Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Skemes Boadie

PEACEPLUS Programme 2021-2027

Investment Area 5.2: Marine and Coastal Management.

Draft Priority Habitats and Species across the Programme Area

Overview:

Projects applying under Theme 5 (Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future), Investment Area 5.2 will work towards the **objective** of enabling a cross-border approach to the protection of the marine and coastal environment from potentially damaging human activities and will support the development of climate change adaption plans which will increase the resilience of ecosystems, coastal communities, infrastructure and the marine economy. It will promote climate change adaptation and sustainable marine and coastal management. It will **result** improved knowledge and management of the transboundary marine environment and a Programme Area which is more resilient and responsive to climate change and threats from human activities.

The following table outlines the places, habitats and species which will be prioritised in assessing applicants to the PEACEPLUS Investment Area 5.2: Marine and Coastal Environment. These are linked directly to government priorities in both jurisdictions and European Commission priorities. Projects should demonstrate how they plan to achieve results in habitat(s) or for species which have been identified as priorities in the Programme Area. The priority habitats and species in this table have been agreed with the relevant government departments. They represent the core designated areas of each of the habitats and species. There may be other areas which are central to the ecological functioning of the habitat (and supported species) and may be considered as part of a habitat / species project or part of a Region Wide project. Accountable Departments are open to considering proposals that go beyond these. However, early engagement with Programme Officials during development of project proposals is recommended to ensure alignment with national and local priorities. Applicants should consider how they will contribute to the achievement of the output and result indicators through focusing on sites and species outlined within this document.

Please note that these priorities will require approval by the PEACEPLUS Programme Monitoring Committee, and as such, may be subject to changes up to the time of the official launch of the Call for Applications later this year. SEUPB is sharing this information to allow partnerships to continue to develop their applications with as much information as possible.

THEME / AREA OF BENEFIT	IE MSFD Priority Area	NI / UK Marine Strategy Priority Area	OSPAR NEAES 2030 Operational objective	Other driver/policy area	Potential Outputs & Results
COASTAL CHANGE	• Better understanding of hydrographical conditions in the nearshore zone and how coastal infrastructure impacts background conditions • Better understanding of seafloor habitat types and impacts on the seafloor (seafloor integrity)	• Further develop approaches to assessing cumulative effects of significant infrastructure developments. • Better understanding of the status of coastal change to inform management decisions. • Improve spatial coverage of benthic monitoring and the understanding of influence of physical damage/ alterations.	• Impacts of climate change and ocean acidification • More evidence base/knowledge on seabed loss and disturbance due to human activities and related recovery times/habitats • Ecosystem resilience to climate change • Habitat restoration – methodology restoration of degraded habitats	Heritage assets and climate c	**1** joint coastal change strategy for the region developed and taken up **3** pilot action area-based coastal change studies developed and taken up in IE. **3** pilot action area-based coastal change studies developed and taken up in NI. .
CLIMATE & PELAGIC SYSTEMS	• Leatherback turtle ecology w.r.t. ocean systems • Pelagic habitat condition & methods (coast-ocean) • Food web methodology & understanding • Plankton monitoring (phyto-p/zoo-p) on coordinated basis • Incidental bycatch of non-commercial species	• Better understanding of effects of key anthropogenic pressures and climatic drivers on pelagic habitats and food webs in the Western Irish Sea (inc. plankton, fish [esp. sharks, skates, rays, sandeels and sprat], birds and marine mammals). • Improve monitoring effectiveness with innovations; flow cytometry, flow cams, eDNA. • Review of the incidence and ecology of non-resident transient marine megafauna with respect to ocean systems (e.g. turtles, walrus, sunfish)	• Halting decline in/pressures on habitats • Take all measures to enable recovery of OSPAR Threatened and Declining Species and/or Habitats (TDSH) • Elasmobranchs: coordinated research & data sharing + management action • Incidental bycatch of non-commercial species • Ocean acidification monitoring • Climate impact assessment & monitoring, measures and actions • Coordinated management to strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change • Nature-based solutions for carbon sequestration and carbon storage		**2** joint pelagic habitat action plans developed and taken up for: • Phytoplankton • Zooplankton **6** joint species action plans developed and taken up for: • Sandeels & sprat • Sharks, skates & rays • Seabirds • Seals • Cetaceans • Turtles **1** joint seabird conservation strategy developed and taken up.
NATURAL CAPITAL, HABITATS & HUMAN BEHAVIOUR	• Improved knowledge of harbor seal behavior/breeding/distribution • Improved methodologies for assessment of habitat condition • Better knowledge on extent of different habitat types, e.g. littoral habitats	• Better understanding of seal population trends, abundance, dynamics, life history, competition between seal species and impacts of human-induced and natural pressures (inc. predation, disease, noise, toxins (inc. harmful algae) and bycatch.	• Nature based solutions for: - carbon storage - habitat restoration - coastal protection - nutrient sequestration • Litter: improve evidence on harm and develop measures to control		**1** joint action plan/ strategy on the accounting of marine ecosystem services developed and taken up.

	• Better knowledge on impacts on seafloor of other human activities besides fishing • Impact of cumulative effects of contaminants • More knowledge on harm caused by marine litter • Data gap regarding marine litter on surface of water column • Data gap on presence of microplastics • Gaps in knowledge on quantitative entry pathways • Gaps in knowledge on breakdown from macro to micro litter and associated harm	• Improve data availability and habitat condition monitoring methodologies with use of innovative and new technologies e.g. iVMS, REM. • Improve knowledge on extent of blue carbon habitats (inc. seagrass, saltmarsh, kelp forest, mudflat, subtidal mud). • Improve spatial coverage of benthic monitoring and the understanding of influence of physical damage/ alterations. • Improve understanding of status of chemical synergies and chemicals of emerging concern. • Improve understanding of status and impacts of marine microplastics.	and phase out discharges of plastics (can be linked with food webs) • Methods and knowledge on cumulative effects in marine ecosystems – human activities and other pressures (also linked with coastal change) • Ecosystem services accounting – link with MPA management		**1** joint action plan on integrating natural capital processes into decision making developed and taken up. **4** joint blue carbon habitat strategies developed and taken up for: • Kelp forest • Shellfish beds • Subtidal mud • Seagrass, saltmarsh & mudflats **4** pilot actions for blue carbon habitat restoration. **1** joint action plan developed and taken up for Marine Litter, including: • Floating litter • Seabed litter • Microplastics **1** pilot study on chemical synergies developed and taken up. **1** joint strategy on chemicals of emerging concern developed and taken up.
PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY, COASTAL & MARITIME HERITAGE	• Harbour seal aquatic ecology: breeding & non-breeding periods • Harbour seal breeding ecology in NW, NE Ireland • Black-legged kittiwake status, trends and ecology • Tracking baleen whale migration & deep-divers (acoustically) • Incidental bycatch of non-commercial species	• Better understanding of seal population trends, abundance, dynamics, life history, competition between seal species and impacts of human-induced and natural pressures (inc. predation, disease, noise, toxins (inc. harmful algae) and bycatch. • Better understanding of effects of key anthropogenic pressures and climatic drivers on pelagic habitats and food webs in the Western Irish Sea (inc. plankton, fish [esp. sharks, skates, rays, sandeels and sprat], birds and marine mammals).	• Elasmobranchs, incl. basking shark others on TDSH • Tracking blue whale occurrence & migration • MPA targets including OECMs • MPAs: effective management, barrier removal • Halting decline in/pressures (esp. on marine birds) • Take all measures to enable recovery of TDSH	• Sandeel & sprat as fundamental food web elements	**1** joint pilot on large scale monitoring of key threatened and declining species developed and taken up. **1** joint strategy on the impacts of climate change on key threatened and declining species developed and taken up.

		• Habitat restoration: ID suitability, coordinated methods, knowledge sharing • Habitat restoration targets & actions to achieve • Coordinated management on NIS introductions → zero • Incidental bycatch of non-commercial species • Climate impact assessment & monitoring • MPA network use in nature-based climate mitigation and resilience assessment to effects thereof • TDSH list review and update w.r.t. climate • Regional ecosystem-based management and protection incl. through Collective Arrangement		
•	•		**Investment Area 5.2 Output and Result Indicators** **Output Indicator** **RC083 – Strategies and action plans jointly developed** **RC084 – Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects** **Result Indicator** **RCR79 – Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations** **RCR104 – Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations**	 **17** **10** **13** **8**