

Please provide the following details on the origin of this report.

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Submission	
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Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report.

Report was compiled by the Science, Habitats and Species section, and Parks and Reserves Unit of National Parks and Wildlife, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government which is responsible for site selection, designation and conservation plans for designated areas, as well as the general administration and management of National Parks and Nature Reserves in Ireland and any other State-owned lands purchased for conservation of natural heritage.

Protected areas

System of protected areas

1. What is the relative priority afforded to development and implementation of a national system of protected areas in the context of other obligations arising from the Convention and COP Decisions?				
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low
2. Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?				
a) no		<p>Document entitled “Living with Nature” describes designation of areas under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and Irish national legislation. In addition Ireland has 6 National Parks but there is as yet no National Parks legislation.</p>		
b) in early stages of development				
c) in advanced stages of development				
d) yes (please provide copies of relevant documents describing the process)				
3. Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?				
a) no		<p>(c), (d) and (b): The principal assessments to date have been the EU “biogeographic seminars” which assess each member state’s sufficiency in proposals for Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are near completion; and BirdLife International’s publication “Important Bird Areas” which compares with the national list of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the EU Birds Directive.</p> <p>The National Parks and Wildlife Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government are currently going to contract for an assessment in relation to any remaining deficiencies in terms of habitats or species which can be addressed through designation of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) under national legislation.</p>		
b) an assessment is being planned for				
c) an assessment is being undertaken				
d) yes (please provide copies of the assessments made)				

Regulatory framework

4. Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	<p>Yes. The EU (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 and a number of other regulations provide for SACs and SPAs. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 provides for NHAs.</p> <p>There is no specific legislation for National Parks in Ireland. The nucleus of Killarney National Park is the Bourn Vincent Memorial Park which was given as a gift to the State in 1932 under the Bourn Vincent Memorial Park Act 1932. The other areas of Killarney National Park together with Connemara, Glenveagh, Wicklow Mountains, the Burren and Ballycroy National Park, Co. Mayo are managed under the State Property Act 1954. As much of the land in National Parks is designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive it is also managed in accordance with the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (SI 94 of 1997 which transposed this directive into Irish Law).</p> <p>Nature Reserves are established under section 15 and recognised under section 16 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000.</p>
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes (please provide copies of relevant documents)	
5. Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	<p>Yes . These are set down as follows:</p> <p>For SACs, in the EU Habitats Directive, 1992. The criteria as adapted for Ireland are being updated at this time.</p> <p>For SPAs, broad criteria are set down in the EU Birds Directive.</p> <p>NHA criteria are being developed in 2003.</p> <p>IUCN guidelines and criteria are used for the establishment of National Parks. The Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000 contain the guidelines and criteria for the establishment and recognition of Nature Reserves.</p>
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes (please provide copies of guidelines, criteria and targets)	

6. Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?	
a) no	<p>There is an entrance fee at just one of the six National Parks.</p> <p>Liaison Committees have been established for three of the six National Parks. It is hoped that all National Parks will soon have a Liaison Committee which will assist the National Parks and Wildlife Service in finalising the management plan for the Park and implementing the plan. The Liaison Committees are made up of representatives from local interested parties / stakeholders.</p> <p>The principal incentive measure for SACs, SPAs and NHAs is through a national agri-environmental scheme, the Rural Environment Protection Scheme, run by the Department of Agriculture and Food.</p> <p>Under the scheme, farmers are paid (e.g. €242 per hectare up to 20 ha of designated land) and must manage the land according to a farm plan which recognises the importance for habitats and species.</p>
b) yes, incentive measures implemented for some protected areas (please provide some examples)	
c) yes, incentive measures implemented for all protected areas (please provide some examples)	

Management approach

7. Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?	
a) no	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A National Biodiversity plan was launched in May 2002 to examine and deal with possible threats. 2. Conservation plans have been drafted for c.250 SACs and SPAs that consider threats and how to deal with them. 3. For National Parks, management plans, which are being prepared at the moment, will address threats to the National Parks and biodiversity. 4. The EU Water Framework Directive places special emphasis on water quality in protected areas and a register of such areas is being drawn up to ensure adequate monitoring and maintenance or improvement of water quality, as necessary.
b) an assessment is being planned for	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been completed	

<p>e) programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place (please provide basic information on threats and actions taken)</p>	<p>Under EU and National Law, planning and other consent authorities are required to assess the impacts of any proposed development in SACs and SPAs and ensure that there is no significant impact. This applies also to the funding of activities such as commercial forestry.</p> <p>Overgrazing of commonage areas has been a significant threat. A national assessment of overgrazing of c 425,000 ha of commonage is now virtually complete, and de-stocking measures, begun in 1999 are being put in place for all commonages deemed to be significantly overgrazed.</p> <p>Many of the important raised bogs acquired by the State have had restoration work carried out by blocking of drainage channels and building dams to raise the water levels thereon, thus preserving the habitat and the biodiversity of these sites.</p>
<p>8. Are protected areas established and managed in the context of the wider region in which they are located, taking account of and contributing to other sectoral strategies?</p>	
<p>a) no</p>	<p>National Parks, Nature Reserves and designated areas are not established in this manner. However, each Local Authority is required to have a County Development Plan which takes account of the designated areas.</p>
<p>b) yes, in some areas</p>	
<p>c) yes, in all areas (please provide details)</p>	
<p>9. Do protected areas vary in their nature, meeting a range of different management objectives and/or being operated through differing management regimes?</p>	
<p>a) no, most areas are established for similar objectives and are under similar management regimes</p>	<p>National Parks have similar objectives and management, i.e. state-owned lands managed for nature conservation while encouraging sustainable recreational and educational use.</p> <p>Most Nature Reserves allow for limited public access but this is not necessarily encouraged.</p>
<p>b) many areas have similar objectives/management regimes, but there are also some exceptions</p>	
<p>c) yes, protected areas vary in nature (please provide details)</p>	

10. Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	For National Parks – see 6 above. A similar arrangement but involving landowners only exists for SACs and SPAs; but it is at an early stage and a significant number of landowners are not willing to participate.
b) with some, but not all protected areas	
c) yes, always (please provide details of experience)	
11. Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?	
a) no, they do not exist	There are 11 Nature Reserves in Ireland which are privately owned, or owned by NGOs, and are recognised by the Minister as Nature Reserves under Section 16 of the Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000.
b) yes, they exist, however are not formally recognized	
c) yes, they exist and are formally recognized (please provide further information)	

Available resources

12. Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?	
a) no, they are severely limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	There are financial constraints on staffing of National Parks and Wildlife. While there are c. 110 field staff in the section, best practice in consultation and management would require more staff. Similarly, while much has been achieved in the area of survey, research and monitoring, the resources are limiting and much work remains to be done.
b) no, they are limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
c) Available resources are adequate (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
d) yes, good resources are available	
The management plans for the National Parks are not complete yet – it will be easier to assess the adequacy of resources available to manage these areas once the management plans are in place, but within the usual limitations of Government funding, resources are finite.	

13. Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) funding has been requested, but not received	
c) funding is currently being requested	
d) yes, funding has been received (please provide copies of appropriate documents)	

Assessment

14. Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?	
a) no	X
b) yes, constraints have been assessed (please provide further information)	
c) yes, actions to deal with constraints are in place (please provide further information)	
15. Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?	
a) no	<p>We are developing a monitoring system which will deal with habitats and species listed under the EU Directives. In addition there will be cyclical review of implementation of protected area plans and commonage framework plans. The review period has not yet been decided but is likely to be within 5 and 7 years.</p>
b) yes, a programme is under development (please provide further information)	
c) yes, a programme is in place (please provide further information)	
16. Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?	
a) no	X
b) an assessment is planned	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been made (please provide further information)	

Regional and international cooperation

17. Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?	
a) no	<p>Yes, arising from meetings of the Ireland – Northern Ireland Ministerial Council and of the British – Irish Ministerial Council.</p> <p>There are cross-border sites at several places along the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, including the River Foyle, a river renowned for Atlantic Salmon, and several peatland sites.</p>
b) yes (please provide details)	
18. Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?	
a) no	X
b) yes	
c) information is not available	
19. Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes	
20. If your country has protected areas or other sites recognised or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them.	
21. Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?	
a) no	X
b) yes (please provide details)	

Further comments

1. Information on protected areas was provided in Ireland's 2nd National Biodiversity Report (2001), as follows:-

"There is a comprehensive policy and legislation framework now in place to provide for protected areas of both European and National importance. Major process of formal implementation of European network in Ireland now in final phase.

Legislation to provide a specific statutory basis for nationally important sites was outstanding until recently. In 2000, a statutory basis was provided for the designation and conservation of Natural Heritage areas (NHAs) - the network of sites of national importance - in the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000. The approach adopted ensured that the NHA system is scientifically based and will guarantee the permanent protection of NHAs (without the need for compulsory purchase). The legislation also provides for notification of landowners, right of objection to proposed designations or restrictions, compensation, arbitration, and the continuation of use or activities that are compatible with conserving the ecological interest of the site.

The various types and extent of protected areas in Ireland were outlined in the previous National Biodiversity Report. Since then legislation has been enacted to provide a statutory basis for NHAs as noted above, and also to provide for the designation and conservation of 'Refuges for Flora'.

The recent report on the state of Ireland's environment (EPA, 2000) noted that while significant resources have been devoted to the protection of areas of national and European importance, little attention has been given to sites of local significance which cumulatively constitute an important part of Ireland's natural heritage." An update of the current extent of the main types of protected areas established primarily for biodiversity conservation is provided in the Table below:

2. Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan - adopted in 2002 contains a section on protected areas as follows:-

"The establishment of protected areas is very important for the conservation of biodiversity. About 10% of Ireland is considered to be of prime importance for nature conservation and is included in the protected areas programme. The framework for site protection in Ireland, both in terms of what should be protected and how it should be protected, is determined by national policy and by EU policy. Most sites of special ecological importance will require or allow human intervention in order to maintain their ecological interest. Protection through State ownership is important and appropriate in some cases. The conservation of protected areas is not achievable solely through regulation. Economic incentives, as are provided under REPS, or where appropriate compensation for losses incurred, are also required in order to ensure the biodiversity interest of protected areas is maintained or enhanced. It is also essential to involve interested parties and especially farmers and others who are likely to be directly affected.

In recent years, very considerable effort and progress has been made in established a comprehensive network of conservation areas in Ireland. The introduction of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in particular represents a fundamental advance for the conservation of biodiversity in Ireland. While the SAC programme is at an advanced stage, the task is to finalise the establishment of SACs and to ensure the sites are appropriately managed and effectively conserved in the long term. The network of sites of European importance (SACs/SPAs) will be complemented by the establishment, including formal designation and protection, of a network of nationally important sites (Natural Heritage Areas). Monitoring programmes are also required for all protected areas to ensure their long term conservation".

ACTIONS

- *Review previously proposed Natural Heritage Areas and designate as appropriate under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000.*
- *Elaborate and publish a framework for the selection and designation of future Natural Heritage Areas, including sites of geological and geomorphological importance, taking into account the views of interested parties.*

- *Complete identification and notification of SACs and SPAs, their submission to the European Commission and formal designation.*
- *Provide advice and prepare and issue Guidelines on the Conservation of SACs, SPAs, NHAs and other protected areas to local authorities and other authorities.*
- *Continue the programme of acquisition, agreement to, and designation of a representative series of Nature Reserves.*
- *Prepare and implement site specific conservation plans and other plans (e.g. Commonage Framework Plans) with particular reference to Natura 2000 sites, NHAs, Nature Reserves and National Parks in consultation with affected landowners and the public.*
- *Continue to provide compensation for farmers and other landowners for losses incurred in managing their lands in a manner which is compatible with conservation requirements of designated sites.*
- *Continue or put in place further measures, including appeals procedures, to provide for consultation with, and the participation of, those affected by existing and future protected areas.*
- *Establish a comprehensive programme to monitor the condition of protected areas.*
- *Review effectiveness of legislation, policies, practices and mechanisms for site safeguards.*

Table. Categories and approximate extent of protected areas in Ireland in 2003.

Category	Objectives	Area covered (ha.)	Number of sites
Nature Reserves	Conservation of flora and fauna and habitats	18,095	78
National Parks	Nature conservation and public use and appreciation	60,063	6
Special Protection Areas [SPAs]	Conservation of bird species and habitats of European importance	258,000	110
Special Areas of Conservation [SACs]	Conservation of flora, fauna and habitats of European importance	1,091,000	420
Proposed Natural Heritage Areas [NHAs]	Protection of flora, fauna, habitats and geological sites of national importance	Approx. 900,000	Approx. 1,180
Wildfowl Sanctuaries	Hunting of birds prohibited	n/a	68
Refuges for Fauna	Conservation of the habitat of named species of animals	n/a	7
Ramsar Sites	Conservation of wetlands of international importance under Ramsar Convention	70,550	47
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves	Nature conservation and sustainable use	11,500	2
Biogenetic Reserves	Conservation of biodiversity in sites recognised by Council of Europe	6,587	14

n/a = figure not available