehensive overview of the history of forestry in the State, the evolution of policy developments in this area, the scale of the forestry related NRL challenge for 2030 in particular and some proposed solutions.

Rebecca Jeffrey of NPWS gave a presentation on *High level outline of NRP template and associated mapping*. Using the old sessile oak habitat as an example, Dr Jeffrey walked the group through how targets are being set for article 4 and sought feedback from the Committee on the approach suggested. The process for addressing NRP requirements for species is more complex, as targets are not quantified by time or numbers. There is likely to be a lot of overlap with other Article targets.

## 3. Principles & Vision for NRP

Vision: the Chair went through three alternative versions of the vision statement for the NRP that had been previously circulated to the Committee and a discussion ensued. A small subcommittee will consider the texts and the discussion and propose a final text for the next meeting.

Principles: the Chair talked the Committee through the tracked changes in the previously circulated draft principles document. It was agreed to recirculate the draft and that proposed updates would be provided to the Chair/secretariat within one week. Final text to be agreed at that point. It will be written in plain English.

## 4. Criteria for Prioritisation in decision making

The Committee discussed a guidance document on the prioritization of habitats and species for restoration to meet 2030 targets. The specific prioritisation of Natura 2000 sites for 2030 targets forms part of this consideration and a specific row will be included in the reporting table to make this prioritisation clear. A narrative approach was agreed as being more favourable than quantitative scoring systems as it is important that those who read the Plan understand how decisions were made. This guidance document was agreed and can be made available to

IWGs for use in informing potential decisions which may have to be discussed in the line of their work.

5. Update on other stakeholder engagement planning & events

*Education for Nature Restoration Leaders' Forum*

Took place on 23 June. The event was oversubscribed, with featured broad representation from across the education sector and great levels of engagement on the day. The report from the day is due in mid-July and will be shared with the IAC.

*Farming for the Future of Nature Restoration Leaders' Forum*

Scheduled for 9 July in Mullingar. A draft outline for the day has been prepared. The event is suitable only for farmers and those who work directly with them (DAFM, Teagasc etc.) There is a broad representation of the different types of farmers expected.

*Urban Leaders' Forum*

Scheduled for 10 September in Dun Laoghaire. For further discussion at future meetings.

*Marine Leaders' Forum*

Originally scheduled for 17 September but rescheduled to 3 September to prevent a diary clash with the ploughing championships. For further discussion at future meetings.

*Final (Land) Leaders' Forum*

Scheduled for 15 October. For further discussion at future meetings.

*Ploughing Championships*

15-18 September. Chair will attend to discuss NRP issues at various forums.

6. Review of Actions from Meeting

- Dates for leaders forums to be confirmed and updated.
- Education leaders forum report to be circulated
- Vision for NRP– sub group to revert with final wording
- Principles document – IAC members have one week to revert with comments
- Marina Conway to circulate forestry presentation

- Chair to meet with Coillte before the next meeting to discuss their presentation to the committee and visit some of their nature-focused sites

#### 7. Next meeting agenda:

Three presentations confirmed: Coillte (who will present first), CIEEM & CCMA. Lisa Clifford and Colin Fulcher from Planning Division to attend for presentations. Dates were agreed for the next IAC meetings:

- 29 July
- 29 August
- 24 September
- 22 October
- 19 November
- 17 December

#### 8. AOB

The Committee was advised that a contract had recently been awarded for the facilitation of the Community Conversations element of the stakeholder engagement on the NRP. More information on the structure and timing of these events will be shared with the Committee at future meetings.

Minutes of previous meetings to be checked for follow up actions re pollinators.

## **Annex I – IAC Meeting 5 Attendees**

- Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin, Chair
- Eamon Carroll
- Marina Conway
- Prof Tasman Crowe
- David Flynn
- Hannah Hamilton
- Graham Hopkins, NPWS
- Dr Rebecca Jeffrey, NPWS
- Fintan Kelly
- Marcus Maginnis, NPWS
- Ainle NiBhriain, NPWS
- Paul O'Brien
- Colm O'Donnell
- Norah Parke

## Apologies

- Dr David Fenner, NPWS
- Linda Lennon
- Dr Micheál Ó Briain
- Coilín O'Reilly