

The PEACE PLUS Programme- Environment Sector

The PEACE PLUS Programme is a €1bn investment in the social, economic and environmental development of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

Building upon the success of previous cross border PEACE and INTERREG Programmes, it will contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous and stable society, leaving a lasting legacy across the Programme area. This will be achieved by funding activities that promote peace and reconciliation across six themes, which encompass 21 individual investment areas as outlined below. These have been developed to optimise engagement and participation across all ages, communities and sectors.



A public consultation regarding the potential PEACE PLUS Programme design was held in 2019-20. In response to the views expressed, the SEUPB has developed the Programme to ensure multiple opportunities for engagement by **the Environment Sector**. This includes a dedicated Environmental Theme (5), which comprises six individual component investment areas. In addition, PEACE PLUS includes other investment areas, which although not exclusively for the environment, will provide significant opportunities for Environment Sector involvement (Themes 2,3,4 and 6).

We now look forward to receiving your views on the investment areas proposed as part of the Statutory Public Consultation process, and wish to outline all the areas across the Programme which may provide opportunity for you to get involved, and initiate the preparation of potential projects.

Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future

Our natural environment is one of our most important assets and its enhancement and protection is critical to future economic and social development. Strategic cross border collaboration provides an opportunity to deliver a sustainable thriving environment and a more prosperous and healthier population across the Programme area.

5.1 Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience (€15m)

This investment area will build upon the current INTERREG VA Programme by continuing to promote cross border co-operation and facilitating the recovery of additional protected habitats and priority species. Investment will be directed towards further delivery of conservation actions proven to redress biodiversity loss and preserve these important environmental, social and economic assets.

5.2 Marine and Coastal Management (€12m)	This investment area will enable a cross border approach to the protection of the marine and coastal environment from natural and anthropological threats; safeguarding this irreplaceable natural asset and resulting in economic, social and cultural benefits to the Programme area.
5.3 Water Quality and Catchment Management (€21m)	This investment area will facilitate a cross border collaborative approach to the management and improvement of water quality in selected cross border water bodies. In line with the Water Framework Directive, this will be demonstrated by an improved classification over time. The Programme will promote sustainable water management. It will improve freshwater quality in cross border river basins and result in an increased percentage of cross border freshwater bodies in cross border river basins with good or high quality.
5.4 Water Quality Improvement Programme (€32m)	This investment area will result in an improvement in the water quality of three specific transitional water bodies through cross border collaboration: Lough Erne, Lough Melvin and Donegal Bay. In addition, raw drinking water quality will be improved through the reduction of pollutants, including those of an agricultural nature.
5.5 Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme (€20m)	This investment area will build the knowledge, skills and capacity required to develop a policy framework and encourage investment in the geothermal technology sector. Associated cross border collaboration to achieve the replacement of fossil fuels by indigenous renewable energy in the heat sector will result in a reduced reliance on fossil fuels and enhanced energy security. It will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits across the Programme area.
5.6 Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity (€165m)	This investment area will increase connectivity in the form of sustainable public transport. It will involve significant investment in sustainable rail stock. The improvement of the rail service linking the two capital cities and the smaller adjacent urban centres of Portadown, Newry, Dundalk and Drogheda can exploit this dynamic to its full potential, providing spin-off agglomeration and wider economic and environmental benefits, including contributing to the long-term development of a zero-emissions rail network.

Other Opportunities for the Environment Sector to Engage in PEACE PLUS

Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities	
1.1 Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans (€90m)	This investment area will see the creation of Local PEACE PLUS Partnerships across all parts of the Programme area. This structure will enable and empower council led local community partnerships, to co-design Local Community PEACE Action Plans and thus self-determine and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis. It will provide opportunities to develop local projects to be delivered by local organisations, including those with an environmental focus.
1.2 Empowering Communities (€30m)	This investment area will support the delivery of people-to-people projects across all communities by local Community & Voluntary Sector organisations. Through the provision of a small grants programme, it will enable participation by smaller organisations who can often be best placed to affect real change and embed peace at local community level. Projects can use any medium which will result in improved

	cross community relations, including environment focused projects. In this way, the Programme will contribute to the creation of strengthened and more cohesive local communities and provide opportunities for engagement by environmental organisations.
1.4 Re-Imaging Communities (€60m)	This investment area will offer the potential to develop new and transform existing spaces into shared environments for use by all communities. It will provide Statutory, Community & Voluntary Sector organisations with the opportunity to develop and manage innovative spaces, spanning a range of thematic areas including: children and young people; health and wellbeing; social enterprise and innovation. From an environmental perspective, these spaces will be constructed and operated with an emphasis upon sustainability.
Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation	
2.1 SME Development and Transition (€20m)	This investment will support SMEs to operate at scale through cross border collaboration; engage in commercially led innovation; and effectively transition to engage in the low carbon, circular economy.
2.2 Innovation Challenge Fund (€58m)	This investment will facilitate high level cross border research and innovation projects, including those with an Environment focus, within key sectors such as Renewable Energy and Bio Energy.
2.3 Programme Area Skills Development (€35m)	This investment area will support area-based approaches to address emerging skills requirements across the Programme area. This will include a focus upon key Environmental sectors, including Renewable Energy.
2.4 Smart Towns and Villages Programme (€30m)	This investment area will support stakeholders including the Community & Voluntary Sector to lead the transformation of vacant spaces within town and village centre for communal economic and social usage. It will result in increased opportunities for remote working within rural communities, which will contribute to a more inclusive and balanced economy and a corresponding reduction in CO2 emissions across the Programme area.
Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Our Young People	
3.2 PEACE PLUS Youth Programme (€45m)	This investment area will build the capacity of marginalised and disadvantaged young people within the Programme area, while enhancing their employability. Supported projects will incorporate the 'one good adult' approach. It will provide young people with the opportunities to participate in social action projects, including those of an environmental nature.
Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities	
4.2 Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion (€50m)	This investment area will adopt a strengths-based approach to supporting key social, economic and environmental projects. These will contribute to sustainable regeneration, social inclusion and the creation of healthy and thriving rural communities. Investment within rural communities will include the development of natural assets in the form of green infrastructure. This will promote active lifestyles and sustainable connectivity between rural and urban areas.
Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration	

<p>6.2 Strategic Planning and Engagement (€27m)</p>	<p>This investment area will support engagement of strategic stakeholders, targeting legal and administrative obstacles to cooperation in relevant sectors. It will facilitate dialogue between different actors to establish the challenges and possible solutions to facilitate increased cross border collaboration in key sectors such as Energy and the Environment (including air quality).</p>
<p>6.2 Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens (€20m)</p>	<p>This investment area will support smaller projects which increase social and civic cohesion on a cross border basis. It will provide opportunities for cross border initiatives led by Statutory, Community & Voluntary Sector organisations, including those with an environmental focus.</p>