The Irish Environmental Network

Annual Report 2025



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Irish Environmental Network

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Chair, Nuala Madigan reflects on her role and the many highlights of 2025 including the IEN's role in the Nature Restoration Law, Peace Plus Funding Programmes, Biodiversity Week and the many collaborative projects and training events for IEN members.

5 The Board

The Board of Directors has a key role in ensuring the IEN is adhering to principles of good governance. During 2025, 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.

6 Our Work

Our work in 2025 has involved strengthening connections between environmental representatives across the country, supporting our members in their work to protect and enhance their environment.

14 Our Staff

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.







16 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.

20 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 2025.

24 Funding Statement — Joe Boshell, Head of Finance and Operations

In 2025, the Irish Environmental Network had another record year for income with a total income of €4,727,987.

25 Financial Statements

Foreword
Nuala Madigan, Chair of IEN Board of Directors



It has been my privilege to hold the position of Chairperson of the IEN Board of Directors throughout 2025 and for this opportunity to share the growth, operations and finances of the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) over the past twelve months.

The IEN is a network of national environmental non-government organisations with members working both individually and together to protect and enhance the environment, and to place environmental issues centre stage in Ireland and internationally. Working together, we develop synergies through sharing knowledge, skills, strengths, and experience. The network also acts on behalf of its members to secure core and other funding for their activities.

To follow are some highlights from the work of the IEN in 2025:

EU Nature Restoration Law
Following the success of a members campaign coordinated by the IEN to see the Nature Restoration Law through the final European Council vote in 2024 IEN members contributed to the development of the National Nature Restoration Plan both through participation at the Leaders Forum and the Independent Advisory Committee.

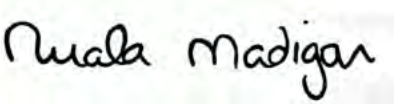
PEACE PLUS Funding Programmes
The IEN and the Northern Ireland Environment link (NIEL) were awarded funding for two all-island/cooperation projects entitled CORE and CHANGE. Beginning in 2026, both projects will deliver targeted training, mentoring, and capacity-building to members seeking to enhance their cross-border engagement.

National Biodiversity Week
With funding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Biodiversity Week, coordinated by the IEN, is growing from strength to strength each year. In 2025 over 300 events were held across Ireland.

Annual Gathering
In December the IEN coordinated a winter conference for members from both the IEN and the Public Participation Network. This was the first time these two networks had come together offering an opportunity to explore themes including establishing volunteer networks, moral and ethical dilemmas of using AI and collaboration and action for climate.

Supporting Members Campaigns
In 2025 the IEN launched the Stop Mercosur social media and ran the #HandsOffNature campaigns. The IEN also continued to host the Fair Seas, Coalition 2030 and Maréire projects in partnership with members.

In 2025 the IEN welcomed representatives from member groups; Irish Seedsavers Association, Global Action Plan, VOICE Ireland and Green Economy Foundation to the IEN Board of Directors. I take this opportunity to thank the Directors of the IEN who have shared their experience and given their time to guiding the work and ensuring good governance of the organisation. Under the leadership of CEO, Karen Ciesielski, the IEN staff continued to grow, in 2025, with the introduction of a new Membership and Network Assistant. I thank all staff for their work and commitment throughout 2025 and wish Justin Byrne, IEN's Chief Operation Officer well in his retirement.



Nuala Madigan
Chair of IEN board of directors

The Board



Elaine Bradley



Liam Breslin



Donna Cooney



Oisín Coghlan



Maria Cullen



Gary Dempsey



Shane Downer



Nikki Keeling



Tad Kirakowski



Nuala Madigan



Elaine Nevin



Dermot Tynan



Hans Zomer

The Board of Directors has a key role in ensuring the IEN is adhering to principles of good governance. During 2025, 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 2025

Elaine Nevin (Retired Oct 2025), Donna Cooney (Retired Oct 2025), Liam Breslin (Retired Oct 2025), Oisín Coghlan (Retired Oct 2025), Hans Zomer (Appointed Oct 2025), Elaine Bradley (Appointed Oct 2025), Tad Kirakowski (Appointed Oct 2025), Nikki Keeling (Appointed Oct 2025), Maria Cullen, Nuala Madigan (Chair), Shane Downer, Dermot Tynan (company Secretary), Gary Dempsey (Treasurer)

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 2025, covering Membership, Human Resources, Governance and Finance, respectively.

The work of each sub-committee 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 2025 has involved strengthening connections between environmental representatives across the country, supporting our members in their work to protect and enhance their environment.



Fair Seas team at UNOC in France



Biodiversity Week 2025 launch event

On the Ground

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

Work in 2025 included hosting three in-person events and five webinars that covered topics of interest to local PPN Representatives and groups, and allowed for networking opportunities between local and national groups, individuals and PPN representatives.

The inaugural Winter Conference was held in Portlaoise which saw IEN and PPN members come together to hear from speakers of interest and learn from each other. Other in-person gatherings included the Workshops for a Wilder World event in Cavan which launched National Biodiversity Week and proved such a popular event that it was repeated in Monaghan later in the year.

374

374 events organised by IEN member groups for National Biodiversity Week

Other work with the PPNs included verifying new environmental groups joining their PPN, streamlining the process for new groups joining, collecting and sharing resources that are of use to PPN Representatives, 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; a celebration of Irish Wildlife with free public events nationwide. In 2025 the week grew to host 374 events organised by IEN member groups and Biodiversity Officers across the country.

Coalition 2030

Throughout 2025, Coalition 2030 continued to strengthen its role as Ireland's leading civil society alliance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), advocating for stronger political leadership, greater policy coherence and increased ambition in delivering the 2030 Agenda. The Coalition focused on ensuring the SDGs remained central to national policymaking following the formation of a new Government, engaging extensively with ministers, officials, Oireachtas committees and political representatives. Key advocacy included submissions to Programme for Government negotiators, engagement with the SDG Unit, participation in the OECD Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development process, and evidence to the Joint Oireachtas Committees on EU Affairs and Fisheries and Maritime Affairs.

A major focus of the year was advancing long-term governance through the Coalition's campaign for a Commissioner for Future Generations. Building on previous work, the Coalition relaunched the campaign during the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), hosting a high-profile political and media event at Buswells Hotel with cross-party political support, youth representatives and Coalition members. The campaign generated significant national media coverage and reinforced calls for the Government to progress the Future Generations Bill as a practical mechanism for embedding long-term thinking, intergenerational justice and accountability into public policy.

Coalition 2030 also maintained a strong international presence throughout the year. The Coalition was represented at the UN High-Level Political Forum in New York, where it welcomed the renewed global commitment to the SDGs while highlighting the importance of multilateral cooperation at a time of increasing geopolitical uncertainty. Meetings with Government representatives, including Minister Darragh O'Brien, provided opportunities to discuss Ireland's SDG implementation, the Future Generations Bill and preparations for Ireland's upcoming EU Presidency. Domestically, the Coalition used SDG Week and the lead-up to Budget 2026 to call for greater investment in achieving the Goals, urging Government to explicitly link budgetary decisions to Ireland's SDG commitments.

Internally, the Coalition continued to grow its membership and strengthen member engagement through plenary meetings, a small grants programme, collaborative policy development and preparations for a new national public awareness campaign on the SDGs. The Steering Committee oversaw the extension of core funding, strengthened engagement with government departments and developed plans to maximise opportunities presented by Ireland's forthcoming EU Presidency. The year also marked a period of organisational transition, with Coordinator David Rossiter concluding his tenure in October and arrangements put in place to recruit a new Coordinator to build on the Coalition's growing influence and continue driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fair Seas 2025

Fair Seas is a coalition of Ireland's leading environmental nongovernmental 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 campaign for ambitious and robust legislation and secure a network of effective, well-managed marine protected areas.

Phase 2 of the Fair Seas campaign commenced in January 2025 with funding from Oceans 5, the Becht Family Charitable Trust, and Blue Nature Alliance. Over the course of the year, the campaign built public momentum, strengthened political engagement, successfully influenced national and EU policy debates, and has become the go to civil society marine conservation organisation for media and policy makers alike.

84,000

Fair Seas has garnered over 84,000 signatures advocating for MPAs

Throughout the year, Fair Seas made six policy submissions to public consultations, participated in multiple marine national biodiversity stakeholder fora and strengthened the movement through the organisation of, or engagement in, a record number of community events around Ireland, participated in multiple high level political meetings, and presented in the Dáil on World Ocean Day 2025. Fair Seas has garnered 84,000+ online signatures to advocate for marine protected areas and to call on the Irish government to enact strong MPA legislation.

In a significant and welcome development, in December 2025, the Government Cabinet approved the decision to draft a revised General Scheme for new MPA legislation. The Bill will be brought forward as an amendment to the Marine Planning Act (2021) as opposed to standalone legislation. Fair Seas will continue to campaign with allies to ensure that the legislation is ambitious, sufficiently robust, and will deliver for nature. The campaign is strategically positioned to influence the legislative process, mobilise public and political support, and hold the Government accountable for achieving the 30x30 target of protecting 30% of Ireland's seas by 2030. During 2025, Fair Seas media coverage reached an estimated audience of more than 9 million people with more than 60 interviews, articles, and features. The equivalent advertising value is estimated at approximately €347,000.

Thank you to the coalition members, including the Irish Wildlife Trust, BirdWatch Ireland, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Sustainable Water



Below Winner of the Biodiversity Photographer of the Year competition: Four Spotted Chaser by Lorraine Kelly.



Biodiversity Week
2025 launch event



Network, Streamscapes, Irish Environ–mental Network, and Coastwatch. Fair Seas is hosted by the Irish Environmental Network and includes 5 core staff, with additional part-time capacity from some coalition partners.

MARÉIRE

The MARÉIRE project, funded by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, is coordinated by Jenny Bortoluzzi with team members within the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and Birdwatch Ireland.

The project aims to be a unifying voice for IEN member groups in the context of offshore renewable energy development. By engaging early in the process, the project aims to ensure biodiversity and the environment are considered in all phases of the process. With a focus on advocacy and finding a balance between mitigating the climate crisis and protecting biodiversity, MARÉIRE provides expert, scientific and evidence-based information while recognising its diverse audience.

In 2025, MARÉIRE, working with Brian Byrne from Lands Design Studio to develop their brand image, logo and website where they now host all outputs from their work, post open opportunities and share upcoming events.

In October, they published their first report “Identifying Knowledge Gaps on the Impacts of Offshore Renewable Energy on Biodiversity at Sea”, written by Howell Marine Consultants with contributions from the MARÉIRE team and some of our members. The report was followed and accompanied by a workshop bringing together academics and eNGO members to work together on a prioritisation exercise of the identified knowledge gaps. The workshop was really well received with great feedback, networking and resulting collaborations among attendees. The report from the workshop is now available to read on the MARÉIRE website.

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MARÉIRE submitted responses to 22 consultations and planning applications in the UK and Ireland

During the year, the project also opened two rounds of grant calls and awarded eight small research grants, two postgraduate research grants and issued five tenders for specific topics. A majority of the grants awarded were to, or in partnership with, IEN member groups —building capacity within our network to engage with the topics of ORE and marine biodiversity.

Individually or as a team, Rochelle Strekker, Stephen Comerford and Jenny submitted responses or contributed to submissions to 22 consultations and planning applications, in Ireland and the UK. The whole team also continued to engage with government staff and state bodies through a range of forums and on a range of topics including Phase 1 projects, DMAPs, the NRL, fisheries and other maritime activities, national and EU legislation, MPAs and more. They also continued to engage with industry and academia and disseminate knowledge back to IEN members through attendance at events and conferences, running and participating in webinars, contributing to research and workshops.

Above MARÉIRE Prioritising research for Offshore Renewable Energy and Marine Biodiversity in Ireland Workshop



Biodiversity Photographer of the Year
Winner of the Biodiversity Photographer of the Year competition is Four Spotted Chaser by Lorraine Kelly. The judges were impressed by the detail of the subject and the excellent crisp and clear composition, detail of the subject and the photographic technique.

First Place in the Ocean category was Harbour Anemones by Daniel Fildes. Judge Jack O'Donovan Trá said the photo shows the magical world that lies just below any pier, jetty or harbour in Ireland. "The careful framing of this photograph, which looks up towards the surface from the darker deep water, adds to the sense of wonder and curiosity at these odd-looking creatures that can be found in the most common places."

And huge thanks to our judges 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.

The All-island Environment
The island of Ireland is a single biogeographic unit with shared landscapes, water sources, flora and fauna. We are in the midst of a climate and biodiversity crisis on the island and both jurisdictions face similar challenges in addressing these crises.

Protecting this common environment is dependent on coherent policy-making, high standards and regulations and enforcement on both sides of the border. Increasing cross border cooperation and policy-making provides a real opportunity to improve the environment on an all-island basis.

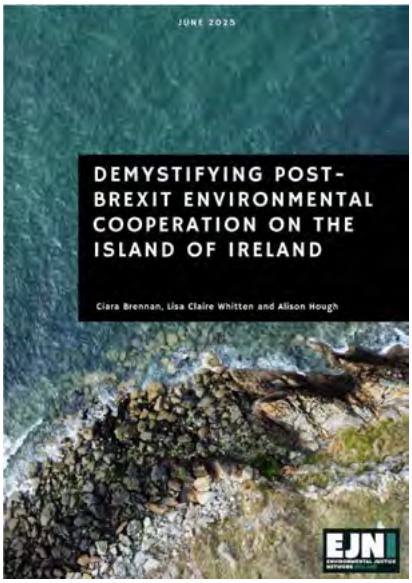
The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit) threatens this cooperation and shared standards and thus presents a significant risk to the all-island environmental integrity of the island of Ireland.

The IEN published a report Demystifying post-Brexit environmental cooperation on the island of Ireland.

This report provided in-depth review of the complex legal and political developments which have occurred post Brexit which are relevant to all-island/cross-border cooperation on the environment on the island of Ireland can be accessed **here.**

The IEN also was awarded the two PeacePlus projects in 2025, with both due to begin in 2026:

1. Cross-border Opportunities for a Resilient Environment (CORE) Project
The CORE Project (Cross-border Opportunities for a Resilient Environment)



Top Winner of the Biodiversity Photographer of the Year Ocean category: Harbour Anemones by Daniel Fildes

Above Report Demystifying post-Brexit environmental cooperation on the island of Ireland.

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is a cross-border initiative funded under PEACEPLUS, focused on strengthening environmental governance, institutional capacity, and collaboration across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Led by the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) in partnership with Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL), the project supports environmental NGOs, public agencies, and communities through training, knowledge exchange, pilot projects, and a digital knowledge hub.

2. Collaborative Horizons for All-Island Nature and Governance Enhancement (CHANGE) Project
The Collaborative Horizons for All-island Nature and Governance Enhancement (CHANGE) project is a cross-border initiative designed to strengthen environmental governance and cooperation in response to increasing regulatory divergence and shared ecological challenges in a post-Brexit context.

Delivered in partnership by Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) and the Irish Environmental Network (IEN), the project supports collaboration, evidence-led policy development, and capacity-building among environmental organisations, public bodies, and communities across Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Winter Conference
There was a fantastic turnout, great conversations, wonderful engagement, networking & sharing ideas at the IEN Winter Conference in Midlands Park Hotel Portlaoise in December.

It was a wonderful opportunity for national and local groups from across the country to meet, learn from our speakers on a variety of topics. Delegates heard about local successes of the Laois Public Participation Network Climate Action Project and the Abbeyleix Bog Project. They helped shape the work of the IEN with a strategic planning session and learned more about establishing and developing a volunteer network in their organisation. There was also a session which explored the moral and ethical dilemmas of using AI.

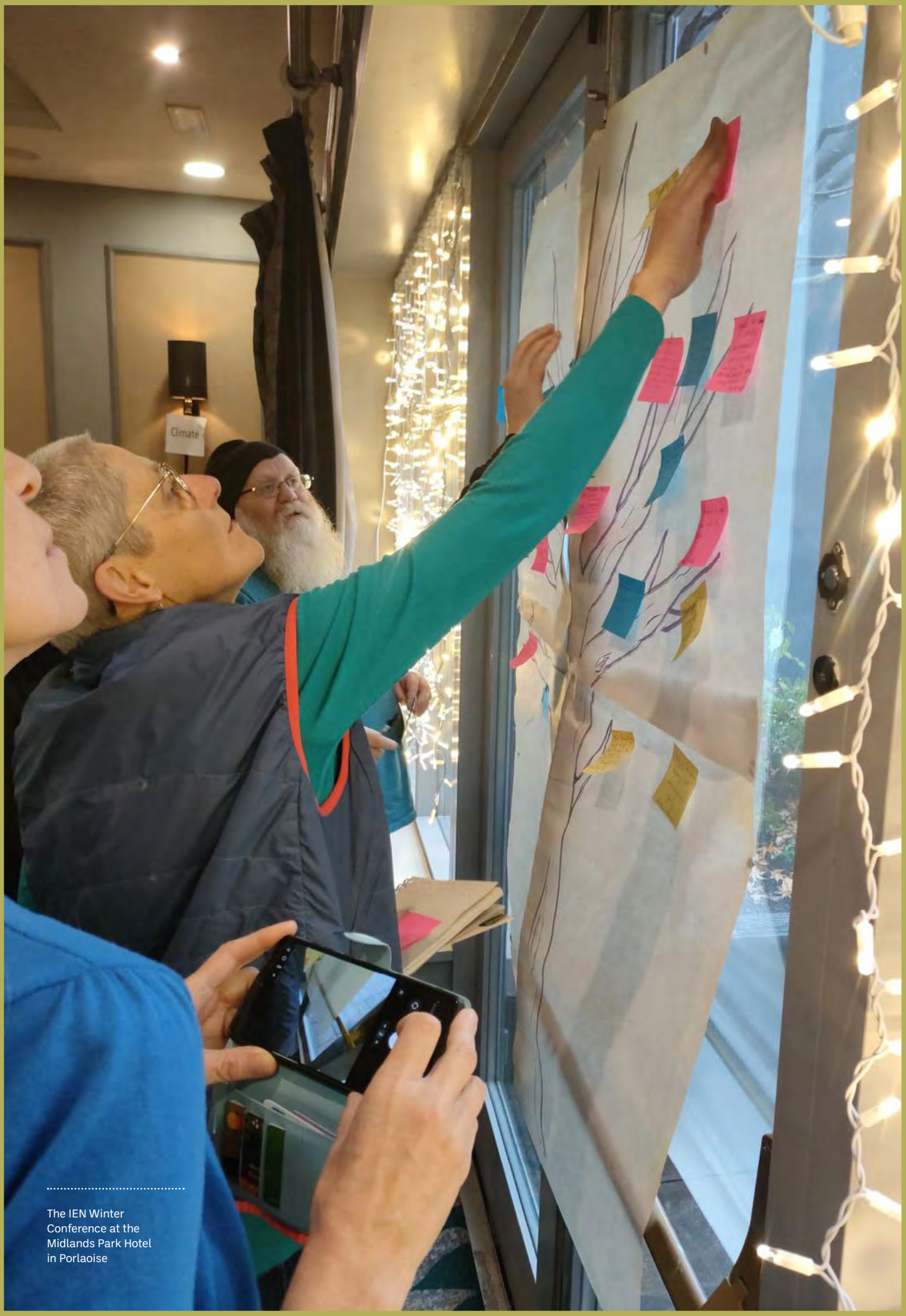
Justin Byrne
In 2025, we also said goodbye to chief operating officer Justin Byrne after 15 years with the network. Justin was a fantastic colleague who was always kind and generous with his time and wisdom. The esteem in which he was held was evidenced by the fantastic turnout at the event to mark his leaving the network.



Top and Right Justin Byrne speaking at his leaving event in 2025

"Justin was a fantastic colleague who was always kind and generous with his time and wisdom."

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The IEN Winter Conference at the Midlands Park Hotel in Porlaoise

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.



Alanagh Tennanty
Senior Operations Officer

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.



Dónal Griffin
Fair Seas
Campaign Coordinator

Dónal is the campaign coordinator for the Fair Seas Campaign. With a strong background in marine biology and ecology, Dónal 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 communications and campaigns in 2018, and has since worked with many large international environmental coalitions and campaigns across Europe.



Ciaran Brennan
Head of Communications

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
Senior Agriculture and Land Use 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
Head of Policy and Advocacy

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
PPN and Local Environmental Networks Liaison 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.



Claire Knightley
Fair Seas Finance and Reporting Assistant

Claire is the Finance and Reporting Assistant for Fair Seas. With over five years of experience in both corporate and nonprofit environments, she brings a detail-driven approach to managing financial and reporting data. She is dedicated to ensuring that Fair Seas is supported by clear, accurate financial information and efficient operations, while respecting planetary boundaries.



Amy Dugdale
Membership and Networking Assistant

Amy Dugdale was hired as Membership and Networking Assistant in May 2025. She plays a key role in the IEN's mission to facilitate, support and build capacity among the network of eNGOs by assisting in the development and coordination of member engagement and training activities and administering the annual IEN membership application process.

Irish Environmental Network

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.



Left Meeting with Minister Jack Chambers

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 2025 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:

- Expanding the number of Policy and Advocacy hubs from five to six. The Hubs provide spaces and a structure for members to collaborate on policy development, advocacy strategies and advocacy and campaigning activities. There are six Hubs arranged around thematic areas - Biodiversity and Nature Protection; Land use (incorporating forestry and agriculture); Climate Action and Energy; Circular and Wellbeing Economy; Planning and the Marine. They collaborated to propose a number of joint projects which will be run in 2026.
- Meeting with EU Commissioner Jessika Roswall in Dublin to discuss a number of issues in relation to sustainability and resilience, including Nitrates Derogation; Simplification/ Deregulation; Marine Environment (MPA) legislation; EU Nature Restoration Law Implementation; and the Circular Economy.
- Campaigning against European Commission plans to water down protection of health and environment and give an easier pass for toxic pesticides.
- PEACEPLUS CHANGE project launched to strengthen cross-border environmental cooperation.
- Responding to Budget 2026: Budget 2026 is a standstill budget which will not deliver the transformational transition needed for climate action **Budget 2026 delivers little for climate action–Environmental Pillar**
- Meeting with Minister Thomas Byrne about Ireland's upcoming EU Presidency where the Environmental Pillar proposed "resilience" as a theme, highlighted the areas of EU law where we have to get our house in order beforehand, and discussed key files Ireland will be managing, like the Budget, for sustainable agriculture, for nature restoration and for civil society.

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The Pillar expanded the number of Policy and Advocacy hubs to six. They collaborated to propose a number of joint projects which will be run in 2026.



- Continuing the campaign to stop the EU-Mercosur deal.

- Meeting Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Services, Reform and Digitalisation to discuss the need to prioritise funding for nature restoration, marine protected areas and climate action in Budget 2026.

- Responding to the gutting of nature from the Infrastructure, Climate & Nature Fund to finance transport, energy and water infrastructure projects in the National Development Plan **Environmental Pillar shocked and alarmed at gutting of nature from the Infrastructure, Climate & Nature Fund in NDP—The Environmental Pillar.**

- Attending **#EuropeanMaritimeDay** in Cork with colleagues from **#FairSeas** and meeting with EU Commissioner Costas Kadis to discuss issues such as Marine Protected Areas, conservation of the marine environment and supporting coastal communities.

- Planning a specific workstream in relation to the upcoming Irish EU Presidency of the EU which takes place in the latter half of 2026 **Request for Tenders: EU Presidency Advocacy Support - The Environmental Pillar.**

- Contributing a number of opinion pieces on environmental issues to the Irish Examiner, the Journal and The Irish Times **Opinion Pieces & Interviews - The Environmental Pillar.**

Above Meeting with Minister Thomas Byrne

Below Meeting with EU Commisioner Jessika Roswall



Agriculture and land use

Building consensus and holding the line in 2025

In 2025, the Environmental Pillar continued to work with key stakeholders and decision-makers at national and international level to build common ground and consensus around the best way forward on our most pressing environmental challenges, while maintaining momentum as we moved from the adoption of the Nature Restoration Law to its implementation.

The election of a more right-wing European Parliament and Commission in 2024 saw much of the remaining momentum behind the EU Green Deal dissipate. The Commission's alignment with the far right on a range of environmental files created a very challenging context for our EU-level advocacy. In particular, the EU political agenda in 2025 was dominated by environmental deregulation under the auspices of simplification. It was an uphill battle to resist these regressive headwinds and, unfortunately, much of the progress made to improve environmental conditionality within key policy instruments such as the Common Agricultural Policy was eroded. In an Irish context, an example of this was the weak protections for peat soils adopted in early 2025, which effectively maintained the status quo.

Against this backdrop, the importance of the Environmental Pillar as a community and platform for collaboration and consensus-building was more evident than ever. At EU level, we continued to collaborate with networks such as the European Environmental Bureau and Good Food Good Farming to influence EU decision-making on key issues including the CAP post-2027 and the Nitrates Derogation, and we were a lead organisation in the drafting of Good Food Good Farming's joint position paper on the future of EU farming.

The passing of the Nature Restoration Law was perhaps the high-water mark of the Green Deal era, and despite the challenges we have faced since then, this new regulation presents an opportunity to accelerate ambitious nature restoration at scale. A key priority of our collective work since the adoption of the NRL has been to ensure that Ireland implements an ambitious Nature Restoration Plan that will map out where and how nature will be restored, and the milestones between now and 2050 to get us there. Key to achieving this will be our ability to maintain broad public and political support for nature restoration. In particular, we have worked to identify common ground with other stakeholders and ensure that our voices, and those of nature-starved grassroots communities, are heard.

The Irish Government created a good framework to engage with stakeholders and identify consensus on the Nature Restoration Plan, and we actively participated in all of those forums, including the Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration, the Leaders' Forum, and the Community Conversations. In the Independent Advisory Committee, we represented the environmental sector and worked constructively with representatives of the farming and fishing communities to achieve agreement and provide a strong cross-sectoral mandate to the Government on how nature should be restored in collaboration with local communities. In addition, through the work of our Biodiversity Hub, we invested significant resources to enable our members to bring their expertise, citizen science and GIS mapping to the fore to inform the design and implementation of the Nature Restoration Plan.

The Forestry Programme mid-term review was another example of the value of consensus-building, as the Environmental Pillar worked with forestry representatives to find common ground around the need to address overgrazing by deer and to recognise the opportunity presented by the NRL to restore native woodlands at scale. The strong accord on these points resulted in a range of updates to the Forestry Programme (finalised in 2026), including increased supports for deer fencing and tree shelters, two new agroforestry pilot schemes, a new scheme for the creation of alluvial woodland, and greater flexibility to restore native woodlands in our uplands.

Our ongoing participation in multi-stakeholder forums related to the Common Agricultural Policy, the Land Use Review and the Water Forum similarly provided us with opportunities to engage directly with decision-makers and stakeholders on some of the most important issues for our environment.

The challenges ahead remain significant, but our achievements in 2025 demonstrate that 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 mobilising public support for sustainable land use and nature restoration.

Identifying knowledge gaps on the impacts of offshore renewable energy on biodiversity at sea.

Featured Publication

Meeting Ireland's energy target of 5GW of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) capacity by 2030, 20GW by 2040 and 37GW by 20501—alongside achieving the designation of 30% of its marine area as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2030; and Good Environmental Status (GES) of its seas under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, is a key national challenge. In response, Ireland is undergoing a significant transformation in its approach to ORE planning and development.

Building blocks are in place to ensure that renewable energy development does not present additional and significant detrimental effects to the marine environment.

Building blocks are in place to ensure that renewable energy development does not present additional and significant detrimental effects to the marine environment. The Project Ireland 2040 National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) provides a foundation for decision-making that ensures ecologically sustainable growth and the restoration of biological diversity and ecosystems.

In alignment with these goals, the Future Framework for ORE 2024 outlines that environmental considerations must remain central to long-term, plan-led development. This is reinforced by the establishment of Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs), which will adopt an ecosystem-based management approach to future ORE projects, whilst maintaining a healthy and thriving ecosystem. Ireland issued Maritime Area Consents (MAC) for six offshore wind farm (OWF) projects in 2023, marking the planned expansion of Ireland's ORE sector.

Alongside these measures, an important step towards achieving these goals is to ensure that the best scientific evidence and advice on the environmental and biodiversity effects of ORE, including fixed and floating offshore wind, wave and tidal renewable energy, is available to support decision-making, policy, planning and consenting. This is outlined in Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030, which sets a key objective of enhancing the evidence base for biodiversity. By 2028, environmental data relating to environmental assessments must be readily available to inform future projects.

To support this ambition, the Irish Environmental Network commissioned Howell Marine Consulting to produce this evidence report Identifying knowledge gaps on the impacts of offshore renewable energy on biodiversity at sea. The purpose is to assess the current state of knowledge on the impacts of ORE on biodiversity at sea with a specific focus on Irish waters; to identify and prioritise critical evidence gaps; and to propose a strategic, cost-effective research framework that aligns research needs with energy delivery, biodiversity and climate goals.

Read full submission here →



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 2025.

Zero Waste Alliance Ireland

2025 was a standout year for us at Zero Waste Alliance Ireland (ZWAI) as we took the plunge into filmmaking for the first time, to highlight one of Ireland's unsung climate heroes: Seagrass.

Our documentary showcases the vital work of researchers at the University of Galway currently involved in the EU Horizon funded CLIMAREST project. We were honoured to feature their expertise and to take a closer look at the incredible work they are doing. This film was a true ZWAI passion project, fully funded, produced and driven by our own dedicated team. It's a proud milestone for us, and we hope that it helps bridge the gap between science and community action.

The film takes you beneath the waves to explore our "blue forests", vital underwater meadows that capture carbon and protect our coastlines. The film was produced and directed by our Creative Lead Órla Coutin Fitzsimons and features the unmistakable voice of our very own Jack O'Sullivan, one of ZWAI's founding members, as narrator.

By sharing the story of these incredible ecosystems, we're connecting the dots between nature's natural cycles and the zero waste mission we strive for. We were thrilled to release the trailer in late 2025 and can't wait for the full premiere in June 2026. Keep an eye out, it's a beautiful tribute to the magic happening just off our shores!

www.zwai.ie

GAP Ireland - "Ballymun Is Brilliant"

GAP Ireland's Ballymun Is Brilliant project demonstrated how climate action can begin with listening.

Developed through a partnership between residents, artists, community organisations and local groups, the project used creativity to bring people together around themes of place, belonging and community connection. Rather than starting with climate change, it started with people's lived experiences and the things they care about most.

Over two years, the project created opportunities for hundreds of people to participate in workshops, community events, exhibitions, storytelling projects, murals and celebrations. Working with 29 community organisations, it engaged people of different ages, backgrounds and experiences, including many who are often under-represented in environmental initiatives and decision-making processes.

By focusing on community pride, local identity, biodiversity, food and connection, Ballymun Is Brilliant opened up conversations about sustainability in ways that felt relevant, positive and inclusive. The project's lasting achievement lies in the relationships, confidence and sense of shared ownership it helped build, offering a hopeful model for community-led climate action as something communities shape together rather than something delivered to them.

www.globalactionplan.ie

Green Sod Ireland

A major achievement in 2025 was the formal acceptance of Green Sod Ireland as members of the IEN - a significant milestone in our organisational journey. IEN support has provided us with access to core funding for the first time, ensuring greater long-term stability. It also meets our objective to secure funding to release the potential of Green Sod Ireland.

In August we hosted our very successful second annual Biodiversity Summer School weekend event in Kylemore, Connemara, Co. Galway, supported by the University of Notre Dame. This event is a valued opportunity to expand awareness of Green Sod Ireland, engage with communities and other NGOs, and inspire both current and future volunteers and supporters. This is achieved by bringing together experts and enthusiasts on biodiversity and nature restoration.

We developed a successful conservation grazing programme as part of our Wild Acre Model. Conservation grazing refers to a less intensive form of management used to maintain and increase the biodiversity of natural or semi-natural ecosystems, in particular, grasslands. It focuses on low stocking densities and little to no artificial input so that it can increase and maintain biodiversity instead of damaging it.

Together we hold this land in trust.

www.greensodireland.ie

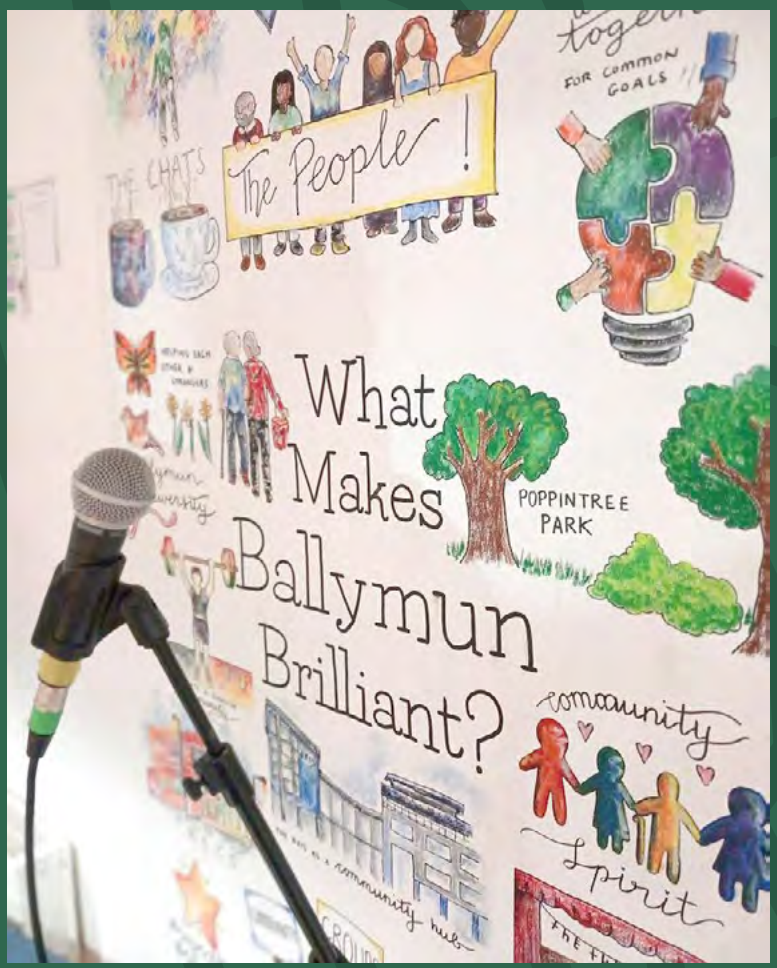


Above Juan Lugilde Yáñez, Liam Morrison and Clémence Gacon

Right GAP Ireland's Ballymun Is Brilliant project

Below Green Sod Ireland, Biodiversity Summer School, Kylemore







Vincent Wildlife Trust LCCC Curraghchase Bat Walk in August 2025

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group

In 2025, the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group continued to deliver impactful, science-led conservation across Ireland, supported by the core funding and collaborative network of the Irish Environmental Network.

Our recording schemes remained central, with 2,478 validated cetacean and basking shark sightings and over 400 strandings recorded. These long-term datasets underpin research, inform policy, and strengthen the evidence base for marine protection.

It was our busiest year for live strandings, with 55 events involving 125 animals. IWDG responders attended most incidents, supported by a growing national network of trained volunteers and veterinarians. This work was recognised with a National Lottery Good Causes Award.

Public engagement remained a priority. Through Whale Watch Ireland, Floating Classroom, Whale Tales 2025, and training courses, we increased ocean literacy and supported pathways into citizen science and conservation.

We continued to contribute expert input to marine policy, particularly on offshore renewable energy and marine spatial planning, while supporting the designation of Important Marine Mammal Areas and advocacy for Marine Protected Areas.

With IEN's support, IWDG continues to advance collaborative, evidence based conservation across Ireland.

www.iwdg.ie

Vincent Wildlife Trust

2025 saw Vincent Wildlife Trust celebrate 50 years of mammal conservation. To celebrate, a number of events were organised throughout the year to engage people with the species we work with, showcasing past achievements while looking ahead to the future.

A highlight came during National Heritage Week, when Kate McAney, VWT Ireland Mammal Development Manager, led a six-night journey across the six western counties where lesser horseshoe bats are found. Joined by 140 participants, the six bat walks offered a rare chance to experience one of Ireland's most elusive mammals up close.

Each evening, the bats put on a show, with many attendees seeing and hearing lesser horseshoe bats for the first time. Other species of bat also joined, including pipistrelles, Daubenton's, and Leisler's bats. From woodland trails to river and lake edges, the week gave us a magical glimpse into the world of bats.

A big thank you to NPWS staff and rangers, local Biodiversity Officers, and everyone who came out to take part. We couldn't have asked for better company to celebrate lesser horseshoe bats. Funding support from IEN and Heritage Council allows us to continue delivering sound scientific research and developing innovative wildlife conservation action.

www.vincentwildlife.ie

Irish Bee Conservation Project

The Irish Bee Conservation Project has grown in its capacity, its reach and ability to implement its vision of conserving Ireland's native bee species. While joining the IEN in late 2025, was one of our highlights, other highlights include:

- Securing essential funds from the public and corporate sectors (notably SSE Airtricity's Generation Green Community Fund) enabling the IBCP to develop and deliver an innovative educational programme for schools.
- We have hired our first Education Officer and Administration Officer.
- Cork's Men's Sheds are the backbone to our solitary bee pole production, and bee poles are now seen in community, school and businesses green spaces around Ireland.
- Working collaboratively with UCC's and MTU's School of Architecture, we have developed a printable 3D Bee lodge for free download.
- Events, mainly in Co. Cork but also in Dublin have taken place.
  - Our events and outreach to mention some include:
  - Fota Wildlife Park 'Summer Events'
  - Biodiversity & Heritage Week events
  - Walks & Talks with schools, community groups
- These have enabled us to widen our reach and build people's awareness of the essential role of Ireland's wild bee species to Ireland's ecosystems and sustainability.
- Engaging with the corporate sector on various pollinator friendly initiatives.

www.ibcp.ie





Above IWDG RV Celtic Mist during the 2025 summer survey cruises at Great Blasket Island Beach

Right Irish Bee conservation event

Funding Statement
Joe Boshell, Finance, Operations & Membership



In 2025, the Irish Environmental Network had another record year for income with a total income of €4,727,987 (2024: €3,810,353).

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Our main source of funding is DCEE (Department of Climate, Energy & Environment) 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 maintain our Core Funding to member groups at €1,613,427. 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 Climate, Energy & Environment and his officials.

The IEN's finances are healthy and our auditors identified no material uncertainty about our ability to continue as a going concern, although our principal risk remains a possible reduction in government grants. In 2026 we began delivery of CHANGE, a PEACEPLUS funded cross border project with Northern Ireland Environment Link, and we continue to work with the DCEE on our funding for 2026 and beyond.

The main outgoings are set out on the following pages and the full accounts are available on www.ien.ie.

Statement of Financial Activities

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the financial year ended 31 December 2025

	Notes	**Restricted Funds 2025 €**	**Total Funds 2025 €**	Restricted Funds 2024 €	Total Funds 2024 €
Income					
Company activities					
—Grants from government and other co-funders	**4.1**	**4,726,787**	**4,726,787**	3,299,846	3,299,846
Other income	**4.2**	**1,200**	**1,200**	174	174
Total Income		**4,727,987**	**4,727,987**	3,300,020	3,300,020
Expenditure					
Company activities	**5.1**	**4,752,288**	**4,752,288**	3,649,692	3,649,692
Net income / (expenditure)		**(24,301)**	**(24,301)**	(349,672)	(349,672)
Transfers between funds		**—**	**—**	—	—
Net movement in funds for the financial year		**(24,301)**	**(24,301)**	(349,672)	(349,672)
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds beginning of the year	**17**	**1,538,815**	**1,538,815**	1,888,487	1,888,487
Total funds at the end of the year		**1,514,514**	**1,514,514**	1,538,815	1,538,815

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 2025

	Notes	2025 €	2024 €
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets	**10**	**6,392**	8,040
Current Assets			
Debtors	**11**	**37,280**	3,675
Cash at bank and in hand	**12**	**1,711,634**	2,069,454
		1,748,914	2,073,129
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	**13**	**(240,792)**	(542,354)
Net current assets		**1,508,122**	1,530,775
Total assets less current liabilities		**1,514,514**	1,538,815
Funds			
Restricted trust funds		**1,514,514**	1,538,815
Total funds	**17**	**1,514,514**	1,538,815

Statement of Cash Flows

for the financial year ended 31 December 2025

	Notes	2025 €	2024 €
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net movement in funds		**(24,301)**	(349,672)
Adjustments for:		**5,995**	4,546
Depreciation		**(1,200)**	(174)
Interest receivable and similar income			
		(19,506)	(345,300)
Movements in working capital:			
Movement in debtors		**(33,605)**	489
Movement in creditors		**(301,562)**	(303,316)
Cash (used in) / generated from operations		**(354,673)**	(648,127)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest received		**1,200**	174
Payments to acquire tangible assets		**(4,347)**	(10,378)
Net cash used in investment activities		**(3,147)**	(10,204)
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents		**(357,820)**	(658,331)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		**2,069,454**	2,727,785
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	**12**	**1,711,634**	2,069,454

Supplementary Information Relating to the Financial Statements: Operating Statement

for the financial year ended 31 December 2025

	2025 €	2024 €
Income	**4,726,786**	3,299,847
Expenses		
Wages and salaries	**581,709**	534,441
Social security costs	**67,579**	59,013
Staff defined contribution pension costs	**74,839**	24,115
IEN: Training	**23,171**	23,673
IEN: International NGO meetings	**17,857**	32,340
IEN: Participation Government Bodies	**11,688**	9,750
IEN: Policy Subs	**49,250**	45,055
IEN: Fundraising Capacity Building	**—**	18,942
IEN: Office expenses	**38,672**	43,330
IEN: Digitization Fund	**57,427**	39,168
Member Engagement Events	**12,970**	9,049
Festivals IEN: Travel and Meetings	**2,746**	—
Biodiversity week	**52,224**	42,942
Pillar funding	**995,367**	325,080
ELIG expenses	**95,000**	190,084
Coalition 2030	**79,011**	33,545
Core Funding	**1,731,243**	1,562,985
Core Funding Capacity Building	**—**	50,000
Rent payable	**7,163**	7,163
Rates	**2,733**	2,219
Insurance	**3,563**	2,163
MPA (Fairseas) Project	**447,825**	341,434
MARÉIRE costs	**300,149**	203,747
Telecoms and internet	**64,536**	21,219
Andrew St Ledger Fund	**10,000**	—
Legal and professional	**5,695**	14,679
Auditor's remuneration	**8,648**	8,648
Bank charges	**344**	364
General expenses	**4,614**	(1)
Depreciation	**5,995**	4,546
	4,752,288	3,649,693
Miscellaneous Income		
Bank	**1,200**	174
	1,200	174
Net Deficit	**(24,302)**	(349,672)

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

Irish Environmental Network

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