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LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2024/5-2030

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Prepared for:

Limerick City and County Council

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Limerick City & County Council

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Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan SEA Screening Report for Limerick City and County Council

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this SEA Screening Report to Limerick City and County Council for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) is in the process of preparing a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for its functional area (the Plan Area) for the years 2024/5-2030. The aim of the LABAP is to promote biodiversity conservation at local authority level.

LCCC appointed Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) to conduct SEA and AA Screening of the LABAP.

This report documents the SEA Screening undertaken to identify the need for full SEA for the LABAP. This Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the corresponding AA Screening Report and the LABAP.

1.2 Background to Biodiversity Action Plans

LABAPs must be prepared in accordance with The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). Thes guidelines provide best practice guidance to local authorities on preparing and implementing biodiversity conservation actions within their functional area. These guidelines advise that LABAPS *'should aim to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.'*

LABAPS are designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at local level. Local authorities are required to develop a compelling vision for their LABAP and a set of clear, measurable and achievable objectives for biodiversity conservation in their functional area. LABAPs are developed by local authority Biodiversity Officers with the support of a dedicated Biodiversity Working Group. Public engagement and consultation must be undertaken at the Pre-draft and Draft Plan stages of the Plan-making process. All submissions from stakeholders and members of the public should be considered during the development of a LABAP.

LABAPs should serve to define targeted and focussed action for promoting biodiversity conservation through the functions of a local authority in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes. LABAPs should be in harmony with and support the land use planning framework, including City and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

LABAPs - as non-statutory land use plans - should be screened for the need for SEA and AA.

2. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview of SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme.

SEA aims to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

SEA of plans and programmes is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC ('the SEA Directive'). For a specific range of land-use plans, this Directive is transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

For all other relevant plans and programmes in Ireland (including other types of plans in the land-use planning sector), the SEA Directive is transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011)

2.2 Overview of the SEA Process

The SEA process comprises the following steps:

- Screening – the process whereby a decision is made on whether a particular plan or programme other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would require SEA. This report relates to this stage of the SEA process.

The following steps are necessary if a plan or programme requires SEA:

- Scoping – Scope and level of detail in the environmental assessment is decided upon, in consultation with the identified statutory bodies;
- Environmental Assessment - An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the relevant plan or programme;
- Preparation of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation of the plan or programme and associated Environmental Report;
- Evaluation of the submission and observations made on the plan or programme and environmental report; and
- Provision of an SEA Statement, identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final plan or programme

SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans or programmes – which give rise to individual projects – are being developed. It is noted that SEA should result in more sustainable development through the systematic appraisal of policy options.

2.3 Legislative Context

LABAPs, as non-statutory land use plans, require to be screened for the need for SEA in accordance with the requirements of:

- The SEA Directive, particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) and 3(5) in relation to '*screening*'; and,
- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011)(termed 'SEA Regulations' from this point onward), particularly Schedule 1, which sets out the *'Criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment.'*

2.4 Overview of the SEA Screening Process

The first step of the SEA process is to carry out SEA Screening to determine the need for SEA of a plan or programme

The first stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is the carrying out of a 'Pre-screening Check' (also known as a 'Stage 1 Applicability'). This allows rapid screening-out of a plan or programme that is clearly not going to have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that do require SEA. The second stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is known as 'Stage 2 Screening.' The purpose of this stage is to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment and whether SEA must be carried out in conjunction with a plan or programme. The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required. Annex II of Directive 2001/42/EC sets out the statutory criteria that should be addressed when undertaking this stage. This process is typically undertaken following a broad 8-step approach, as depicted in Figure 2-1.

The first environmental significance criterion relates to the characteristics of the plan or programme, having regard to: the degree to which the plan or programme sets out a framework for other projects and activities; the influence of the plan or programme on other projects, plans or activities; the role of the plan for integrating environmental considerations to promote sustainable development; environmental issues of relevance to the plan or programme and the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of EU legislation on the environment.

The second environmental significance criterion refers to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected, having regard to; the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; the cumulative nature of the effects; the transboundary nature of the effects; the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or intensive use; the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European or international protection status.

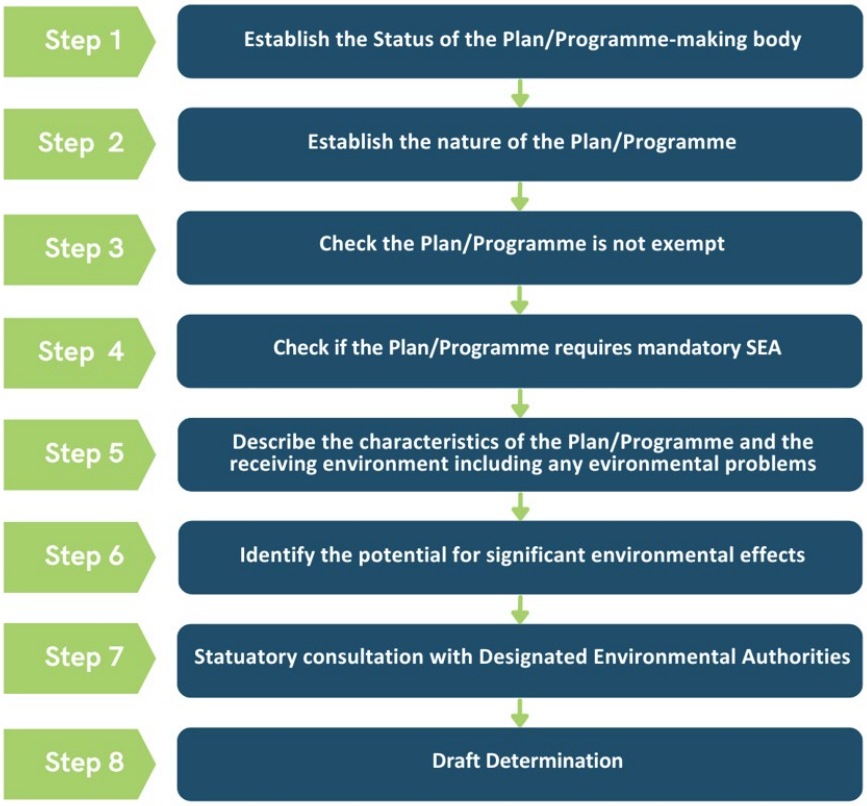

Figure 2-1: SEA Screening steps as per the EPAs Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening

2.5 Relevant SEA Guidance

This SEA Screening has been carried out in accordance with and having appropriate regard to the following guidance documents primarily:

- Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening (EPA, 2021).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022)
- SEA of Local Authority Land-Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources (EPA, 2024)

2.6 Appropriate Assessment and Relationship to SEA Screening

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) be carried out where a plan or project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 Site. Nature 2000 Sites in Ireland include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Areas of Protection (SPAs).

The first step is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This is referred to as Screening for AA and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in relation to the site's conservation objectives.

Screening for AA is relevant to Screening for SEA where is it found that a plan may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 Site, or where such an impact cannot be ruled out taking a precautionary approach, an appropriate assessment of the Plan must be carried out, and in any case where a SEA is not otherwise required.

Article 3(c) of the SEA Directive requires that an SEA is carried out on a plan or programme wherever such a plan or programme requires an AA under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Therefore, where the LABAP requires an appropriate assessment, it will also require an SEA.

This SEA Screening Report and the LABAP is accompanied by an AA Screening Report which should be read in conjunction with this document. The AA Screening Report concluded *'beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information, that the plan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites.'*

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

3.1 Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan

The overarching aim of the LABAP is to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.

The following Strategic Objectives are defined in the LABAP:

- Adopt a Whole of Limerick City and County Council, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
- Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
- Secure Nature's Contribution to Current and Future Generations
- Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
- Strengthen Limerick's Contribution to National and Regional Biodiversity Initiatives

A series of Actions have been defined in the LABAP under each Strategic Objective. The higher-level Objectives are broader in scope, while the Actions underpinning the Objectives are more defined and measurable. These are presented in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: LABAP Strategic Objectives and Actions

Objective	Action Code	Action
A. Adopt a Whole of Limerick City and County Council, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity	1	Actively communicate good news Biodiversity Case Studies/Initiatives via the Council's Communication team
	2	Continue to host the Limerick Biodiversity Forum
	3	Biodiversity Training for all in LCCC a) Decision Makers including b) elected representatives c) indoor and outdoor staff
	4	Include best practise Biodiversity Training requirement/standard in all council procurement processes
	5	Invest /work with 3rd parties in demonstration sites to promote local biodiversity
	6	Ensure biodiversity is integrated into guidance document for LCCC grant initiatives
	7	Work Actively with TT groups, NGOs and Faith Communities in relation to Biodiversity etc.
	8	Develop Best Practice Guidelines to reduce the impact of development on biodiversity
	9	Support LA housing estate communities to manage green areas in a biodiverse manner
	10	Develop and provide Teacher Training workshops on Biodiversity and nature based solutions
	11	Work with the Green Schools and Heritage in Schools programme to promote biodiversity and climate issues to students and the wider schools population
	12	Promote the development of nature based outdoor classrooms to reach Science Foundation Ireland or equivalent standard where possible
	13	Targeted education programmes for the farming community
	14	Collaborate and harness Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) in order collaborate with Corporate Bodies and Local Organisations where appropriate
	15	Host a series of capacity building biodiversity related events annually for general public
	16	Creation of high impact, true to life Biodiversity Murals in Limerick City and County.
B. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs	1	Identify Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) in Limerick City and County according to Heritage Council guidelines. Ensure these are mapped and protected through inclusion of policies in the Limerick Development Plan, the review of which will commence in 2026 and local area plans.
	2	Provide pre-planning guidance document for biodiversity inclusion in all new and refurbished developments
	3	Ring fence a percentage of development contribution specifically for biodiversity

Objective	Action Code	Action
	4	Develop a City or County -wide pollinator plan for Limerick in line with the AIPP
	5	Develop an LCCC Grassland Management Plan
	6	Develop and LCCC Dark Skies Policy to reduce unnecessary light pollution for inclusion in the Limerick Development Plan, the review of which will commence in 2026.
	7	LCCC will minimise compost with peat as an ingredient and actively source new peat free compost or generate their own.
	8	Continue to minimise and reduce the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides across council operations
	9	Undertake a mapping of all zoned lands to determine the extent of trees and hedgerows at the time of zoning and that this mapping is included in all area plans at draft stage and the Limerick Development Plan Review 2026.
	10	Investigate and pilot use of controlled Grazing on Council Land where appropriate
	11	Prioritise and Ecologically Survey and develop Management Plans Council owned lands
	12	Continue to determine risks to water quality via source pathway reception model on all planning applications.
	13	Work with the LCCC Planning to incorporate IFI's Planning Guide for Watercourses in the Urban Environment in LCCC decision making
	14	Set targets in line with LCCC Tree Policy to maintain existing LCCC woodlands in good condition and plant new native trees in urban and rural areas.
	15	Promote native/local provenance for trees, shrubs plants etc. and LCCC to include this as a criteria for procurement
	16	Support and collaborate on environmental and biodiversity projects as identified with external stakeholders
	17	Identify suitable nest box location on Council Lands for Barn Owls, Kestrels and other species identified by NPWS and liaise with local farming community organisations re same
	18	Promote the prevention of fragmentation of ecological corridors including hedgerows and riverine features
	19	Continue to work with LAWPRO (Local Authority Water Programme) and others to identify the impacts of critical and vulnerable receptors in accordance with the River Basin Management Plan and Water Framework Directive
	20	Support the efforts of LAWPRO and other parties to promote the reduction of chemical fertilizers on land.
	21	Support the implementation of Marine Spatial Plan and to protect the Shannon estuary in collaboration with Kerry and Clare local authorities.
	22	Advocate for responsible pet ownership

Objective	Action Code	Action
C. Secure Nature's Contribution to Current and Future Generations	1	Protect and enhance Biodiversity on all developments in Limerick including new, existing and refurbished developments along with Greenways, all infrastructural developments
	2	Increase awareness of the intrinsic value of biodiversity and the services it provides us with.
	3	Inline with LCCC Tree Policy increase the planting of suitable trees and hedgerows of local provenance
	4	Deliver a minimum of 2 case studies to combat pollution using Nature based solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SDS)
	5	Collaborate on programmes with the LCCC Arts Office, education, youth projects and others that emphasise Nature as a muse of the arts and culture
	5	Collaborate on education and research programmes that emphasise Natures positive impact on human well being
	6	Create info hub of where people can visit and immerse themselves in existing nature areas and show case river Shannon and its contribution and importance to biodiversity.
	7	Conduct well being surveys to capture impact of identified actions in certain circumstances
D. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity	1	Carryout habitat surveys on council owned land and highlight areas at risk and identify areas suitable for restoration/enhancement and also identify potential wildlife corridors for protection through statutory plans
	2	Share data from all LCCC surveys with NPWS, Heritage Council and National Biodiversity Data Centre
	3	Support NPWS national surveys for data collection on all annex species.
	5	Investigate the development of an open source digital repository for Limerick Biodiversity Related Data subject to GDPR and wildlife sensitivity restraints
	6	Progress to Phase II of Limerick Wetland Survey
	7	Action the recommendations from 1. Newcastle West Demesne Ecological Survey 2024 and the Annual recommendations for the 2. Baggot Estate Management Plan 2023-50, 3. Westfields Management Plan and 4. Corbally Meadow Work Programme
	8	Compilation, centralisation and GIS mapping of existing data from assessments, reports and planning aps. Years 2023 - 2025
	9	Resurvey Limerick County Barn Owls, Swifts and Bat Roosts include desktop surveys for ground truthin.
	10	Promote Citizen Science Projects to gather evidence to aid in the collection of data which will be verified and collated on the NBDC website.

Objective	Action Code	Action
E. Strengthen Limerick's Contribution to National and Regional Biodiversity Initiatives	1	Promote National Biodiversity Data Centre species recording portal
	2	Develop integrated programme to address Invasive Alien Species including a) mapping, b) management protocol for public lands and c) guidelines for private lands and d) targeted education workshops.
	3	Continue to collaborate on Lesser Horseshoe Bat's national group and regional group.
	4	Engage with Inland Fisheries Ireland, Electricity Supply Board, Office of Public Works and other stakeholders to reverse decline in in riparian and riverine habitat which is home to many annex species such as Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey etc, including the removal and mitigation of barriers to fish movement in our rivers.
	5	Develop online resources to raise awareness of birdlife in the Shannon Estuary
	6	Promote seed saving of local plants and trees that support biodiversity within LCCC and with the general public
	7	Promote the protection of hedgerows and other trees which contribute to green infrastructure
	8	Update 2021 Bluesky Tree Cover Survey
	9	In line with LCCC Tree Policy identify and survey trees under the management of LCCC that are affected by Ash Die Back

3.2 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

The LABAP sits within a hierarchy of plans and has been informed by and is consistent with the aims and objectives of other plans, programmes and strategies developed at national, regional and local levels. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

National Level

- Project Ireland 2040 : National Planning Framework (2018).
- Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage (2022).
- Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (2023).
- The 4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023 - 2030 (2024) (discussed further in Section 3.1.1 below).
- Climate Action Plan (2024).

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the region.
- The County Development Plan for the local authority functional area.
- The Local Authority Climate Action Plan for the local authority functional area.
- The Heritage Plan for the local authority functional area.

3.2.1 The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to protect and value nature. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to 'act for nature.' This plan provides the overarching arching framework for delivering biodiversity conservation through LABAPs.

This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. The five overarching objectives to address new and emerging issues include the following:

- Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
- Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
- Objective 3 - Secure Nature's Contribution to People
- Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
- Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

The NBAP contains actions pertaining to the preparation to LABAPs under *Objective One: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity* and *Objective Three: Secure Nature's Contribution to People*, including the following:

Table 3-2: NBAP Actions pertaining to the preparation to Local Biodiversity Plans

Action Number	Action
1C5	The Heritage Council will publish updated guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans and their integration with City and County Development Plans
1C6	All Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan adopted by the end of 2026 which is subject to regular review and revision processes in line with relevant guideline standards
3A3	Local Authorities will work to identify and respond to opportunities for enhancing the biocultural value of GBUE through appropriate design strategies, the use of visual and performing arts, and enhancing equity of access and promoting use of GBUE by community groups, and integrating cultural services in local biodiversity action plans

Local Authorities are expected to align their LABAPs with national commitments defined in the NBAP to ensure a cohesive approach to biodiversity conservation across the country.

4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

This section of the report documents the SEA Screening undertaken.

Stage 1 Applicability Analysis was undertaken initially. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.1 of this report (Table 4-1 and Table 4-2).

Stage 2 Screening Analysis was then undertaken. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.2 of this report (Table 4-3, Table 4-4 and Table 4-5).

4.1 Stage 1 - SEA Applicability Analysis

Table 4-1: SEA Applicability Analysis

SEA Applicability Analysis	
Status of Plan/Programme (P/P) Maker	
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	The LABAP has been prepared by a local authority.
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	The LABAP is required by administrative provisions. The local authority is required to prepare the LABAP by the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030. The NBAP has been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The NPWS is an executive agency within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) of the Government of Ireland.
Nature of the Plan/Programme	
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	LABAPs are non-statutory land use plans.
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No.
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No.
Exemptions	

SEA Applicability Analysis	
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No.

Table 4-2: Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis

Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis	
Applicability Analysis Criterion	**Outcome (Yes or No)**
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	Yes
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	Yes
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No
Conclusion	
Having regard to the SEA Screening Process defined in Section 2,4, it has been concluded that Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis is required to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and whether a full SEA of the plan is needed.	

4.2 Stage 2 - SEA Screening Analysis

To inform the Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis, an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of LABAP Actions has been undertaken. This evaluation is presented in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3: Evaluation of Potential Environmental Effects of LABAP Actions

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
A. Adopt a Whole of Limerick City and County Council, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity	1	Actively communicate good news Biodiversity Case Studies/Initiatives via the Council's Communication team	The action is centred around the dissemination of biodiversity-related news, which has the potential to stimulate interest and improve awareness within the community. It also holds further potential to mobilise community members towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity within the plan area. The action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effect in and of itself.
	2	Continue to host the Limerick Biodiversity Forum	The Limerick Biodiversity Forum provides an avenue for improving biodiversity-related expertise and knowledge across the community. The action therefore supports and promotes biodiversity-related awareness, which can underpin biodiversity improvements within the plan area. The action will not result in the occurrence of any real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3	Biodiversity Training for all in LCCC a) Decision Makers including b) elected representatives c) indoor and outdoor staff	This action promotes biodiversity related training. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	4	Include best practise Biodiversity Training requirement/standard in all council procurement processes	This action promotes biodiversity related training, in consideration of best practice and expertise available. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	5	Invest /work with 3rd parties in demonstration sites to promote local biodiversity	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the plan area. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	6	Ensure biodiversity is integrated into guidance document for LCCC grant initiatives	The integration of biodiversity into LCCC's funding opportunities can motivate applicants include biodiversity considerations within the application process. The overall outcome of this will be positive, as the action supports the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the plan area, and generate positive effects on biodiversity components such as habitats and key species, in addition to interacting components such as the water and soils environments, air and climate, and population and human health. It will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	7	Work Actively with TT groups, NGOs and Faith Communities in relation to Biodiversity etc.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the plan area. Faith communities can often own large areas of land such as churchyards and burial grounds, which serves as an opportunity to enhance biodiversity at these sites. The action will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. It will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	8	Develop Best Practice Guidelines to reduce the impact of development on biodiversity	This action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within the land use framework and development planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realization of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	9	Support LA housing estate communities to manage green areas in a biodiverse manner	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the plan area. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	10	Develop and provide Teacher Training workshops on Biodiversity and nature based solutions	This action promotes biodiversity and nature based solutions related training. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	11	Work with the Green Schools and Heritage in Schools programme to promote biodiversity and climate issues to students and the wider schools population	This action promotes biodiversity and climate related education. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	12	Promote the development of nature based outdoor classrooms to reach Science Foundation Ireland or equivalent standard where possible	This action promotes biodiversity related education. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	13	Targeted education programmes for the farming community	This action promotes biodiversity related education. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise within the farming community and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	14	Collaborate and harness Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) in order collaborate with Corporate Bodies and Local Organisations where appropriate	The ESG sphere can provide an opportunity for enhancing biodiversity through partnerships between local organisations and corporate bodies, for example through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The action has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components (habitats and key species), and co-benefits for any interacting environmental components (the soils and water environments, air and climate, and population and human health). The action does not have the potential to result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	15	Host a series of capacity building biodiversity related events annually for general public	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	16	Creation of high impact, true to life Biodiversity Murals in Limerick City and County.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community.
B. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs	1	Identify Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) in Limerick City and County according to Heritage Council guidelines. Ensure these are mapped and protected through inclusion of policies in the Limerick Development Plan, the review of which will commence in 2026 and local area plans.	The action is aimed at the identification and protection of any significant sites within the plan area that support local biodiversity. This is proposed to be done in alignment with Heritage Council guidelines and through policy design within the Limerick Development Plan and Lower-Order Area Plans. The action will contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and other interacting environmental receptors. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	2	Provide pre-planning guidance document for biodiversity inclusion in all new and refurbished developments	The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and improvements within the plan area through the land-use framework and development planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and other interacting environmental receptors. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	3	Ring fence a percentage of development contribution specifically for biodiversity	The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and improvements within the plan area through the land-use framework and development planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and other interacting environmental receptors. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4	Develop a City or County -wide pollinator plan for Limerick in line with the AIPP	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing pollinators in the plan area. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	5	Develop an LCCC Grassland Management Plan	Grassland (both managed and natural) comprises a large percentage of Limerick's landcover. The action will support the protection and enhancement of these habitats through the use of a cohesive and focused management plan. This will have positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species and other interacting environmental receptors (soils and water, and air and climate). It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	6	Develop and LCCC Dark Skies Policy to reduce unnecessary light pollution for inclusion in the Limerick Development Plan, the review of which will commence in 2026.	Light pollution presents a threat to light-sensitive, nocturnal species inhabiting in or around urban or peri-urban settlements. The development of an LCCC Dark Skies Policy will have positive effects on the local wildlife which require natural darkness, and as per Dark Sky Ireland's findings, potentially positively impact population and human health, cultural heritage and tourism and recreation. The action does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	7	LCCC will minimise compost with peat as an ingredient and actively source new peat free compost or generate their own.	This action supports the reduction of peat harvesting which results in peatland degradation and removal of vegetation. This will serve to maintain and enhance existing levels of biodiversity within the plan area. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	8	Continue to minimise and reduce the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides across council operations	This action supports the prevention and reduction of pollution that may affect biodiversity components in the plan area. It is inherently positive in nature. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	9	Undertake a mapping of all zoned lands to determine the extent of trees and hedgerows at the time of zoning and that this mapping is included in all area plans at draft stage and the Limerick Development Plan Review 2026.	This action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within the land use framework and development planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realization of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components, through the conservation of treelines and hedgerows supporting local wildlife. The action does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	10	Investigate and pilot use of controlled Grazing on Council Land where appropriate	The management of forage with grazing animals through controlled grazing has the potential to improve sward quality by preserving good soil structure and minimising soil compaction. Controlled grazing has the potential to result in the enhancement of the ecosystem through reduced fertiliser and herbicide applications, fewer weeds, and environmentally sustainable grazing areas. This action therefore has the potential to result in positive effects on biodiversity and other interacting components such as soils, water, and air and climate. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	11	Prioritise and Ecologically Survey and develop Management Plans Council owned lands	Management Plans for Council-owned lands will ensure the appropriate protection for these sites and their natural and ecological assets. The action has the potential to result in positive effects on biodiversity. In isolation, the action proposes the prioritisation and development of Management (As opposed to the implementation of comprising actions, which will be subject to its own assessments). The action does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	12	Continue to determine risks to water quality via source pathway reception model on all planning applications.	This action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within the land use framework and development planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realization of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	13	Work with the LCCC Planning to incorporate IFI's Planning Guide for Watercourses in the Urban Environment in LCCC decision making	This action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within the land use framework and development planning process. It has the potential to contribute to the realization of positive effects on biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	14	Set targets in line with LCCC Tree Policy to maintain existing LCCC woodlands in good condition and plant new native trees in urban and rural areas.	This action promotes woodland protection and the use of native species in the plan area. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential contribute to ecological diversity and sustainability. This action also supports biodiversity enhancement and protection, as well as carbon sequestration, having positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	15	Promote native/local provenance for trees, shrubs plants etc. and LCCC to include this as a criteria for procurement	This action promotes the use of native plant species in the plan area. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential contribute to ecological diversity and sustainability. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	16	Support and collaborate on environmental and biodiversity projects as identified with external stakeholders	This action supports the creation of a collaborative approach between the local authority and external stakeholders, to the implementation of biodiversity initiatives and contribution to the overall enhancement of existing biodiversity in the plan area. In and of itself, the action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant, adverse environmental effect.
	17	Identify suitable nest box location on Council Lands for Barn Owls, Kestrels and other species identified by NPWS and liaise with local farming community organisations re same	This action will support the conservation of Barn Owls and other key species present in the plan area and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	18	Promote the prevention of fragmentation of ecological corridors including hedgerows and riverine features	This action supports the prevention of land-take causing habitat fragmentation. It is inherently positive in nature. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	19	Continue to work with LAWPRO (Local Authority Water Programme) and others to identify the impacts of critical and vulnerable receptors in accordance with the River Basin Management Plan and Water Framework Directive	This action supports continued compliance with the Water Framework Directive. This action will be supportive of water quality and associated biodiversity improvements. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	20	Support the efforts of LAWPRO and other parties to promote the reduction of chemical fertilizers on land.	This action has the potential to lead to positive effects on important habitats and species, water quality and the climate. Limiting the use of chemical fertilisers would prevent, to a degree, the occurrence of environmental pollution incidents due to the use of these substances. The action does not hold the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	21	Support the implementation of Marine Spatial Plan and to protect the Shannon estuary in collaboration with Kerry and Clare local authorities.	This action supports the Marine Spatial Plan and the projects included therein. This action has the capacity to positive lead to water quality, biodiversity, and climate change benefits. The Marine Spatial Plan will be subject to its own SEA and AA. This action does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects in and off itself.
	22	Advocate for responsible pet ownership	Pet ownership requires consideration in the context of local biodiversity, as untrained/unrestrained pets may predate on local wildlife or disturb livestock. The introduction of exotic pets in native natural ecosystems can also lead to negative interactions by competing for resources or introducing and spreading diseases. The action therefore is aimed at the protection of local biodiversity, and does not have the potential to generate any negative effects in and of itself.
C. Secure Nature's Contribution to	1	Protect and enhance Biodiversity on all developments in Limerick including new, existing	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity through integration of biodiversity considerations in any developmental works

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Current and Future Generations		and refurbished developments along with Greenways, all infrastructural developments	undertaken in the plan area, particularly in areas that contain existing green infrastructure. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key specie, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. In isolation, the action does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	2	Increase awareness of the intrinsic value of biodiversity and the services it provides us with.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3	Inline with LCCC Tree Policy increase the planting of suitable trees and hedgerows of local provenance	This action promotes the use of native species in the plan area. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential contribute to ecological diversity and sustainability. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	4	Deliver a minimum of 2 case studies to combat pollution using Nature based solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SDS)	This action promotes biodiversity-related education through case studies focused on nature-based, sustainable infrastructure and their potential in combating pollution. It has the potential to improve biodiversity-related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5	Collaborate on programmes with the LCCC Arts Office, education, youth projects and others that emphasise Nature as a muse of the arts and culture	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in the plan area. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally, in addition to contributing to cultural heritage through the creation of art oriented around nature narratives. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	5	Collaborate on education and research programmes that emphasise Natures positive impact on human well being	This action promotes biodiversity-related education, particularly in relation to the positive impacts it has on human wellbeing. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area, in consideration of the human impact. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6	Create info hub of where people can visit and immerse themselves in existing nature areas and show case river Shannon and its contribution and importance to biodiversity.	This action promotes non-intensive, passive engagement with nature areas. It has the potential to improve people's awareness and understanding of biodiversity and nature. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant adverse environmental effect on biodiversity.
	7	Conduct well being surveys to capture impact of identified actions in certain circumstances	The action proposes surveying participants within the plan area to measure well-being impacts of formerly proposed biodiversity actions. This can underpin and support the effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action, in isolation, will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effect.
D. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity	1	Carryout habitat surveys on council owned land and highlight areas at risk and identify areas suitable for restoration/enhancement and also identify potential wildlife corridors for protection through statutory plans	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline ecological surveying in the plan area. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	2	Share data from all LCCC surveys with NPWS, Heritage Council and National Biodiversity Data Centre	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to improving biodiversity in the plan area by increasing knowledge and expertise and information sharing. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3	Support NPWS national surveys for data collection on all annex species.	This action will support the conservation of key species present in the plan areas and connected areas, through baseline ecological surveys.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			This has the potential to result in positive effects for these species and underpin the effective implementation of the plan, potentially leading to focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action does not have the potential to result in any real, adverse environmental effect, in and of itself.
	5	Investigate the development of an open source digital repository for Limerick Biodiversity Related Data subject to GDPR and wildlife sensitivity restraints	The action is centred around the development of a digital data repository, which has the potential to improve upon biodiversity-related expertise and knowledge. This is in turn has the potential to underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the plan area. The action, in isolation, will not have result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental effect.
	6	Progress to Phase II of Limerick Wetland Survey	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline ecological surveying in the plan area. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	7	Action the recommendations from 1. Newcastle West Demesne Ecological Survey 2024 and the Annual recommendations for the 2. Baggot Estate Management Plan 2023-50, 3. Westfields Management Plan and 4. Corbally Meadow Work Programme	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the areas of Newcastle West Demesne, Baggot Estate, Westfields Wetland and Corbally Meadow. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	8	Compilation, centralisation and GIS mapping of existing data from assessments, reports and planning aps. Years 2023 - 2025	This action aims to implement biodiversity improvements in the plan area utilising most recent and up-to-date available data. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	9	Resurvey Limerick County Barn Owls, Swifts and Bat Roosts include desktop surveys for ground truthin.	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline ecological surveying in the plan area. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
	10	Promote Citizen Science Projects to gather evidence to aid in the collection of data which will be verified and collated on the NBDC website.	This action will promote awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation and the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant environmental impact in and of itself.
E. Strengthen Limerick's Contribution to National and Regional Biodiversity Initiatives	1	Promote National Biodiversity Data Centre species recording portal	This action will support the recording and conservation of key species present in the plan area and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	2	Develop integrated programme to address Invasive Alien Species including a) mapping, b) management protocol for public lands and c) guidelines for private lands and d) targeted education workshops.	This action will prevent and minimise the spread of invasive species in the plan area. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, such as native species and habitats, that are at risk due to invasive species spread. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	3	Continue to collaborate on Lesser Horseshoe Bat's national group and regional group.	This action will support the conservation of a key species present in the plan area and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	4	Engage with Inland Fisheries Ireland, Electricity Supply Board, Office of Public Works and other stakeholders to reverse decline in in riparian and riverine habitat which is home to many annex species such as Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey etc, including the removal and mitigation of barriers to fish movement in our rivers.	This action will support the conservation of Atlantic Salmon present in the plan area and connected areas. It has the potential to generate a positive effects for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	5	Develop online resources to raise awareness of birdlife in the Shannon Estuary	The Shannon Estuary is designated as a Special Protection Area (River Shannon and River Fergus SPA) for conservation of wild birds (under the

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			EU Birds Directive). Birdlife within this area include various species that are under threat such as the Eurasian curlew and the Black-tailed Godwit. The Shannon Estuary is an important site for wintering and migrating birds, supporting species of both international and national importance. The action is aimed at the improving awareness of the biodiversity at this site, which has potential for contributing to biodiversity improvements in general. In and of itself, the action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effect.
	6	Promote seed saving of local plants and trees that support biodiversity within LCCC and with the general public	Seed saving projects or seed banks can preserve plant species that are threatened by invasive species, monoculture crops or climate change. The action is aimed at the conservation of native plant species of local provenance within the plan area to preserve species diversity. It has the potential to result in positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. The action does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	7	Promote the protection of hedgerows and other trees which contribute to green infrastructure	This action supports the protection and enhancement of hedgerows in the plan area. Hedgerows are an integral biodiversity feature in the plan area and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	8	Update 2021 Bluesky Tree Cover Survey	The Bluesky Tree Cover Map is a UK/ROI dataset that captures data pertaining to tree heights, location, canopy extents of trees, including clusters that may amount to woodlands and forests. This geospatial data can support local authorities in decision-making and designing biodiversity initiatives. The action, in isolation, supports the enhancement of biodiversity in the plan area and will generate positive effects on biodiversity components (habitats and key species). It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.

Objective	Action Code	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	9	In line with LCCC Tree Policy identify and survey trees under the management of LCCC that are affected by Ash Die Back	The action is aimed at the identification of ash trees within the plan area that have been affected by Ash Dieback, an infection caused by an invasive fungal pathogen (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus)*. Ash dieback is a common threat to amenity trees and can render them structurally unsound, which runs the risk of property damage and personal injury. This therefore requires identification and intervention for affected trees and prevent further spread of the diseases. The action will support biodiversity by enabling targeted and focused interventions in the plan area. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.

Table 4-4: Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Environmental Effects - Characteristics of the Plan

Potential Signficant Effects	
Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:	
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the plan area, including local authority controlled lands. The LABAP defines a vision for biodiversity in the plan area, and strategic objectives, aims and targets for achieving this vision. The LABAP proposes a number of biodiversity management related projects and activities, including projects and activities at specific areas. These projects and activities all relate to biodiversity protection and enhancement, however. The LABAP does not propose or support any intensive land use or development projects outside the land use planning framework and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. Considering the Precautionary Principle enshrined in European Union (EU) environmental law, the Objectives and Actions in the LABAP should be assessed having regard to criteria defined in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The LABAP is defined as a Tier 2 Local Action Plan under The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). The LABAP is therefore a lower order plan in the context of the European, national, regional and local plan hierarchy.

Potential Signficant Effects	
Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:	
	Local Action Plans set out specific objectives and actions for managing and protecting heritage in a particular area, such as biodiversity, archives, archaeology, heritage engagement, education etc., within the context of a higher order heritage related plan, for example. Each Local Action Plan is developed by a Working Group that includes representatives from relevant stakeholders and is led by heritage professionals within the local authority. The LABAP fits into this tier of plans. The LABAP supports the development of lower order area specific biodiversity management plans and supports the implementation of biodiversity related measures defined in inter-related plans, including the County Development Plan.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The LABAP supports and promotes the integration of biodiversity protection and enhancement measures into development and activities occurring in the plan area and supports ecological sustainability. The LABAP does not, however, stipulate specific development planning requirements and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	Biodiversity in the plan area faces a number of known threats and pressures, including: • Development (residential, commercial, infrastructural and agricultural), • Agricultural activity and expansion, • Urbanization, • The spread of invasive species, • Pollution (e.g., air, noise, water, light pollution), • Climate change, • Recreational activity, • Land abandonment, • Urban wastewater, • Changes in the hydrological environment. These threats and pressures may cause a range of negative impacts on biodiversity, including habitat loss , reduction and fragmentation; disturbance to key species; reduction in species density, impacts on designated

Potential Signficant Effects	
Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:	
	sites and locally important non-designated sites present or connected to the plan area, or changes to indicators of conservation value (i.e. water quality, air quality, habitat quality). The LABAP defines a variety of actions to address these threats and pressures.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g., plans linked to waste-management or water protection)	The LABAP is a non-statutory land use plan. It does however support the achievement aims of EU nature-related legislation at a local level, including the following: • EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, • Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (the 'Nature Restoration Law'), • Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ('the Birds Directive'), • Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'), • European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended, • Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ('the Water Framework Directive'), • European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722/2003), as amended , • Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy ('the Marine Strategy Framework Directive'), • European Communities (Marine Strategy Framework) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 249/2011), as amended, • Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks ('the Floods Directive'), • European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 122/2010), as amended, • Directive 2006/113/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the quality required of shellfish waters ('the Shellfish Waters Directive'), • European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 268/2006), as amended.

Table 4-5: Criteria for Determining Potential for Significant Effects - Characteristics of the Effects

Potential for Signficant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the plan area. It defines the biodiversity actions that support and promote: • Best practice biodiversity management and improvement, • Local authority biodiversity protection and enhancement initiatives, • The improvement of biodiversity on local authority controlled lands, • Biodiversity training and awareness events, • Biodiversity education and training, • Planting of native species (i.e. trees, shrubs, plants etc.) • Ecological surveying and mapping to identify areas of risk from threats and pressure and areas for targeted biodiversity protection/enhancement action, • Collaborating with key stakeholders and the public to achieve biodiversity aims. The range of actions defined in the LAPAP have the potential to have a range of likely, slight to very significant, temporary to long-term, positive environmental effects, including: • Positive effects on biodiversity, including habitats, key species, designated sites and locally important non-designated sites. • Indirect positive effects on water quality and hydrology - e.g., through the promotion of the use Nature Based Solutions in drainage management and the protection of the aquatic environment. • Positive effects on population and human health - e.g., - through the protection and enhancement of areas of biodiversity that provide amenity value, and support public health and well-being. • Positive effects on the soils environment - e.g., biodiversity has the potential to improve soil quality, structure and function. • Positive effects on Climate - e.g., through the promotion of areas of enhanced biodiversity that can contribute to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) sequestration levels, and protect against the effects of climate change related events (i.e. floods, erosion etc.).

Potential for Signficant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
	• Positive effects on landscape and visual amenity - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage that contributes to scenic value and visual amenity. All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. They have been carefully reviewed and it has been concluded that these actions do not have the potential to have unintended negative effects on the receiving environment. The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. There is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.
The cumulative nature of the effects	The LABAP is in harmony and consistent with inter-related plans, including land use plans relevant to the plan area, higher order heritage related plans, the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, the national Climate Action Plan and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The range of positive effects that may be realised by the implementation of the LABCAP have the potential to interact and combine with positive effects associated with biodiversity measures defined in these inter-related plans to create larger, more significant positive effects. All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to interact and combine with negative effects associated with measures defined in these inter-related plans or projects to create larger, more significant negative effects.
The transboundary nature of the effects	The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in or connected to the plan area. These effects will be relatively localised however given that the LABCAP is local action plan. These effects have the potential to be transmitted to areas surrounding and outside the local authority functional area via environmental pathways. It is unlikely most of these effects will be transmitted Northern Ireland or any other country outside of Ireland however given the distance from the local authority functional area to these other countries and the lack of direct environmental pathways from the functional area to these countries. Actions in the LAPAB that may benefit migratory birds have some degree of potential to create positive effects beyond the national boundary of Ireland, however.

Potential for Signficant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
	The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the ability to be transmitted beyond the national boundary of Ireland.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents)	The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to create risks to human health or the environment.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in the plan area or connected to the plan area via environmental pathways, including elements that may up the receiving biodiversity environment such as habitats, key species, designated sites and non-designated locally important sites.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • Intensive land-use	The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects that contribute to enhanced biodiversity and natural heritage; enhanced water, soil or air quality in the plan area, and more sustainable, ecologically diverse land use. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that may affect special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (including built or archaeological heritage), or contribute to the exceedance of environmental quality standards, in the plan area. The LABAP does not support or promote intensive land use or development projects that may create negative environmental effects.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, community or international protection status	There are a variety of sites designated for their ecological value (e.g., Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, proposed Natural Heritage Areas) present in and connected to the plan area. The actions in the LABAP have been carefully designed to support the protection and enhancement of these designated sites. There are sites in the plan area that are designated for their landscape and visual amenity value. The implementation of the LABAP has the potential to have positive effects on landscape and visual amenity generally and such designated sites - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage settings that contribute to landscape character, scenic value and visual amenity.

Table 4-6: Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

Summary of SEA Screening Analysis
Having regard to the evaluation undertaken in Table 4-3 and the Stage 2 Screening Analysis undertaken in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5, it is concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.

4. CONCLUSIONS

An SEA Screening Assessment was undertaken to determine the need for an SEA for the Limerick City and County Council LABAP. It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP. The principal reasons for this are as follows:

- The LABAP does not introduce any source of impacts that have potential for interactions with the receiving environment.
- All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. There is no requirement to integrate further environmental considerations into the LABAP given its intrinsic nature, its stated aims and objectives, and the potential positive effects associated with its actions.
- The LABAP is in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes.
- The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects.
- The LABAP is not a statutory land use plan. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.

Therefore, a full SEA of the LABAP is not required.

The local authority is now required to consult with the Environmental Authorities on the above conclusion.

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