



NETWORKS

NETWORKS FOR NATURE

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

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Contents

FOREWORD	3
INTRODUCTION	4
WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?	6
DRIVERS OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS	8
INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC BIODIVERSITY POLICY	11
OUR EXISTING COMMITMENT TO BIODIVERSITY	15
OUR BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY	18
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	29

Foreword

I am delighted to present ESB Networks' first Biodiversity Strategy 'Networks for Nature'. ESB Networks is profoundly aware of Ireland's biodiversity crisis which has resulted in ongoing declines in many of our native species and degradation of our sensitive habitats. This strategy provides a clear framework for the delivery of a wide range of biodiversity actions across our business.

ESB Networks published its Networks for Net Zero Strategy in January 2023 setting out our commitment to continue to play a leading role in delivering the Government's Climate Action Plan (CAP). Our Networks for Net Zero Strategy commits us to deliver on our part to achieve the CAP targets set out for 2025 and 2030. We will continue to develop Ireland's distribution and transmission networks as well as their respective supporting systems as we enable decarbonisation of the Irish economy and society.

The Networks for Net Zero Strategy is not solely focussed on decarbonisation and climate action. ESB Networks believes in the role of electricity infrastructure as an enabler of social, environmental, and economic regeneration. We are placing sustainability at the core of everything we do and are collaborating to support sustainability.

Biodiversity action is a core part of our commitment to sustainability; we recognise that the climate and biodiversity crises are inherently linked and need to be considered together. 2024 saw the publication of Ireland's Fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan, which advocates a 'Whole of Government, Whole of Society' approach to biodiversity action. ESB Networks is conscious that we have a key part to play in this all-inclusive approach to action for nature.

ESB Networks is deeply cognisant of the inherent value of biodiversity in the Irish landscape, but also of its significant importance to society through the services it provides. We recognise the importance of fostering proactive engagement with our stakeholders and the communities in which we operate to identify synergies for the delivery of biodiversity action at a range of scales across the country.

This strategy has been developed through leveraging our own internal experience with specialist input. It also draws from international best practice and innovation implemented by the energy sector.

We embrace the transformational challenge posed by biodiversity action, aspire to regenerate nature where we operate, and look forward to contributing to the restoration of Ireland's wild spaces for future generations.



Nicholas Tarrant

Nicholas Tarrant
Managing Director
ESB Networks

1

Introduction



1. Introduction

ESB Networks provides the electricity infrastructure that transports electricity to all customers in Ireland through both the distribution and the transmission Systems. We have served Irish customers for over 90 years and have provided the electrical infrastructure on which our society has developed.

ESB Networks is responsible for delivering and managing the performance of a system of almost 157,000 km of overhead networks, 26,000 km of underground cables, over 800 high voltage substations, significant amounts of connected generation (including renewable generation connected to the distribution and transmission systems) and 2.4 million demand customers.

We are committed to operating our business so that we can be proud of our environmental performance. We recognise that our activities potentially have environmental impacts and

that we have a responsibility to manage these impacts in a manner that provides a high level of protection for the natural environment.

ESB Networks is cognisant of the importance of biodiversity in the Irish landscape and aims to ensure its activities enable regeneration in relation to biodiversity. It is also aware of the requirements to identify potential impacts on biodiversity with the aim of avoiding or mitigating these impacts, and where feasible, work to enhance biodiversity. ESB Networks also seeks to identify its dependencies on nature and consider appropriate measures to reduce risks in this regard.



2

What Is Biodiversity and Why Is It Important?



2. What Is Biodiversity and Why Is It Important?

'Biodiversity' is a term used to describe the variety of life on Earth. It covers all living species and the ecosystems within which they function, ranging from an individual's genetic level all the way up to complex landscapes.

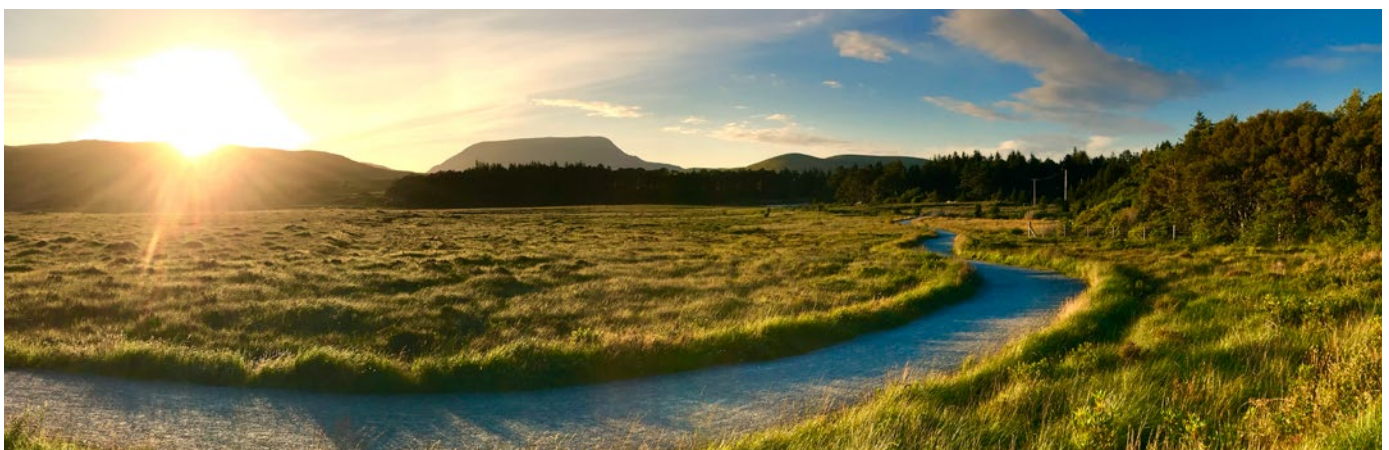
Biodiversity underpins the essential resources upon which all life depends. The word 'ecosystem' describes a group of living organisms, their communities, and their dynamic interaction with the physical (non-living) environment of the air, water, rocks, and soils. Within an ecosystem, all aspects of the environment (biodiversity and the non-living surroundings) interact and affect one another. 'Ecosystem services' are the ecological processes of the natural world which have beneficial value to humans, such as the pollination of crops by insects or flood attenuation provided by wetlands. These are essential to our society, our economic development, and our health and well-being, and are worth billions of euros to the Irish economy every year.

Ireland holds a rich diversity of ecosystems and wildlife across its terrestrial habitats as well as throughout its freshwater and marine environments, though these all reflect negative trends. Over 31,000 species have been recorded in Ireland, including over 28 species

of land mammal, circa 400 species of bird, more than 12,000 species of insect and over 4,000 plant species, while it is likely that many more have yet to be discovered.

Concerning global trends of biodiversity loss are broadly reflected in Ireland. For example, research has shown that 85% of EU-protected habitats in Ireland are in unfavourable condition, one fifth of breeding birds in Ireland are in long decline and numbers of birds that overwinter in Ireland have halved since the 1990s. Over half of native Irish plant species have declined in range and/or abundance, while 30% of Ireland's wild bee species are threatened with extinction. Furthermore, approximately half of Ireland's rivers and lakes are in an unhealthy ecological state; the number of pristine watercourses has fallen from 500 to 20 since the 1980s.

It is clear that impactful action across all sectors of state and society is urgently needed to stop the continued erosion of biodiversity on the island of Ireland.



3

Drivers of Biodiversity Loss



3. Drivers of Biodiversity Loss

Biodiversity loss is a huge social, environmental, political, and economic issue for Ireland and the global community. Unsustainable development and human activity have major impacts on natural habitats and species, causing significant declines in wildlife populations.

Unfortunately, current species extinction rates are unprecedented, accelerating and beginning to affect the ecosystem services humans depend upon, including production of food and water, pollination, flood control, soil formation and nutrient cycling.

For example, the 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services notes that “The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. At least 680 vertebrate

species had been driven to extinction since the 16th century and more than 9% of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had become extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more breeds still threatened.”

The 2023 World Economic Forum Global Risks Report notes that biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is viewed as one of the fastest deteriorating global risks over the next decade.



Primary drivers of biodiversity loss:



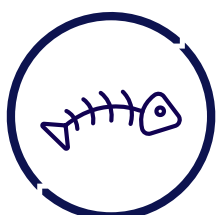
Climate Change

Climate change can progressively alter habitats through changes in plant composition and diversity, as well as causing changes in the range of species present. Furthermore, increased intensity of rainfall events can result in an increase in the severity and recurrence of flooding, while sea level change can accelerate the rate of coastal erosion. Conversely, protracted periods of drought can lead to soil destabilisation and increase erosion during subsequent rainfall.



Habitat Change

Removal and fragmentation of habitats (for example; caused by land conversion for agriculture, infrastructural developments and urbanisation) progressively reduces their value to species which utilise them. Fragmentation of habitats contributes to reductions in species diversity due to the loss of foraging corridors as well as migration routes and subsequent genetic isolation.



Over-exploitation

Unsustainable use of land and natural resources can directly and indirectly affect biodiversity. Increased fertiliser and pesticide use in the wider countryside has had a significant impact on the natural environment. Overfishing and problematic fishing methods has resulted in negative effects on our marine ecosystem. Disruption to peatlands as a result of turf cutting can lead to reduced capacity for flood attenuation and the release of carbon.



Water Quality Reduction

Decreases in water quality can arise from a number of sources, including agricultural runoff, wastewater discharges, and changes to natural flows, such as barriers and channel modifications. Increased nutrient concentrations can drive the growth of aquatic plants, which limits sunlight penetration and photosynthesis, with knock-on effects to fish and other aquatic life. Release of pollutants into rivers can lead to direct mortality of water-dependent species. About half of our rivers and lakes are in an unhealthy ecological state, mainly owing to nutrient inputs from wastewater and agriculture.



Invasive Alien Species

Invasive alien species are non-native animals or plants which have historically been introduced to a country and have become problematic due to their capacity to spread rapidly in the absence of competition or predation. They can subsequently outcompete and replace native species, as well as causing problems for infrastructure. The most significant invasive plant species in Ireland include Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, and giant hogweed.

4

International and Domestic Biodiversity Policy



4. International and Domestic Biodiversity Policy

Biodiversity features prominently across many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets, given that it contributes directly to human well-being and development priorities. SDGs 14 and 15 specifically target the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of marine and onshore ecosystems respectively.

In May 2020, the European Commission published the new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and an associated Action Plan. This also presents the proposal for the EU contribution to the upcoming international negotiations on the global post-2020 biodiversity framework.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy contains specific commitments and actions to be delivered by 2030, including:

- **Establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea**
- **An EU Nature Restoration Plan - a series of concrete commitments and actions to restore degraded ecosystems across the EU**
- **A set of measures to enable the necessary transformative change**
- **Measures to tackle the global biodiversity challenge, demonstrating that the EU is ready to lead by example.**

An integral part of the 2030 Strategy relates to Building on an integrated and whole-of-society approach to biodiversity. The European Commission notes that all parts of the economy and society will have to play their role. Industry and business have an impact on nature, but they also produce the important innovations, partnerships and expertise that can help address biodiversity loss. This specifically relates to Section 3.3.1 of the Strategy document, “Business for biodiversity”.

Furthermore, under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), organisations will be asked to identify, assess and disclose material impacts, risks and opportunities that relate to biodiversity. Reporting will be aligned with the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) E4 standard, which specifically addresses corporate sustainability relating to biodiversity and ecosystems.



In December 2022, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was signed at the UN Biodiversity conference COP15 in Montréal. This framework contains global goals and targets aiming to protect and restore nature, ensure its sustainable use as well as spur investments for a green global economy.

A significant outcome of the agreement aims to improve business action on biodiversity, wherein large companies and financial institutions will be required to regularly monitor, assess and disclose risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity.

The agreement includes several key global targets, including:

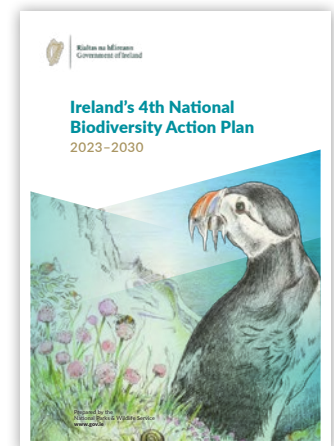
- **Restore 30% of degraded ecosystems globally (on land and sea) by 2030**
- **Conserve and manage 30% areas (terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine) by 2030**
- **Tackle climate change through nature-based solutions**

June 2024 saw the adoption of the EU Nature Restoration Law, which comprises binding targets to restore ecosystems, those with the most potential to capture and store carbon and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters. The Nature Restoration Law's overarching objective is to restore 20% of the EU's degraded ecosystems by 2030 and all by 2050, also adding time-bound targets for specific ecosystems, habitats, and species



Biodiversity Action In Ireland

In 2019, the Irish Government declared a national climate change and biodiversity emergency, thereby recognising the necessity to immediately act on these inherently linked global crises.



The fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), published in January 2024, sets out a vision for an Ireland in 2050 in which biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored, and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet, and delivering benefits essential for all people. It presents a suite of objectives and actions for biodiversity that are advocated on a 'Whole of Government, Whole of Society' basis.

The overarching objectives of the NBAP are:

- 1. Whole of Government, whole of society approach to biodiversity**
- 2. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs**
- 3. Secure Nature's Contribution to People**
- 4. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity**
- 5. Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives**

The NBAP notes that "It is important that biodiversity is mainstreamed across government and social and economic sectors, and fully considered at all levels of national, regional and local decision-making. This requires all government departments and agencies, local government, the private sector and civil society to commit to action, informed by a strong understanding of the importance of biodiversity".

The NBAP commits to putting a national Nature Restoration Plan in place by 2026 to contribute to the ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and global restoration targets.

Development of the NBAP has been facilitated through key stakeholder and public consultation, including via the National Biodiversity Conference held in 2022. The Wildlife Amendment Act 2023 gives legal status to the NBAP and includes an article requiring Public Bodies to have regard to a biodiversity plan, programme or strategy.

ESB Networks is cognisant of its role in the advocated 'Whole of Government, Whole of Society' approach to Biodiversity protection and restoration and has considered the Objectives, Actions and Desired Outcomes of the NBAP in the preparation of this Strategy.

In addition, the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss published its final recommendations in March 2023. A number of the Assembly's recommendations are relevant to ESB Networks; Recommendation 30 advises that all relevant departments, bodies and agencies that deal with biodiversity should have in-house ecological expertise to advise on all biodiversity related policies and activities, while Recommendation 155 notes that State and Semi State agencies and bodies responsible for all major state infrastructure should prioritise protection and restoration of biodiversity in strategic planning, with measurable goals and timelines.

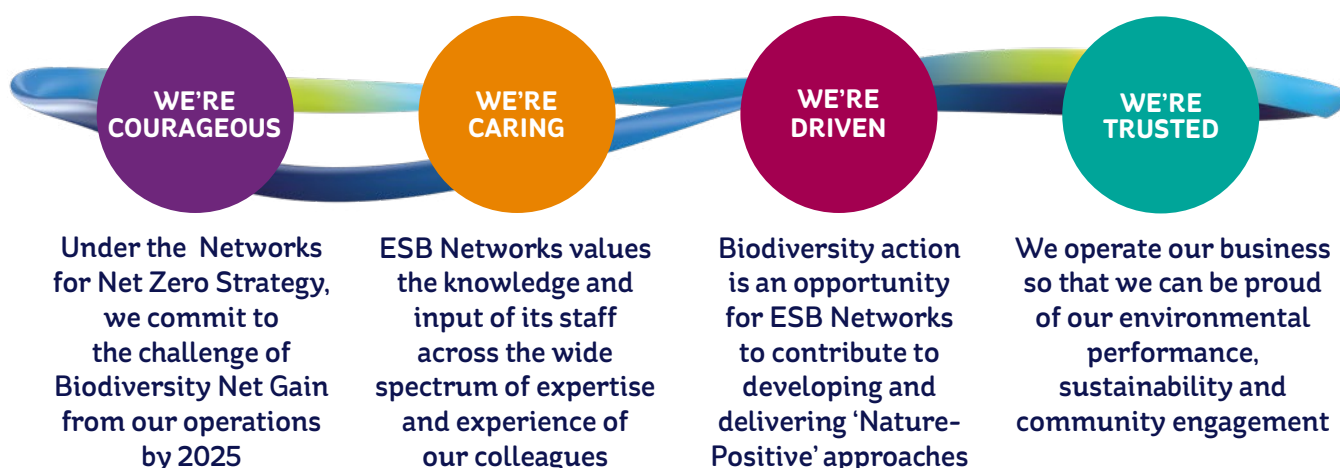
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Our Existing Commitment to Biodiversity



5. Our Existing Commitment to Biodiversity

ESB’s organisational values of We’re Caring, Trusted, Driven and Courageous relate in a real and tangible way to our strategic consideration of Biodiversity and how it intersects with our business operations.



ESB Networks’ 2023 – 2030 Strategy entitled ‘**Networks for Net Zero**’ notes our belief in the role of electricity infrastructure as an enabler of social, environmental, and economic regeneration. ESB Networks recognises that the climate and biodiversity crises are inherently linked and need to be considered together.

The **ESB Networks Policy Statement on the Environment** outlines our commitments to environmental protection during the development, maintenance and operation of our infrastructure and assets. Other relevant publications include the **ESB Networks Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Plan 2022**, as well as ESB’s group strategy, **Driven to Make a Difference: Net Zero by 2040**, which all include a strong commitment to being sustainable and socially responsible.

Biodiversity protection already forms a key part of the way we work. ESB Networks has developed a number of procedures with regard to project design and construction within protected sites and the management of invasive species in proximity to assets and infrastructure.

ESB Networks employs a number of environmental specialists as part of the Environment Team, including staff with specific responsibility for biodiversity action. Where appropriate, ESB Networks obtains support from staff ecologists based in ESB Engineering and Major Projects, as well as from external specialists under an ecological services framework.

ESB Networks values the knowledge and input of its staff across the wide spectrum of expertise and practical experience possessed by our colleagues. To inform this Biodiversity Strategy, outreach and engagement has been facilitated through a number of channels, including consultation workshops with a sample of staff to consider the biodiversity impacts, constraints and dependencies ESB Networks need to consider.

Subsequent to this internal consultation and supported by technical input from ESB’s ecology staff, we have developed this Biodiversity Strategy to facilitate and deliver the implementation of scalable measures across a range of ESB Networks’ resources, operations and assets.

ESB Networks supports the recently published ESB Sustainability Leadership Plan, wherein ESB commits to stepping forward on sustainability issues. Through electricity as an enabler of regeneration, ESB is driven to make a difference for Planet, Place and People:

- **Planet**

We are working towards net zero emissions by 2040 through sustainable and regenerative approaches.

- **Place**

We are committed to helping our communities to transition to net zero and thrive. Our goal is to be nature positive by 2030. We will actively seek to support nature restoration across our activities.

- **People**

We are committed to supporting the social and environmental conditions which enable everyone to flourish.



6

Our Biodiversity Strategy



6. Our Biodiversity Strategy

To promote alignment with ESB Networks' strategies, policies and resources, our first Biodiversity Strategy 'Networks for Nature' is informed by the following overarching objectives:

- A. Integrate Biodiversity:** Incorporate a Nature-Positive approach in ESB Networks' business strategies, decision making, design, planning, construction, maintenance and activities directly undertaken by us and on our behalf.
- B. Enhance Nature where We Operate:** Deliver Biodiversity Net Gain for projects at sites within ESB Networks ownership and ensure No Net Loss of biodiversity at a national level when carrying out operational and maintenance activities.
- C. Build Capacity:** Promote biodiversity awareness among our staff, contractors and suppliers and embed these values through ongoing advocacy and continuing professional development.
- D. Explore Synergies for Biodiversity:** Foster proactive engagement with other utilities, public bodies, stakeholders and the communities in which we operate to identify synergies for the delivery of biodiversity action at a range of scales across the country.
- E. Innovate and Improve:** Seize opportunities to apply innovation and novel technologies to biodiversity protection, enhancement, monitoring and reporting by ESB Networks.
- F. Act Responsibly:** Ensure that all ESB Networks activities comply with relevant biodiversity legislation, effectively consider impacts and dependencies and support national and regional biodiversity policies or schemes as appropriate.

ESB Networks has developed a suite of targeted actions which facilitate our response to the biodiversity emergency. These targets and actions align with the above strategic objectives, and have been developed to be readily deliverable, whilst being workable from an operational perspective, understandable to all involved and measurable wherever possible.

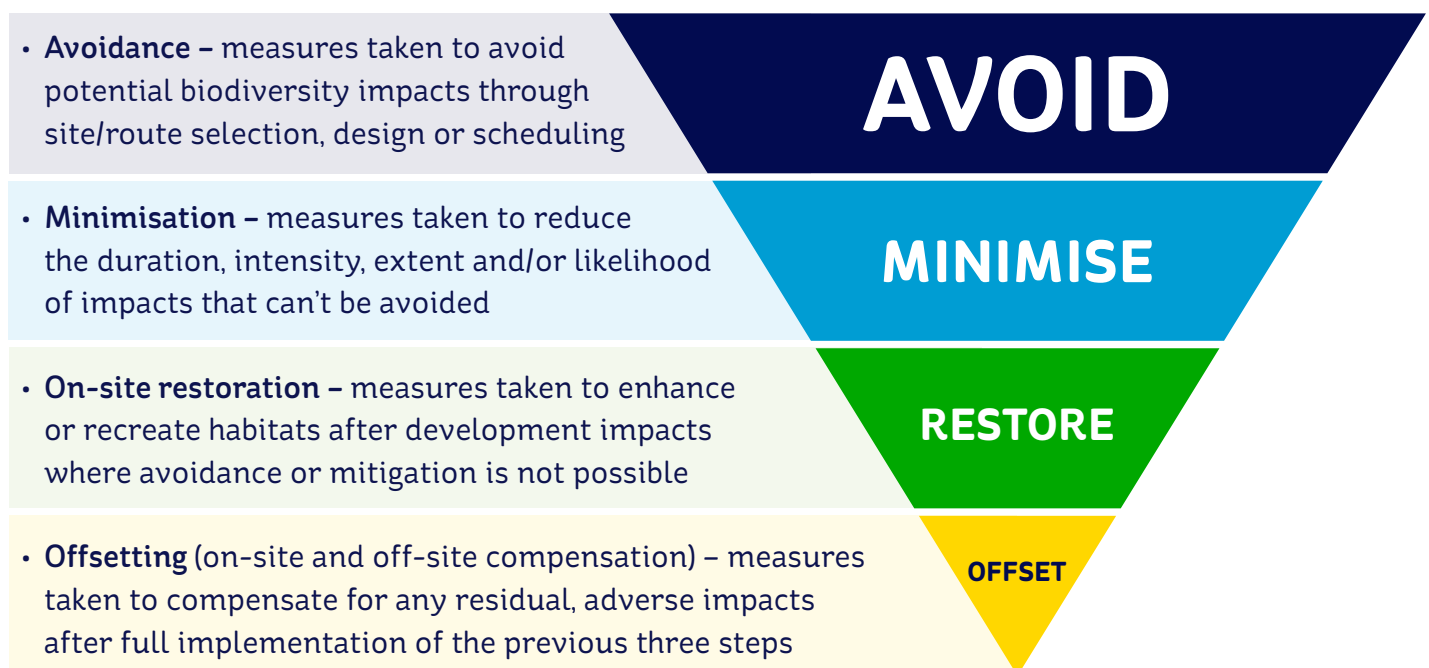
Following publication, the Biodiversity Strategy will be reviewed and updated on a five-yearly cycle to ensure it best reflects science-based decision making and any further developments in policy at all levels.



ESB Networks' foundational approach to the integration of biodiversity action as part of its projects and operations is underpinned by the principles of the 'Mitigation Hierarchy'.

This is an internationally recognised approach that ensures the best outcome for biodiversity and limits as far as possible the negative impacts on biodiversity from development.

The mitigation hierarchy is delivered by first avoiding, then minimising, restoring and finally offsetting. Prevention of impacts (through avoidance and minimisation) should be applied to the maximum extent practicable before remediation (through restoration and offsetting).



Application of the mitigation hierarchy is central to the delivery of the following:

- **'No Net Loss'** of biodiversity occurs when biodiversity affected by a project or activity is measurably restored and offset to the same level as the baseline (as measured prior to the project/activity).
- **'Biodiversity Net Gain'** is the concept where any biodiversity loss arising from a project is measurably restored and offset to exceed the baseline level, such that the development results in a better state of biodiversity than before the development.



A. Integrate Biodiversity

Incorporate a Nature-Positive approach in ESB Networks’ business strategies, decision making, design, planning, construction, maintenance and activities directly undertaken by us and on our behalf.

Action		Timeframe
A1	Ensure ESB Networks integrates biodiversity into business decision making with particular regard to capital and operational expenditure.	By 2025
A2	Implement a mitigation hierarchy as part of project development and maintenance delivery, wherein avoidance and minimisation of biodiversity impacts are prioritised where reasonable before considering the need for restoration or offsetting.	By 2025
A3	Leverage the ‘Build Once for 2040’ approach to include biodiversity considerations for design and construction, thereby limiting potential future impacts.	Ongoing
A4	Raise awareness, understanding and engagement of biodiversity with respect to the importance of nature for the business and increase appreciation of biodiversity action-related performance, e.g. publicise Strategy, priorities, successes, challenges etc.	2024
A5	Progress internal surveys to establish an advocacy baseline, i.e. establish the level of biodiversity education and awareness in the business and identify gaps and know where to prioritise efforts	By 2025
A6	Refresh and reinvigorate engagement on biodiversity through various internal communication channels	Ongoing
A7	Further develop the ESB Networks biodiversity webpage, reporting regularly on action progress, case studies and staff engagement.	2024
A8	Identify and support the development of ESB Networks colleagues with a particular interest in the topic who would be willing to promote biodiversity.	By 2025



B. Enhance Nature Where We Operate

Deliver Biodiversity Net Gain for projects at sites within ESB Networks ownership and ensure No Net Loss of biodiversity at a national level when carrying out operational and maintenance activities.

Action		Timeframe
B1	ESB Networks will trial existing and in-development Biodiversity Net Gain toolkits (quantitative and qualitative) with regard to their application for projects at existing asset sites and greenfield locations.	2024
B2	A methodology for Biodiversity Net Gain delivery and measurement will be agreed during 2024, with subsequent roll-out for a suite of projects in 2025 and in following years.	2024
B3	ESB Networks will collate and assess its primary impacts on biodiversity in line with CSRD criteria.	2025
B4	ESB Networks will progressively establish a baseline of biodiversity at all significant landholdings, based on desktop data, previous ecological studies and updated site surveys where applicable. Baseline data (including habitat classification and condition) will be consolidated in a single mapping resource to facilitate targeting of actions and future assessments of success measurement with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain.	2025-2029
B5	'No Net Loss' of Biodiversity will be embedded into operational activities to ensure ecological features are protected insofar as possible from a public safety perspective. Where habitat loss on third party lands cannot be feasibly avoided, measures to offset habitat loss will be implemented, on or off-site where necessary.	2025
B6	Where feasible, maintenance activities with the potential to cause ecological disturbance should be scheduled during optimum periods to prevent and minimise such effects, in consultation with contractors and other competent parties.	Ongoing
B7	Opportunities to deliver biodiversity action through 'Nature Based Solutions' will be embedded into project design for developments at existing ESB Networks properties where feasible.	2026

Action		Timeframe
B8	ESB Networks will develop a guide comprising practical landscaping measures that can be implemented across a wide range of asset locations and settings, including substations and depots. Actions will focus on optimum habitat management and creation for sites comprising hedgerows, treelines, woodland, grassland, ditches, manicured areas and other features.	2025
B9	For larger sites, those with features of higher ecological value or ones in proximity to designated areas, site-specific Biodiversity Management Plans will be developed and implemented through the involvement of the Environment Team and Local Management.	2026
B10	Site management actions will be incorporated into tender documentation for future maintenance contracts.	Ongoing
B11	ESB Networks will develop a funding model to support practical measures and other components of the Biodiversity Strategy	Ongoing





C. Build Capacity

Promote biodiversity awareness among our staff, contractors and suppliers and embed these values through ongoing advocacy and continuing professional development.

Action		Timeframe
C1	Led by specialists within the Environmental Team, ESB Networks will deliver and/or facilitate biodiversity training for relevant staff and contractors.	Ongoing
C2	A printed informative handbook will be developed for relevant ESB Networks staff which will outline a suite of habitats and species which may be encountered at asset locations or during the normal course of work. The handbook will summarise how to identify such features, their ecological significance, levels of protection and what actions should be implemented to avoid impacts and deliver enhancements.	2025
C3	Case-specific advice will be delivered to ESB Networks staff where opportunities for biodiversity enhancement are identified by colleagues.	Ongoing
C4	Regular updates and educational supports on biodiversity will be provided to all relevant internal stakeholders within ESB Networks, through core briefs, contribution to regional staff meetings etc.	Ongoing
C5	A Working Group/Forum of ESB Networks colleagues representing a cross-section of the business will be established and convened on a regular basis to review progress of the Biodiversity Strategy.	2025
C6	ESB Networks will explore the feasibility of including a biodiversity training module in the apprenticeship curriculum at the Networks Training Centre.	2025





D. Explore Synergies For Biodiversity

Foster proactive engagement with other utilities, public bodies, stakeholders and the communities in which we operate to identify synergies for the delivery of biodiversity action at a range of scales across the country.

Action		Timeframe
D1	ESB Networks, working with relevant partners and community groups, will use case-study sites to deliver student education and local outreach schemes.	2024-2029
D2	Where feasible, ESB Networks will work collaboratively with its commercial customers with large landholdings in proximity to Networks assets to encourage sympathetic biodiversity action at such sites.	2025-2029
D3	ESB Networks will contribute to working groups with other utilities to facilitate a strategically aligned approach to biodiversity action and net gain.	Ongoing
D4	ESB Networks will contribute to ESB Group's engagement with the Business for Biodiversity Platform and support the development of the platform's Community of Practice for the energy sector, advocating a 'Nature Positive' approach to business.	Ongoing
D5	ESB Networks will continue to engage with key environmental stakeholders such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) and Local Authority Biodiversity Officers in undertaking plans, projects and activities that have the potential to impact biodiversity.	Ongoing
D6	Where appropriate, ESB Networks will consult with landowners on third party sites containing Networks assets with regard to opportunities for delivering and maintaining biodiversity actions.	2025-2029
D7	ESB Networks will collaborate with EirGrid with regard to the delivery of current and future biodiversity-specific recommendations for Transmission projects and assets, including those contained within the EirGrid Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)-Related Monitoring Report for the Grid Implementation Plan 2017-2022, Draft Grid Implementation Plan 2023-2029 and 'Nature Inclusive Design' pilot projects.	Ongoing



E. Innovate and Improve

Seize opportunities to apply innovation and novel technologies to biodiversity protection, enhancement, monitoring and reporting by ESB Networks.

Action		Timeframe
E1	ESB Networks will trial the re-purposing of various retired sites for biodiversity benefit, cost reductions and circularity improvements.	Ongoing
E2	ESB Networks will continue to support research on wildlife protection products and impact mitigation technology delivered through relevant utility sector membership bodies such as the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and EurElectric.	Ongoing
E3	Testing of novel designs of bird flight diverters will be progressed through the identification of case study locations (for a number of bird species) for subsequent deployment and monitoring.	2025-2029
E4	ESB Networks will explore the development of offsetting for habitat disturbance arising from necessary public safety activities, particularly with regard to the maintenance of timber clearance from live overhead lines.	2025-2029
E5	A data-driven approach to biodiversity action will be promoted within ESB Networks, including the trialling of novel Geographic Information System (GIS) tools, datasets and/or third-party services to identify potential impacts, develop feasible solutions, facilitate monitoring of action success and ensure accurate reporting and disclosure.	2025
E6	ESB Networks will test the use of existing and new Impacts and Dependencies toolkits and Natural Capital Assessment systems in the consideration of effects of operations and works.	2026





F. Act Responsibly

Ensure that all ESB Networks activities comply with relevant biodiversity legislation, effectively consider impacts and dependencies and support national and regional biodiversity policies or schemes as appropriate.

Action		Timeframe
F1	ESB Networks will support and deliver the objectives of the Fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan, including any specific requirements deemed applicable to the respective Public Authorities by the Minister.	Ongoing
F2	ESB Networks will collate and assess biodiversity-related impacts and dependencies of assets and operating protocols, such as wildlife damage to infrastructure and habitat-related constraints to maintenance works. Mitigation measures to manage such dependencies will be developed using evidence-based studies.	2025-2029
F3	The ESB Networks Environment Team will develop procedures and relevant training for relevant staff on the identification of invasive plant and animal species which may be encountered during typical project and maintenance activities. The significance of invasive species and legal implications of their spread will be communicated to all site staff and to contractors working on behalf of ESB Networks. ESB Networks will update and re-circulate protocols and processes with regard to the reporting of invasive species on internal systems and ensure output actions are deployed and monitored.	2024-2025
F4	ESB Networks will establish a framework of invasive species specialist contractors who will prepare biosecurity protocols, site-specific management plans and/or secure licenses for transport and disposal as appropriate.	2025
F5	ESB Networks will collate and report locations of invasive species to the appropriate bodies (Local Authorities / National Biodiversity Data Centre). ESB Networks will contribute to the implementation of National invasive species response strategies as they are rolled out.	2025
F6	In support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP), ESB Networks will develop, communicate and support management practices for grass-cutting at relevant sites to improve local nectar resources for pollinators, whilst promoting the retention of existing habitats important for pollinators and the development of physical features which support them, such as bare earth banks and hibernating structures.	Ongoing

Action		Timeframe
F7	As part of project design for the development of sites, ESB Networks will incorporate the use of native and where feasible, locally-sourced stock for planting, including bulbs, shrubs and trees as appropriate.	2025-2029
F8	ESB Networks will trial alternatives to established herbicide usage on respective properties and minimise and/or eliminate its use where feasible.	2025-2029
F9	<p>All ESB Networks plans, projects and activities will be in line with legislative requirements and best practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations (as amended) and consequent requirements for Screening for Appropriate Assessment. • Comply with the requirements of the Wildlife Acts (as amended). • Consult with in-house or external ecological consultants from the ESB Ecological Services Framework, where required. • Ensure biodiversity commitments arising from planning conditions are implemented in full, for distribution and transmission projects. • Measures for biodiversity protection and enhancement are integrated into local Environmental Management Systems. 	Ongoing



Glossary Of Terms

Baseline

Qualitative and quantitative information on the biodiversity features occurring at a site, their current condition, trends, and value before a project commences.

Biodiversity

Biological diversity (shortened to biodiversity) refers to the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems (UNEP, 1992).

Biodiversity Management Plan

A plan outlining the details of a site's biodiversity features of value to be retained, restored, created, and enhanced as part of a project or maintenance regime. It includes design objectives, management and monitoring prescriptions, work schedule, roles, and responsibilities of those delivering the plan.

Biodiversity Metric

A biodiversity metric is a standardised technique for measuring change in biodiversity value.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Where any biodiversity loss arising from a project is measurably restored and offset to exceed the baseline level, such that the development results in a better state of biodiversity than before the development.

Biodiversity No Net Loss

Where impacts on biodiversity caused by a project are balanced or outweighed by measures taken to avoid and minimise the project's impacts, undertaking on-site restoration and finally offsetting any residual impacts, so that no loss remains.

CSRD

The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, which requires companies to report on the impact of corporate activities on the environment and society and requires the audit assurance of reported information.

Ecosystem services

Functions of nature which have beneficial value to humans, such as the pollination of crops by insects or flood attenuation provided by wetlands.

Minimisation

Actions taken to reduce the adverse effect of impacts to biodiversity from development or operational activities of an asset.

Glossary Of Terms

Mitigation Measures

A collective term for all activities taken to implement the stages of the mitigation hierarchy i.e., avoidance, minimisation, restoration and offset.

Nature-based Solutions

Actions to address societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of both natural and modified ecosystems, benefiting both biodiversity and human well-being.

Nature Positive

An approach to business wherein resources are mobilised to enhance ecosystems and enrich biodiversity as part of a global societal goal to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 on a 2020 baseline and achieve full recovery by 2050.

Restoration

Activities required to re-establish biodiversity back to the baseline state that was lost because of a development's direct impacts on biodiversity features.

Offsetting

Measures undertaken on-site and off-site to compensate for any residual impacts of a project.





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