

Civic Offices, Limerick Road,
Nenagh, County Tipperary



**SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE on**

Climate Action Plan 2021

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Introduction to An Fóram Uisce

An Fóram Uisce | The Water Forum (hereafter, An Fóram) was established in June 2018 in accordance with the provisions of Part 5 of the Water Services Act 2017. An Fóram is the only statutory body representative of all stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies. An Fóram consists of 28 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connections to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

1. Introduction

An Fóram Uisce welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Climate Action Plan 2021. In August 2020, An Fóram Uisce | the Water Forum made a submission to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage proposing a **Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management**, a new approach to managing Ireland's waters and natural environment. This new approach aims to bring disciplines and organisations responsible for water and environmental management (including climate action) together to address Ireland's 21st Century environmental challenges in an integrated and co-ordinated manner to achieve synergies and co-benefits whilst maximising resource efficiencies.

Addressing policy drivers such as the EU Green Deal; Biodiversity Strategy; Farm to Fork; the new CAP as well as national imperatives such as Climate Adaptations; EPA State of the Environment Report 2020 recommendations; UN Sustainable Development Goals requires a co-ordinated action by all stakeholders working together for identified goals.

The proposed *Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management* will enable greater cooperation between different agencies, industries and civil society to more effectively plan and manage areas of mutual interest and resolve conflicts where competing interests (real or perceived) occur. The overarching aim is better environmental outcomes along with a sustainable economy.

2.1 Integrated approach

The components of our natural environment are interlinked – air, water, ecosystems, soils, rocks, land, landscapes (Figure 1) therefore management of these components in the context of society's needs for nourishing food, good health, economic well-being needs also to be undertaken in a comprehensive, holistic and integrated manner. An Fóram Uisce is proposing the adoption of a systems approach in the form of a *Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management* that builds on the Integrated Catchment Management approach used in water resource management but broadens it to include ecosystems, air, water, climate adaptation and mitigation, soil conservation, spatial planning and sustainable food and timber production. This new framework aims to take a whole-of-system approach that will require multi-disciplinary, multi-objective and multi-stakeholder integration and engagement to link the environmental components and human activities within a

catchment to optimise water quality returns while also delivering co-benefits for biodiversity and climate change.

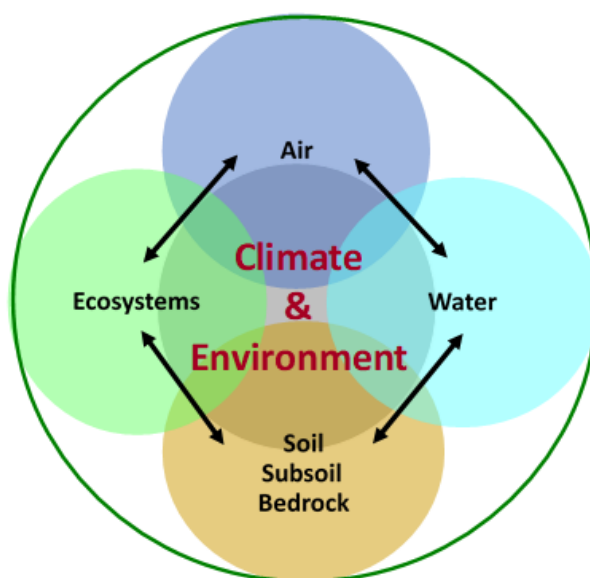


Figure 1. Climate action has co-benefits for water, ecosystems and soils and a holistic, catchment-based approach to all actions is recommended.

The development and implementation of such an integrated approach is likely to require whole-of-government management and co-ordination. It will require agencies to work together to identify, develop and deliver environmental solutions.

2.2 Catchment focused co-benefits

Recognising that the systems of land, water and air are interdependent creates major challenges with regards to their management. It also brings into focus potential co-benefits of actions – that a positive intervention in one realm can deliver positive consequences in others. Using catchments as the landscape/spatial units but approached from a holistic systemic-perspective, simultaneously focusing on the atmospheric system, the ecosystem and the geosystem triggers a virtuous dynamic within and between all three systems in a coherent drive towards environmental enhancement.

Characterising the catchment in an integrated manner enables cost-effectiveness and environmental co-benefits of management actions to be optimised while taking account of trade-offs and avoiding conflict:

- ◆ It encourages a multifunctional approach to land-use, encompassing all the particular ecosystem, geosystem and atmospheric system services in a catchment area¹.

¹ Towards Integrated Water Management (TIMe), Rolston *et. al.*, 2016 <http://bit.ly/eparesearch180>

- ◆ It facilitates greater integration of resource use, including nutrient cycling, spatial distribution of 'natural' and productive land, and renewable energy generation and biofuels.
- ◆ It encourages identification of those situations in which management practices that achieve benefits for one environmental issue could conflict with the delivery of other environmental priorities so that such conflicts can be resolved.
- ◆ It enables agri-environmental and forestry environmental schemes to be considered as an integrated process.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, all environmental spheres (air, water, soils, ecosystems) are interrelated and interlinked. Managing these components, in the context of society's needs for food, good health and economic wellbeing, must be undertaken in a cohesive, holistic, systematic and integrated manner; otherwise efforts are at risk of being ineffective and inefficient. Using the FILLM as the overarching framework for environmental management provides a means of connecting legislation and policies such as the Water Framework Directive, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Floods Directive, the Drinking Water Directive, Climate Change adaptation and mitigation, soil conservation, spatial planning and sustainable food and timber production.

An Fóram Uisce believes that now, whilst the Common Agricultural Policy is being reformed, the Agri-Food Strategy 2030 is being developed, the Nitrates Action Programme and the National Development Plan are being reviewed, the River Basin Management Plan is being drafted and the Climate Action Plan is being developed, transformational changes that can be realised through the implementation of the FILLM is needed to meet Ireland's climate and other environmental objectives into the future.

An Fóram Uisce would like to thank the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage for the opportunity to participate in this consultation and hopes that its views will be taken on board and are happy to engage further should any clarifications be required.

The FILLM document is available at: [Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management](#)

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