

The Irish Environmental Network

Annual Report
2024



**Irish
Environmental
Network**

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Annual Report 2024

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**Irish
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Chair, Kieran Flood reflects on his roll and the many highlights of 2024 including the All Island Civil Society Forum, the Nature Restoration Law, Maréire Launch, Biodiversity Week and the many collaborative projects and training events for IEN members.



8 The Board

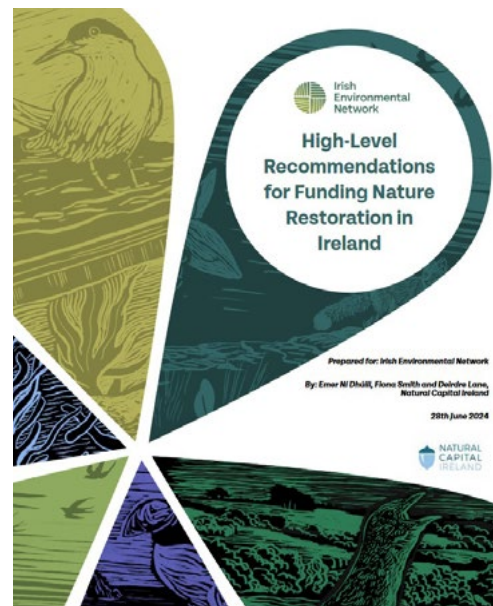
The Board of Directors has a key role in ensuring the IEN is adhering to principles of good governance. During 2024, the board worked to ensure the IEN's compliance with the Governance Code for Charities to ensure that the charitable objectives of the IEN are achieved effectively and with integrity.

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Our work in 2024 has involved strengthening connections between environmental representatives across the country, supporting our members in their work to protect and enhance their environment.

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So much of the work of the Irish Environmental Network depends on the hard work of our team who keep environmental issues centre stage and support our members in their efforts to protect and preserve our natural environment and address the climate and biodiversity crises.



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The majority of the work of the IEN is supported by a grant from the Department of the Environment Climate and Communications (DECC).

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Foreword

Kieran Flood, Chair of IEN Board of Directors



Throughout 2024 it has been an honour for me to hold the role of Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Irish Environmental Network.

The goal of the IEN and its members is the protection of the natural world. We seek to sustain the climate, water, soil and biodiversity that our society and economy rest within. The natural world is a complex and interconnected system where networks and relationships are truly fundamental elements. Where cooperation is more important than competition and resilience is found through diversity.

As an organisation the IEN reflects the interconnectedness of the natural world which it seeks to protect. Through our core funding model we support a diversity of groups all striving in their own way to make our world a better place, while through our network and collaborative project funding we support impactful cooperation. This balance between supporting the core functioning of member groups while promoting collaborative work on holistic issues is a challenging but hugely beneficial role played by the IEN.

Below are some highlights from the work of the IEN in 2024's.

The All Island Civil Society Forum on the Environment 2024

This forum held five sessions on the topics below and culminated with an in-person all-island dialogue and networking event in Dundalk on 11th Oct–

1. Cross Border collaboration opportunities
2. Biodiversity and Nature Restoration
3. Marine Environment
4. Freshwater Ecosystems
5. Climate Change: policies, action and shaping public opinion

Nature Restoration Law

When an unexpected final push was needed to get this vital law over the line our members joined together under the coordination of the IEN and lobbied successfully for strong Irish support to get the law through the final European Council vote.

Funding Nature Restoration in Ireland

The publication of the High-Level Recommendations for Funding Nature Restoration in Ireland report by the Irish Environmental Network and Natural Capital Ireland.

Maréire Launch

The launch of Maréire, the Marine Biodiversity and Offshore Renewable Energy Project to advance and lead research, policy and advocacy in relation to marine biodiversity and Offshore Renewable Energy, with the aim of ensuring that environmental protection remains at the forefront of decision-making, policy and planning whilst meeting our targets for renewable energy.

Annual Gathering

Once more 2024 saw our members gather together in Cloughjordan to strengthen ties and discuss work and plans for the future.

Biodiversity Week

We coordinate this annual celebration of nature across Ireland, with member groups hosting amazing events that engage the public with the natural world.

Collaborative Projects

Continuing to support our member groups through hosting the Fair Seas campaign and Coalition 2030, furthering our efforts to reach the UNSDGs.

Training events and opportunities for members

We have continued to support various training events and opportunities for our members.

In 2024 we also welcomed new directors onto our Board from members groups; Irish Peatland Conservation Centre and the Organic Centre. Member representation on the board is key to the collective shaping and evolution of this organisation and it provides members with valuable insight into the working of the IEN. In my time on the Board of Directors I have seen first hand the dedication and hard work of the staff of the IEN led by our inspirational CEO Karen Ciesielski. The staff here at IEN has grown this year and I have no doubt that in 2025 the team will continue working to strengthen our organisation and increase all our impact. On behalf of the Board of Director I would like to thank all the IEN staff for their tireless work in 2024.

The Board



Liam Breslin



Donna Cooney



Oisín Coghlan



Maria Cullen



Gary Dempsey



Shane Downer



Kieran Flood



Nuala Madigan



Elaine Nevin



Dermot Tynan

The Board of Directors has a key role in ensuring the IEN is adhering to principles of good governance. During 2024, they worked to ensure the IEN's compliance with the Governance Code for Charities to ensure that the charitable objectives of the IEN are achieved effectively and with integrity.

A schedule of meetings for the board was set at the start of the year and they continued to be held remotely.

IEN Directors 2024

Kieran Flood (retired Nov 2024), Nuala Madigan (appointed Nov 2023), Oisín Coghlan, Elaine Nevin, Shane Downer (appointed Nov 2023), Donna Cooney, Liam Breslin, Dermot Tynan, Gary Dempsey, Maria Cullen (appointed Nov 2024)

How the Board Makes Decisions

When making decisions, members of the board work to reach consensus and vote on proposals if necessary.

Sub-Committees

The Irish Environmental Network had four active sub-committees in 2024, covering Membership, Human Resources, Governance and Finance, respectively.

The work of each sub-committees is set out in its Terms of Reference. Sub- committees carry out vital pieces of work on the IEN's internal policies and processes and regularly report on their progress and make recommendations to the Board.

Our Work

Our work in 2024 has involved strengthening connections between environmental representatives across the country, supporting our members in their work to protect and enhance their environment.

On the Ground

Catherine O'Toole heads our effort to increase environmental engagement with the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and to assist PPN representatives and local environmental networks in building their capacity to operate locally and take part in their PPN.

Work in 2024 included hosting informative events that also allowed for networking opportunities between local groups, individuals and PPN representatives. An in-person gathering was held in collaboration with the Úi Máine Kingdom Group, a member of Roscommon PPN. This event, Connecting Through Our Shared Landscape, also included the launch of National Biodiversity Week 2024. Catherine also supported the Community Climate Action Symposium, organised by Tipperary PPN, and hosted online events. Work with the PPNs included verifying new environmental groups joining their PPN, responding to each Local Authority's draft Strategic Policy Committee Schemes, and continued engagement with PPNs across the country.

A monthly newsletter helped share announcements between national and local groups. Catherine also led work on National Biodiversity Week, which grew in 2024 to host 293 events nationwide, and included collaboration from Biodiversity Officers and Heritage Officers across the country.

Coalition 2030

Throughout 2024, Coalition 2030's efforts were focused on placing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the heart of political debate and policymaking during a critical election year in Ireland. With a General Election, European Elections, and Local Elections all taking place, the Coalition spearheaded a comprehensive, member-driven process to develop clear and ambitious policy positions and election asks tailored to each electoral context. This participatory approach ensured that member priorities were central, with working groups convened across Coalition pillars to draft and refine positions that reflect the urgent need for SDG acceleration in Ireland.

The outcome of this work was a series of election-focused publications and campaigns that engaged candidates, parties, and the public on the importance of Agenda 2030. Coalition 2030 members presented these asks at events across the country, as well as at party Ard Fheiseanna and local political gatherings. The Coalition also hosted a hustings for the Local and European elections.

In September, the Coalition launched a landmark report, "A Call to Action for Future Generations", in response to the UN Summit of the Future. The report called for stronger political

accountability and intergenerational justice, including support for the creation of a Future Generations Commissioner for Ireland. The launch was accompanied by a communications campaign and media engagement that brought attention to the report.

The Coalition also played a vital role in parliamentary engagement this year, providing expert evidence at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action, where it emphasised the importance of embedding the SDGs into Ireland's national policy architecture.

In terms of internal developments, David Rossiter was appointed as the new Coalition 2030 Coordinator, succeeding Meaghan Carmody. The Coalition continues to grow and consolidate its influence, welcoming new members and expanding its collaborative footprint.

Fair Seas

Fair Seas is a coalition of Ireland's leading environmental non-governmental organisations and networks seeking to protect, conserve and restore Ireland's unique marine environment. Fair Seas' overarching vision is to build a movement of ocean stewardship across Ireland that energises and empowers people to



Above
The Fair Seas rally
outside Leinster
House, September
2024

campaign for ambitious and robust legislation and secure a network of effective, well-managed marine protected areas.

Over the past three years, the Fair Seas campaign has focused on building a movement and advocating for Ireland's Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Through a series of publications, policy outputs and events, it has helped shape the national conversation and influence MPA policy, resulting in a 7.1% (33,204 km²) increase in MPAs.

In the first wave of the campaign (2021 - 2024), Fair Seas reached over 21 million people online, secured over 635 news articles with an estimated advertising value of over €3 million and garnered 60,000 online signatures to advocate for more Marine Protected Areas.

The campaign also mobilised more than 34,000 supporters in Ireland to take action—whether by attending events, writing to politicians, or joining rallies—and held over 230 meetings with political representatives to advocate for MPAs and the publication of national MPA legislation. The campaign presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the draft MPA legislation, and all of Fair Seas' recommendations were included in the subsequent report. This political engagement was complemented by frequent presentations in the AV Room

in the Dáil and culminated with a public rally outside Leinster House on the 25th of September 2024, with over 150 representatives from the public and NGO community. The campaign also published eight scientific reports, six policy papers and contributed to 22 public consultations alongside 60 events, eight webinars, 54 films and over 250 blogs.

Despite these efforts, new Marine Protected Area legislation has yet to be published or enacted into Irish law. As Fair Seas enters its next three-year phase, it remains committed to holding policymakers accountable and ensuring stronger protections for Ireland's ocean. Following the completion of the first phase of the campaign, the team has secured increased funding for an additional three years from 2025–2028.

Thank you to the coalition members, including the Irish Wildlife Trust, Birdwatch Ireland, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, SWAN, Coomhola Salmon Trust, Irish Environmental Network, and Coastwatch. Fair Seas is funded by Oceans 5, the Becht Family Charitable Trust, and Blue Nature Alliance. Fair Seas is hosted by the Irish Environmental Network and includes two core staff, with additional part-time capacity from some coalition partners.

7.1%

**Increase in Marine Protected
Area coverage to 33,204 km²**



MARÉIRE

The MARÉIRE project, funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), got off the ground in September 2024 in partnership with the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and Birdwatch Ireland. The project aims to be a unifying voice for Irish NGOs in the offshore renewable energy sector. By engaging early in the process, the project will ensure the marine environment is considered in all phases of development. With a focus on advocacy and finding a balance between mitigating the climate crisis and protecting biodiversity, MARÉIRE will provide expert, scientific and evidence-based information while recognising its diverse audience.

In its first few months, the project team has engaged with public consultations and submitted comments to planning applications, including in Irish and UK waters, in relation to offshore renewable energy development and infrastructure. Team members have also participated in a number of stakeholder meetings and events, both nationally and internationally, including meeting with

energy developers, attending the Marine Spatial Planning Advisory Group, the Marine Institute's Ocean Knowledge Conference, Oceans Week in Brussels and the Marine Mammal Observer Association conference among others.

The project coordinator, Jenny Bortoluzzi, has been working with Pillar members to develop an Offshore Renewable Energy policy statement, which is progressing well, and launched a number of funding calls with the aim of building knowledge and capacity within our sector on the topic of ORE and the environment.

Biodiversity Photographer of the Year

Winner of the Biodiversity Photographer of the Year competition is Shy Poser by Declan Goulding. The judges were captivated by this beautiful portrait of an elusive hare. The poise of the hare and the apparent eye contact makes this an exceptionally beautiful image.

Winner of the Ocean Category was Richie O'Donnell with Light Bulb Sea Squirt which captured the incredible

colours and transparency of the Sea Squirt which begins life as a tadpole-like form and, as it matures finds a forever home and permanently attaches to a rock.

This year's competition entries were full of beautiful portraits, artistic compositions, candid moments & a huge variety of wildlife on land & sea. It was a tough competition & we would like to thank everyone who entered & congratulations to the final shortlisted photographers!

And huge thanks to our judges - the judges for the main competition were Frank Miller, Former Picture Editor of the Irish Times and Nick Bradshaw, Photographer with the Irish Times. The judge for the Ocean Category was Jack O'Donovan Trá, Fair Seas Communication Officer.

Above
Light Bulb Sea Squirt by
Richie O'Donnell

Winner of the Biodiversity
Photographer of the Year:
Shy Poser by Declan Goulding





All-Island Civil Society Forum on the Environment Dialogue

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) and the Irish Environmental Network received funding from the Government of Ireland Shared Island Civic Society Fund to develop and deliver a series of five facilitated thematic dialogues and a final in-person networking forum between January and September 2024.

The main purpose of the project was to promote and deepen cooperation and dialogue between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland eNGOs and environmental civil society groups so that the sector is equipped to fully engage with, and respond to, the new environmental regulatory and governance context post-Brexit.

Participants discussed shared challenges and possible solutions and policy responses that they believed were appropriate for introducing/ implementing/ exploring on an all-island basis or on both sides of the border.

The first dialogue will take place online using Zoom on Wednesday 14 February from 1030am until 1pm and set the context for the rest of the series and included an expert overview of the environmental regulatory context post-Brexit, a discussion on why deeper dialogue and cooperation between environmental organisations in Ireland and Northern Ireland was necessary and discussed the thematic areas might be prioritised in the remaining dialogues.

Biodiversity, with an emphasis on terrestrial, was the theme of the second session on Friday 12 April. This was followed by the third dialogue on Friday 17 May which focused on the Marine. The theme of the fourth dialogue on Thursday 27th June was Freshwater. The fifth dialogue took place on Friday 13th September and focused on Climate Change: policies, action and shaping public opinion

Following the five online dialogues, the IEN and NI Environment Link hosted

an in-person all-island dialogue and networking event in the Imperial Hotel Dundalk on Friday 11 October

This event brought together environmental groups and campaigners from all corners of the island to collaborate, share ideas, and inspire change. Delegates discussed the findings of the online dialogues and our shared environmental challenges and possible solutions, and also revisited the complex issue of post-Brexit environmental governance. It also discussed how groups north and south can work together more effectively on an all-island basis.

Above
The launch of
Biodiversity Week
2024





The IEN Annual Gathering took place again in Cloughjordan eco-village, Co Tipperary from 23 November. It was fantastic and inspiring day of conversations, discussions, workshops, networking, sharing ideas, celebrating achievements and working with others to protect and enhance the environment.

Top

In November the IEN Annual Gathering took place in Cloughjordan Eco Village, Co. Tipperary

Above

The late Bob Wilson

Changes to how we engaged with Environmental Law

In April 2024, **An Taisce** assumed responsibility for managing the Environmental Law Implementation Group (ELIG) project.

An Taisce is a founding member of ELIG, which was established with the aim of preventing future breaches of environmental law and potential cases. The structure of the ELIG project and its goals remain the same and the Environmental Pillar remains a member of ELIG.

Attracta Uí Bhroin, who had been Environmental Law Officer at the Irish Environmental Network, moved to An Taisce as part of this process and she remained very active throughout the year working on a number of projects to protect the environment through environmental law.

Annual Gathering

The IEN Annual Gathering took place again in Cloughjordan eco-village, Co Tipperary from 23 November. It was fantastic and inspiring day of conversations, discussions, workshops, networking, sharing ideas, celebrating achievements and working with others to protect and enhance the environment.

Bob Wilson

We were deeply saddened at the passing of Bob Wilson, founder and coordinator of CELT Centre. A gentleman, who was quiet in manner and word but a passionate, committed and effective advocate for the environment, nature and sustainable living. His knowledge, interest and dedication to restoration of the great forests of Ireland will be greatly missed. Our deepest sympathies to his family and friends. May he rest in peace.



The IEN Annual Gathering in
Cloughjordan Eco Village, Co.
Tipperary



Our Staff

The Irish Environmental Network depends on the hard work of our team to place environmental issues centre stage in Ireland and to strengthen the network of NGOs campaigning to safeguard our climate and biodiversity



Karen Ciesielski
 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Karen Ciesielski is the CEO of the IEN. With 20 years of experience in non-profit management, fundraising, communications, advocacy and campaigning, Karen works to promote the interlinked principles of environmental, social and economic sustainability by supporting IEN members. She also serves as the Coordinator of the Environmental Pillar.



Justin Byrne
 Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Justin is the Chief Operating Officer for the IEN, having joined the organisation in 2010. Previously he worked for KPMG as IT Operations Manager and prior to that in management for a division of Unigate PLC in London. He has extensive experience in planning issues.



Alanagh Tennanty
 Administrative Assistant

Alanagh brings a wealth of administrative expertise and a heartfelt dedication to environmental and grassroots action to her role as administrator for the Irish Environmental Network. With a robust background in administration and a passion for sustainability, she is committed to supporting the organisation's mission to protect and preserve Ireland's natural environment.



Donal Griffin
 Fair Seas Campaign Coordinator

Donal is the campaign coordinator for the Fair Seas Campaign. With a strong background in marine biology and ecology, Donal also has a wealth of policy experience from the UK, including coordinating a coalition of environmental NGOs focusing on MPA management and implementation.



Jack O'Donovan Trá
 Fair Seas Communications Officer

Jack O'Donovan Trá is the Communications Officer at Fair Seas. Jack is blending the art of good comms with marine science to bring the message of ocean protection to a wide audience in an engaging and impactful way. Jack is a marine biologist by training and moved into comms and campaigns in 2018, and has since worked with many large international environmental coalitions and campaigns across Europe.



Ciaran Brennan
 Communications Officer & Editor of The Green News

Ciaran joined the IEN as Communications Officer and Editor of The Green News in 2023. He has many years' experience as a journalist and as a public relations/communications specialist, having worked for the HSE, Samaritans Ireland and the Houses of the Oireachtas, as well as a number of national newspapers.



Fintan Kelly
 Agriculture Policy Officer

Fintan works to make Irish agriculture and land-use policies more sustainable for nature and people. He has a MSc in Environmental Biology from Utrecht University and a BSc in Environmental Science from NUI Galway. He specialises in Environmental Policy, Advocacy and Planning and has been working within the Irish eNGO sector since 2012, having previously worked for BirdWatch Ireland, An Taisce, SWAN and the Irish Wildlife Trust.



Aoife Ní Lochlainn
 Policy Officer

Aoife is the Policy Officer at the IEN. Her work covers the UK Withdrawal agreement as it relates to the environment, as well as broader environmental policy and advocacy work to advance sustainable policy in Ireland on behalf of the NGO sector. She is a public policy analyst and researcher with over 13 years of experience in economic, social and environmental policy.



Jenny Bortoluzzi
 MARÉIRE Coordinator

Jenny Bortoluzzi is Project Coordinator for Maréire, the IEN's Marine Biodiversity and Offshore Renewable Energy Capacity Building project. Jenny is a marine biologist by training with a PhD from Trinity College Dublin focusing the ecology and conservation of elasmobranchs and has a keen interest in finding meaningful and impactful solutions to our environmental crises which consider both nature and people.



Catherine O'Toole
 Development Officer

As our Local Environmental Development Officer, Catherine is working to increase engagement in the Environmental College of the Public Participation Networks (PPNs). Working with those on the ground for the Irish environmental movement, Catherine works to educate and inspire people in their local communities by providing complimentary training opportunities to environmental representatives.



David Rossiter
 Coalition 2030 Coordinator

David supports Irish Civil Society Organisations in their efforts to advance the Sustainable Development Goals both in Ireland and globally. With over nine years experience in advocacy and public affairs, he has worked across international development, domestic climate campaigning, and politics. He is deeply committed to building a just and equitable society, fostering economic systems that lift people out of poverty while respecting planetary boundaries.

The Environmental Pillar

Established in 2009, the Environmental Pillar is the advocacy arm of the Irish Environmental Network and it represents 32 national independent environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) all of whom are members of the IEN.

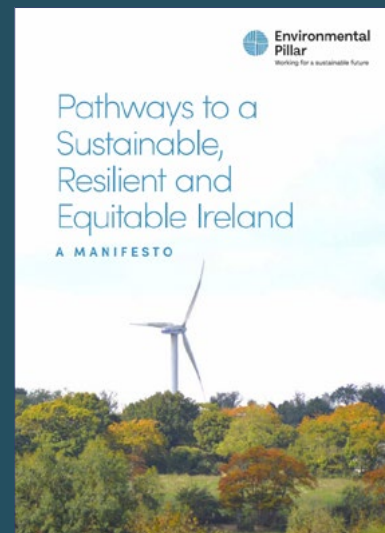
The Pillar is a National Social Partner and has its own line of funding to support its policy, advocacy, and campaigning work. Karen Ciesielski serves as the Coordinator of the Environmental Pillar.

Overseeing its activities is a Steering Committee, made up of eight members who are elected by the members of the Environmental Pillar and serve one year terms. Its members have a huge reservoir of knowledge and expertise. Their work is diverse, covering a broad range of areas, which includes wildlife and habitat protection and restoration, environmental education, forestry, marine issues, waste, circular economy, planning and development, wellbeing, community resilience, and energy.

The Pillar continued its work in 2024 to meet with and put pressure on elected representatives on all matters related to the climate and biodiversity crisis. Throughout the year, the advocacy group engaged on a number of different issues by meeting with decision makers, participating in workgroups, providing input through submissions, and publishing recommendations on key environmental policy.

A snapshot of these topics included:

- Environmental Pillar published a manifesto for the General Election which advocated putting climate, nature and fairness at the heart of Government—**Pathways to a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Ireland**
- Responding to Budget 2025
- Urging the Government to reject the EU Mercosur deals at the European Council
- Called for fully funded Marine Protected Areas amounting to €55 million over four years at the 2024 National Economic Dialogue
- Urged community groups interested in their local environment to become involved in their local Public Participation Network (PPN).
- Advocating the passing of the Nature Restoration Law
- Along with BirdWatch Ireland and An Taisce, the Environmental Pillar led a campaign urging people to call for a government commitment to protect the Hen Harrier.



Above

The Environmental Pillar launched its manifesto in 2024—Pathways to a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Ireland



Agriculture and Land Use

Driving Change: Our Impact in 2024 and the Road Ahead

In 2024, the Environmental Pillar played a decisive role in securing one of the most significant environmental victories at the EU level—the adoption of the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). Our campaign transformed Ireland from a passive opponent to a leading advocate, shifting public and political support in favour of the law. Irish MEPs ultimately played a decisive role in ensuring its passage, with Minister Eamon Ryan rallying support in the European Council. Despite fierce opposition from right-wing groups, our grassroots movement-maintained pressure, securing the law's approval by the Environmental Council in June. Now, our focus is on ensuring ambitious implementation, with strong civil society engagement in designing Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan.

Our advocacy also strengthened environmental safeguards in the Forestry Programme 2023-2027, despite industry resistance. These hard-won protections for peat soils, habitats, and wildlife must be upheld, and we continue to

fight for them through our role on the Forest Strategy Consultative Committee. Similarly, our work on the CAP Strategic Plan (2023-2027) led to major gains, including a €25 million Breeding Waders EIP to protect vulnerable bird species. However, EU-driven CAP simplifications have weakened environmental protections, and we remain vigilant against further backsliding. We continue to push for ambitious climate and biodiversity action, advocating for peatland restoration, carbon farming, and land-use reforms through key forums such as the CAP Monitoring Committee, the Water Forum, and the Land Use Review.

After over a decade of advocacy, 2024 saw the finalisation of the Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan (HHTRP). While the final version fell short of our expectations, our efforts strengthened the plan and generated overwhelming public support, with over 2,400 submissions calling for robust measures to protect this threatened species. We also continued to push for reforms in the mandates of Coillte and Bord na Móna, advocating for biodiversity restoration and climate action to be prioritized on public lands.

To close the year, we represented the Environmental Pillar at Nature COP16 in Cali, Colombia. While the negotiations made progress in recognizing the role of Indigenous peoples in conservation, the talks ultimately collapsed due to deep disagreements over biodiversity financing, forcing negotiators to reconvene in Rome in 2025.

The challenges ahead remain significant, but our achievements in 2024 demonstrate what together we have the power to make a difference. As we move forward, we remain committed to ensuring strong implementation of environmental policies, resisting rollbacks, and mobilizing public support for sustainable land use and nature restoration.

Top Left
Hen Harrier nesting with chicks

Top Right
The Environmental Pillar's Nature Restoration Law campaign was one of the most successful in Europe

Featured Publication

High-Level Recommendations for Funding Nature Restoration in Ireland

With the EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL) adopted by the European Council on 17th June 2024, the Irish Environmental Network and Natural Capital Ireland felt it is timely to grapple with the ‘how-tos’ of financing the implementation of Ireland’s National Restoration Plan (NRP), which is being formulated by Ireland’s National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Natural Capital Ireland (NCI) was commissioned by the Irish Environmental Network to deliver a report on high-level recommendations for funding nature restoration in Ireland. This project brought together a diverse group of subject matter experts from academia, business, environmental NGOs, farming, government departments, and semi-state bodies to workshop high-level recommendations for funding nature restoration, which are set out in this report.

Report’s Recommendations

High-Level Recommendations for Funding Nature Restoration in Ireland sets out a roadmap for funding nature and biodiversity restoration and conservation in Ireland.

Long-term thinking and long-term funding for projects is vital for nature restoration, the report finds. That’s according to a diverse group of experts from academia, business, environmental NGOs, farming, government departments, and semi-state bodies, assembled to workshop solutions to support nature restoration.

The implementation of the Nature Restoration Law, Climate Action Plan and Land Use Review will require

enduring and ongoing supports to enable landowners to implement sustainable land use management. Locking in funding to ensure projects continue into the future is the only way to ensure real impact, according to the report. The authors would like to see an overarching Roadmap for Nature Restoration to facilitate funded initiatives and build on past schemes which have seen successful outcomes but may not be guaranteed long-term support. Several such projects are praised in the report including the award-winning Burren LIFE Project and Roseate Tern LIFE project.

In the past, uncertainty around whether environmental schemes will last or prove beneficial has undermined trust among farmers. There must be political will and support for effective nature restoration to rebuild lost trust in agri-environmental schemes due to past issues, according to the report.

There needs to be accountability for delivering on nature restoration actions within various government departments or an independent Nature Restoration Agency to oversee action. At present, there is a siloed approach in our government and economic systems, despite every aspect of our society being underpinned by nature. This entails long-term and joined-up thinking. Mainstreaming nature-related targets across policy areas will take strong leadership.

Funding must be sustainable, scalable, ongoing and long-term with continuous monitoring and openly tracked progress. Commitment to nature restoration should not be adversely impacted by the political cycle, which is short-term, according to the report.

Continuous monitoring, reporting and built-in verification systems, as well as prompt and fair financial rewards are essential to the success of nature restoration plans. Investment is also needed to enforce existing regulations.

Download the report [here](#).

The report makes a number of other key recommendations:

- **Investment in building capacity and expertise** – More investment is needed in training, staffing, research and expertise for the coordination of an effective delivery of National Restoration Plan (NRP). The NPWS is working on the NRP for Ireland but requires more resources. A large and rapid investment in training and upskilling is needed, including in the short-term to recruit experts from abroad to facilitate rapid training here.
- **Incorporate education** – there is a need to incorporate education on biodiversity loss and nature restoration within our education system, from primary, secondary, through to third level. A graduate programme in practical nature restoration for ecologists (or other relevant skills), similar to an apprenticeship would be a good long-term action. On-the-ground learning is essential. This will allow students and graduates to consider different paths in their educational journey that they may not have considered before.
- **Scale up success** – Rapid scaling up of best-practice restoration projects with ongoing supports. Scaling up nature restoration requires well-designed pilot projects which can then be expanded. The implementation of the NRL, Climate Action Plan and Land Use Review require long-term support to enable landowners to implement sustainable land use management.
- **Mainstream biodiversity** – Invest in engagement and awareness raising. Nature restoration should be mainstreamed by a) embedding biodiversity and nature restoration in the general public awareness and b) clear messaging that the biodiversity loss and climate crises are inextricably linked and need to be addressed in a holistic way.



Above
Minister Malcolm Noonan and Fintan Kelly with the NCI Report

Left
High Level Recommendations for Funding Nature Restoration in Ireland Report

Member Testimonials

The Irish Environmental Network exists because of, and for, its members, who continued to demonstrate their expertise and commitment to their missions and values throughout their work in 2024.

Crann

Crann – Trees for Ireland expanded its nationwide reach to schools, local communities, Tidy Towns and corporates with the support of the IEN, government agencies, private and corporate donors.

Crann advocates for planting ‘the right trees, in the right places’ via presentations, Crann Magazine, networking with other groups/agencies on all tree related matters. We encourage our Members to get involved in local PPNs and SPCs.

Crann is honoured to have been invited to represent Ireland as an NGO at the UN, EU and Forest Europe meetings, contributing on climate action, Forests for Health and Green Jobs.

During the year, Crann organised:

- tree talks, guided woodland walks, photographic competition, calendar, symbolic tree plantings/tree planting events nationwide.
- Crann Easy Treesie project benefited from CSR volunteers.
- Eliza Lynch memorial project linking Ireland and Paraguay.
- Launched Brown Thomas Arnotts 10 year project.
- Giants Grove Project, Birr Phase II progressing.
- Launched new Crann website.
- General Public engagement, opinions/feedback via National Tree Week, National Biodiversity Week, Bloom, Festivals, social media.
- Crann Rep attended COP29.
- Held Crann Regional meeting, Mullingar, with guest speakers, Theme: ‘How can Crann and other like-minded organisations work together to promote tree growing?’
- Crann works for the greater good of our environment – by making a difference with the planting of trees, raising awareness and educating our young adults of the future.

crann.ie

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group

In 2024, we significantly expanded our stakeholder engagement, advocacy, and outreach activities, thanks to the core support of the Irish Environmental Network and other key funders.

We attended over a dozen high-level meetings with government departments and agencies, launched the DECC-funded MAREIRE project with BirdWatch Ireland and IEN, and contributed to policy development through 13 national submissions and extensive input on Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) planning.

Our All-Ireland Cetacean Stranding and Sighting Schemes has validated nearly 3,000 sightings of cetaceans — including the first North Atlantic right whale recorded in Ireland in over a century, and the first humpback whale ever recorded in the Shannon Estuary in November - as well as 388 validated strandings and trained 146 people to respond to live strandings.

We hosted our first Science Week supported by Research Ireland, ran our award-winning “Marine Biologist for a Day” programme during Heritage Week, and brought our Floating Classroom to 166 schoolchildren in the Shannon Estuary.

Membership was maintained at a record level of 1,000+, and we set up the IWDG Northern Ireland Local Group, reinforcing our nationwide efforts. With support from IEN, NPWS, local authorities, and other partners, IWDG continues to promote evidence-based marine conservation through science, education, and policy development across Ireland.

iwdg.ie



Above

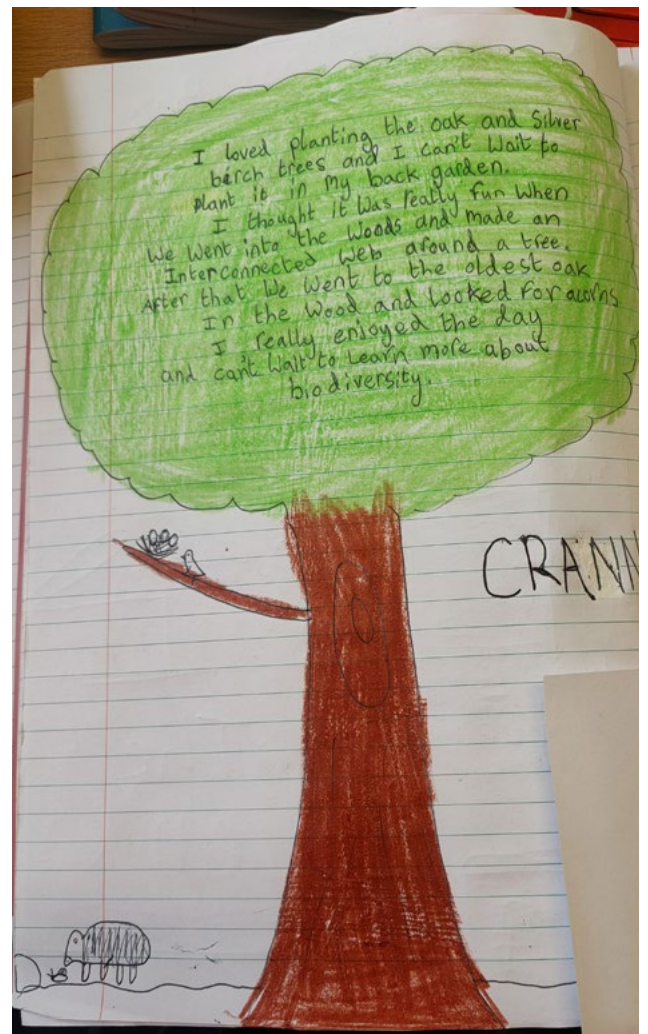
Crann Woodland Walk Belvedere Mullingar, hosted by Diarmuid McAree and PJ Fitzpatrick with participants during National Biodiversity Week.

Right

Ballyhass NS Cork, Pupil's report on Crann School Visit by James Lowry, Crann Schools Coordinator

Below

Humpback Whale (#136) in the Shannon Estuary with Kilrush in the background.





The IAF worked closely with our collaborating organisations to provide agroforestry training courses, host farm walks, and produce a case study-based video series that highlighted the benefits of integrating trees into a range of farming systems.

Bat Conservation Ireland

The summer months tend to be very hectic at Bat Conservation Ireland as we run a number of bat monitoring schemes and other projects with the help of hundreds of volunteers. We also tend to be inundated with requests for bat talks and walks. In the past, we were not able to provide many of these due to lack of capacity.

To address this gap, in early 2024, our newly appointed Projects Co-ordinator Karen Healy trained in a panel of bat educators who became members of 'The Bat Panel'. As a result of this endeavour, we were able to run over 40 bat talks and walks in 2024, thus making a significant contribution to improved public awareness. The development of the bat panel was funded by The Heritage Council's Heritage Organisations Support Fund.

We also continued to develop a new scheme to track trends in two of our most elusive bat species, whiskered and Natterer's bats. This cross-border scheme involves volunteers walking along mapped routes in woodlands at night while recording bat echolocation calls using a bat detector. The results will help us determine how these species are faring. This scheme is funded by a number of local authorities, the NPWS and NIEA and we had great collaboration from other organisations such as Coillte, The National Trust and The Woodlands Trust.

In 2024 we also celebrated our 20th anniversary and ran a series of events, such as a 'Self-care for Volunteers' workshop, online webinars, a bat swarming event at Dunmore Cave in Kilkenny, and The Bat Ball in the Hardiman Hotel in Galway in November. We also launched the Aoibheann Gaughran Award at this event, in memory of this talented scientist, conservationist and member of Dublin Bat Group. Dr Kate McAney was presented the award in recognition of her years of advocacy and bat conservation work.

We also focussed on gardeners and homeowners with Phase I of a new project Gardening for Bats. This project arose from a question we are often asked 'What can I do to support bats?'. In 2024 we filmed a number of short videos illustrating features that bats use in a garden, how to choose plants that support bats, and easy techniques that can be used that help boost insects and bats. These can be viewed on our YouTube channel and GardeningForBats.com website. This project was funded by The Heritage Council.

batconservationireland.org

Irish Agroforestry Forum

In 2024, with core funding support from the Irish Environmental Network and project funding from DAFM, the Irish Agroforestry Forum (IAF) delivered a wide-reaching programme of training, education, and outreach that significantly advanced the visibility and uptake of agroforestry across the island of Ireland.

We worked closely with our collaborating organisations to provide agroforestry training courses, host farm walks, and produce a case study-based video series that highlighted the benefits of integrating trees into a range of farming systems.

We launched the Agroforestry Academy, an online learning hub featuring expert-led modules and farmer-produced content, with organic-specific material added through our CROFT project. IAF also created detailed fact sheets, illustrative agroforestry graphics, and a DAFM agroforestry supports booklet, while also producing podcasts and webinars exploring themes such as silvopasture, forest gardening, and tree integration, for biodiversity and agricultural enterprise support.

In support of longer-term change, we developed educational materials for schools and made a formal submission to the Department of Education recommending the inclusion of agroforestry and forestry in the new Climate subject Curriculum. We also delivered targeted training for foresters, including regional training days and technical webinars, with a strong focus on enterprise-specific system design and support scheme navigation.

IAF Reps are also on the board of Impact Positive, European Agroforestry Federation, CBE JU Working Group on Primary Producers and the Forestry Strategy Consultative Committee and a number of advisory groups including FORADVISE and Scéim na nÉan.

Thanks to IEN's support, IAF is able to play a significant role in building a climate-resilient, nature-rich farming future.

irishagroforestry.ie

Above
Farm walk at Kevin Keaveney's
Farm, Athenry

Bat Conservation Ireland
swarming event at
Dunmore Cave





Friends of the Earth

For our 50th anniversary we hosted an Education Day and a Climate Action conference featuring farming communities, climate justice advocates, and politicians.

Through Local, European and General Elections, we mobilised people to engage candidates to make climate a priority.

We also welcomed two campaign successes: School Photovoltaic Programme launched, providing schools with free solar panels, and a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers was introduced.

During the year, we:

- Launched our Data Centres Campaign calling for a moratorium and organised significant UCC research on data centre impacts.
- Progressed our 'Warm Homes for All' Campaign with a focus on tenants and led research with Bohemians FC on community engagement.
- Supported many local groups from Young Friends of the Earth to B-OLD Climate Action, with 'Cuppa for Climate' meetings being a launchpad for communities.
- Educational activities included: Sowing Seeds for Healing Justice retreat, Active Hope workshops, Climate Change Extractivism and Colonialism training, and Learning Hub Events.
- Joined with Cairde supporting empowerment of Roma to take action on challenges faced by their communities, from discrimination to energy poverty.
- To mark COP29, jointly coordinated a major photo shoot calling for a fast, fair and funded fossil fuel phase-out.
- Continued to show up in solidarity across struggles from housing to Palestine.

friendsoftheearth.ie

Streamscapes

In 2024, StreamScapes focused on strengthening organisational capacity, enhancing governance, and deepening our commitment to providing high-quality educational programming.

A major milestone was the appointment of a new Board of Directors, chaired by Jeanette Liddle, with environmental leaders Jeremy Wates and Dolf D'hondt providing strategic guidance. Alongside CEO Maggie McColgan, this renewed leadership brought fresh energy and direction to our organisation.

The year also saw increased community engagement through events at the StreamSchool in Coomhola and the publication of three localised environmental booklets for Tracton, Rosscarbery, and Clonakilty. In partnership with LAWPRO, StreamScapes supported the Blue Dot Programme, and with support from NPWS produced The Bog Revealed, an educational resource on peatland ecology.

Beyond education and community engagement, StreamScapes contributed to national environmental advocacy through Fair Seas, SWAN, and the Environmental Pillar. Overall, 2024 was a transformative year marked by growth, community connection, and impactful efforts to safeguard Ireland's aquatic heritage.

streamscapes.ie

Above

Aaron, Clare and Ré
at the Cost of Living
March 2024



Above + Right
 StreamScapes CEO,
 Maggie McColgan,
 exploring indicator
 species with
 participants at the
 Ballydehob Summer
 Festival

Below
 World Wetlands Day:
 StreamScapes hosts
 a bog walk for World
 Wetlands Day.





Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

The Wildlife Crime Conference, held on 17th October 2024 at the Johnstown Estate, Co. Meath, brought together key stakeholders to address the growing threat of wildlife crime across Ireland. Organised by Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland (WRI) in partnership with the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Ireland, the event served as a national platform for cross-sectoral collaboration, knowledge exchange, and strategic planning.

The conference featured contributions from law enforcement agencies, government departments, ecologists, veterinary practitioners, legal experts, NGOs, and frontline wildlife rehabilitators. Topics included enforcement challenges, legislative frameworks, forensic investigation, habitat protection, and the role of social media in both reporting and facilitating wildlife crime.

A core theme throughout the day was the urgent need for coordinated responses, enhanced training, and improved reporting mechanisms to strengthen Ireland's capacity to prevent, detect, and prosecute wildlife offences. The event also highlighted the wider ecological, ethical, and societal impacts of wildlife crime and the importance of integrating conservation, welfare, and legal priorities.

The conference concluded with a shared commitment to ongoing cooperation, data sharing, and public engagement to tackle wildlife crime and safeguard Ireland's natural heritage.

We envision a world where people recognise both the intrinsic value of wildlife and that protecting biodiversity is fundamental to life on earth - Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

wri.ie

Hedgerows Ireland

Hedgerows Ireland were represented on the Board of the IEN and the Steering Committee of the Environmental Pillar.

With over 15,000 followers on social media, we ran nearly 68 events across the length and breadth of the Island. We continued our wide-ranging project with Fingal County Council providing a practical template for future projects with local authorities.

Our Hedge Code continued to gain followers in all provinces. 2024 marked our 20th Anniversary and we celebrated the occasion with a three day event. A Conference on Friday 4th October themed: "Hedgerows: Winning Climate & Biodiversity Battles", at the Keadeen Hotel with over 100 delegates attending.

A wide range of hedgerow topics were discussed with leading experts from home and abroad, including Hedgerow Management with Nigel Adams and Lex Roelveld, and Hedgerow Produce with Darina Allen. This was followed on Saturday 5th October by our annual All-Ireland Hedge Laying Championships at Milland House Stud, attended by in excess of 500 people, watching national and international practitioners. Sunday 6th had a members visit to the legendary Kildangan stud, followed by lunch in the Keadeen Hotel. A memorable weekend in a memorable year.

hedgerows.ie

Above
 Winning Climate and
 Biodiversity Battles held
 last October in Co. Kildare

Right

Delegates at the WRI 20th Anniversary conference

Below

Irish Stoat



Vincent Wildlife Trust

In 2024, Vincent Wildlife Trust continued its conservation focus on three Irish species: lesser horseshoe bat, pine marten, and Irish stoat. 2024 marked the final stage of the Irish Stoat Citizen Science Survey — our biggest project yet — focused on this unique and elusive animal, found only in Ireland and the Isle of Man.

Running from February 2023 to February 2025, the survey was delivered in partnership with National Biodiversity Data Centre, University of Galway and Centre of Environmental Data and Records, and was supported by Irish Environmental Network, National Parks and Wildlife Service and The Heritage Council.

Members of the public were invited to report stoat sightings, which resulted in a collection of 1,080 records over two years. After expert review, 816 records were confirmed as stoat, nearly five times more than the previous two years. These records helped create habitat suitability maps, showing where stoats live and where they might be present but unrecorded.

This project demonstrates how citizen science can help address significant knowledge gaps and inform conservation efforts. In 2026, we'll team up with Manx Wildlife Trust to launch a similar project on the Isle of Man, helping us understand Irish stoat distribution across its full range.

vincentwildlife.ie



Funding Statement

Justin Byrne, Chief Operating Officer



In 2024, the Irish Environmental Network had another record year for income with a total income of €3,810,353. This was thanks to increased funding from Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) and the extension of our Fairseas project for a further three-year phase. We also had continued funding from the DECC for our MARÉIRE Project.

Our main source of funding is DECC and we received €3,127,000 to cover all of the IEN and Environmental Pillar projects and supported activities. This includes Coalition 2030 and the Environmental Law implementation Group.

We were able to increase our Core Funding to member groups to the highest level ever (€1,600,000). This is the most important funding we provide, as it is given as unrestricted funds. Our members use it to support their core activities and office/administration costs. It is almost impossible to obtain funding for these activities, so our Board and Secretariat prioritise this funding line when engaging with the minister for the Environment and his officials.

We were very happy to extend our Fairseas Project for a further three-year term. This is a great vote of confidence in the project from the American Philanthropic organisations who have provided the funding to make this possible. More details of the project can be found [here](#).

We finished the year with an overspend of €350,000. This is due to extending the Fairseas project and the funding for this has been received since the year end.

Approximately 75% of our funding grant is distributed to our members. The remainder is used to cover salaries and office expenses.

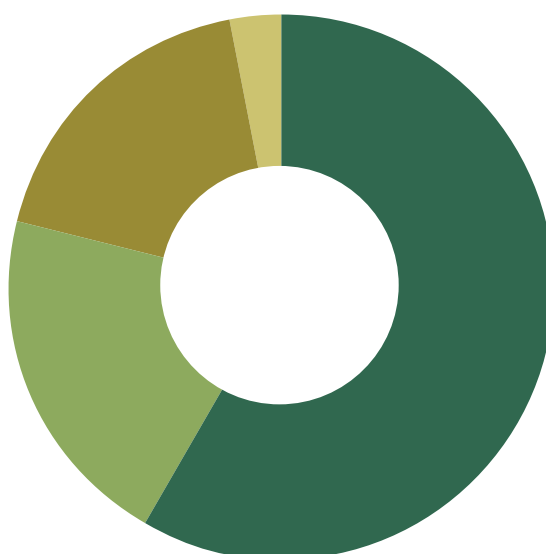
The IEN remains in a very healthy position, and it has the capacity to support our growing membership. Our Secretariat and board will continue to work with DECC to press for funding for our members and our work.

Some highlights of the 2024 audited accounts can be found on page 30 of this report. The full accounts are available on www.ien.ie.

Main Outgoings

Core Funding.....	€1,612,985
Staff Salaries.....	€505,583
Pillar North / South cooperation + projects, agriculture + policy, travel.....	€90,305
Rent, rates, office & professional fees.....	€84,444
Meetings with government.....	€49,075
Biodiversity Week.....	€42,942
IEN Training.....	€42,807
Digitisation fund.....	€39,167
Policy submissions.....	€35,500
IEN-MPA Project costs.....	€27,990

Expenditure



Core Funding
€1,612,985

Other Funding
€556,234

Staff Salaries
€505,583

Establishment Costs
€84,444

Approximately 75% of our funding grant is distributed to our members. The remainder is used to cover salaries and office expenses.

Statement of Financial Activities

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	Restricted Funds 2023 €	Total Funds 2024 €	Restricted Funds 2023 €	Total Funds 2023 €
Income					
Company activities					
—Grants from governments and other co-funders	4.1	3,299,846	3,299,846	3,089,070	3,089,070
Other income	4.2	174	174	9	9
Total Income		3,300,020	3,300,020	3,089,079	3,089,079
Expenditure					
Company activities	5.1	3,649,693	3,649,693	3,099,929	3,099,929
(Deficit) Surplus		(349,673)	(349,673)	(10,850)	(10,850)
Transfers between funds		—	—	—	—
Net movement in funds for the financial year		(349,673)	(349,673)	(10,850)	(10,850)
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds beginning of the year	15	1,888,487	1,888,487	1,889,337	1,889,337
Total funds at the end of the year		1,538,814	1,538,814	1,888,487	1,888,487

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year. All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets	9	8,040	2,208
Current Assets			
Debtors	10	3,674	4,164
Cash at bank and in hand	11	2,069,454	2,727,785
	5.1	2,073,128	2,731,949
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	12	(542,354)	(845,670)
Net current assets		1,530,774	1,886,279
Total assets less current liabilities	15	1,538,814	1,888,487
Funds			
Restricted trust funds		1,538,814	1,888,487
Total funds		1,538,814	1,888,487

Statement of Cash Flows

for the financial year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 €	2023 €
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net movement in funds		(349,673)	(10,850)
Adjustments for:		4,546	3,603
Depreciation		(174)	(9)
Interest receivable and similar income			
		(345,301)	(7,256)
Movements in working capital:			
Movement in debtors		490	21,493
Movement in creditors		(303,316)	838,106
Cash (used in) / generated from operations		(648,127)	852,343
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest received		74	9
Payments to acquire tangible assets		(10,378)	—
Net cash (used in) / generated from investment activities		(10,204)	9
Net (decrease) / increase in cash and cash equivalents		(658,331)	852,352
Cash and cash equivalents at at the beginning of the year		2,727,785	1,875,433
Cash and cash equivalents at at the end of the year	11	2,069,454	2,727,785

Supplementary Information Relating to the Financial Statements: Operating Statement

for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	2024 €	2023 €
Income	3,299,846	3,089,070
Expenses		
Wages and salaries	534,441	603,434
Social security costs	59,013	66,542
Staff defined contribution pension costs	24,115	23,613
IEN: Training	23,673	12,972
IEN: International NGO meetings	32,340	23,482
IEN: Participation Government Bodies	9,750	19,800
IEN: Policy Subs	45,055	35,000
IEN: Fundraising Capacity Building	18,942	18,471
IEN: Office expenses	43,330	16,287
IEN: Digitization Fund	39,168	45,292
IEN: Agriculture Grants	—	17,200
Ploughing, Electric Picnic, Festivals	9,049	10,694
Biodiversity week	42,942	44,137
Pillar expenses	325,080	153,915
ELIG expenses	190,084	43,979
Coalition 2030	33,545	168,616
Core Funding	1,562,985	1,210,058
Core Funding Capacity Building	50,000	85,652
Rent payable	7,163	7,025
Rates	2,219	2,187
Insurance	2,163	1,980
MPA (Fairseas) Project	341,434	429,48
MARÉIRE costs	203,747	—
Telecoms and internet	21,219	33,061
Directors Expenses	—	399
Legal and professional	14,169	14,169
Auditor's remuneration	8,648	7,011
Bank charges	364	335
General expenses	(1)	1,531
Depreciation	4,546	3,603
	3,649,693	3,099,929
Miscellaneous Income		
Bank	174	9
Net Deficit	(349,673)	(10,850)

The supplementary information does not form part of the audited financial statements.

Irish Environmental Network

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