

# BLUE GREEN CITY

## Blue and Green Infrastructure for Sustainable Cities



## Action Plan

Southern Regional Assembly (IRE)

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## Part 1: Project Information

### 1.1 Introduction to the Project

Blue Green City seeks to improve policies that promote Blue and Green Infrastructure (BGI) as an integral part of local and regional policies across planning, heritage and biodiversity. It seeks to increase individual, organisational, stakeholder and external knowledge of BGI through project events, workshops and training.

This will be done through interregional policy learning process and collaboration in finding common solutions to common challenges posed by climate change adaptation and by sharing experience and exchanging good practices.

The objectives of the Blue Green City project are:

- Development of an Action Plan by each partner
- The improvement of public funds allocation (mainly structural funds but also other funds) directly related to the main outputs (Action Plans)
- The development of good practice recommendations for improving policy instruments that promote the value of BGI as an integral part of a local or regional natural heritage preservation strategy

### 1.2 Blue Green City Partners

The Blue Green City project partners are:

- Metropolis Nice Cote d'Azur, France (Lead Partner)
- University of Greenwich, UK
- Piedmont Region, Italy
- Southern Regional Assembly, Ireland
- Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency, Romania
- City of Ingolstadt, Germany
- Rijeka Development Agency, Croatia
- Municipality of Växjö, Sweden

### 1.3 Partner Organisation: Southern Regional Assembly

**Description:** The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland. It is primarily focused on:

- formulation, adoption, and implementation of its Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES),
- oversight and coordination of Local Economic and Community Plans,
- management of EU co-funded Programmes,
- EU project participation,
- supporting and promoting public sector participation in EU Programmes,
- implementation of national economic policy.

**Country:** Ireland

**NUTS2 Region:** Southern Region

**Contact person:** David Kelly, Director

**Email address:** [dkelly@southernassembly.ie](mailto:dkelly@southernassembly.ie)

**Phone number:** +35351860707

## Part 2: Policy Context of the Regional Action Plan

### 2.1 Policy Instrument Addressed

The [Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy \(RSES\)](#) for the Southern Region is the policy instrument addressed by the SRA in the Blue Green City project and our Action Plan.

The RSES provides a statutory long-term, strategic development framework for the spatial, economic and social development of the Region, in line with the vision and objectives for national change in the [National Planning Framework \(NPF\)](#) and the [National Development Plan \(NDP\)](#).

The RSES was adopted by the Elected Members of the Southern Assembly in January 2020. We are now in the implementation stage. Therefore, the focus was on using the Blue Green City project as an **implementation tool** for the RSES.

The RSES does not have a set source of funding. Its implementation is dependent on **policy alignment** from other policy documents. These include local authority Development Plans, investment plans, and policy documents from Government Departments and State Agencies. Policy alignment is a key implementation mechanism for the RSES and this is reflected in the actions of this plan.

It should be noted that the project application states that the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 is the policy instrument. However, it became apparent that the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 allowed little scope for influence and stakeholder interest was also limited. By instead selecting the RSES, we will achieve greater influence and implementation of BGI across our Region. This will also positively influence local authority Development Plans. In addition, our stakeholders were much more interested in RSES implementation as this is actively happening.

## 2.2 Policy Context for Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature Based Solutions (NBS)

The vision of our RSES is for the Southern Region to become one of Europe’s most **Creative and Innovative**, **Greenest** and **Liveable** regions.



*Figure 1: RSES Vision and Strategy Statements*

Figure 1 shows the 3 pillars of the vision. It is surrounded by **11 Regional Strategy Statements**. During the Blue Green City project, the SRA and stakeholders identified the Regional Strategy Statements that are positively impacted by Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature Based Solutions (NBS). This is

captured in Table 1 on the left column. Table 1 shows that the benefits that accrue are directly linked to the *National Strategic Outcomes* of the NPF and UN Sustainable Development Goals. BGI and NBS are thus important elements of policy implementation across a range of policy documents. Appendix 1 lists the specific Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Objectives which are positively influenced by implementing BGI and NBS concepts.

*Table 1: BGI and NBS – links to regional, national and international policy implementation*

<b>Regional</b> <i>Regional Strategy Statements of RSES positively influenced by BGI &amp; NBS</i>	<b>National</b> <i>National Strategic Outcomes positively influenced by BGI &amp; NBS</i>	<b>International</b> <i>UN Sustainable Development Goals positively influenced by BGI &amp; NBS</i>
 <p>1. Compact Growth</p>	 <p>Compact Growth</p>	
 <p>3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities</p>	 <p>Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities</p>	
 <p>9. Sustainable, Planned and Infrastructure-led Development</p>	 <p>Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and Other Environmental Resources</p>	
 <p>5. A Strong Economy</p>	 <p>A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills</p>	

 <p>7. Diversity, Language, Culture and Heritage Enhancement</p>	 <p>Enhanced Culture, Amenity and Heritage</p>	
 <p>8. Low Carbon, Climate Resilient and Sustainable Society</p>	 <p>Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society</p>	
 <p>10. A Healthy and Learning Region</p>	 <p>Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services</p>	

### 2.3 BGI and NBS – relevance to the RSES

By 2040, the population of the Region is projected to rise to almost two million, requiring new homes and jobs. The RSES sets a combined target growth of over 8,000 people per annum to 2040 for our three Cities. This level of growth has never been achieved in the State’s history. We therefore need to respond by delivering a new way forward.

It is within this context that BGI and NBS become extremely important in achieving regional policy. High-quality green and blue spaces are important not just for nature but also for human health and well-being, particularly in the context of an increasingly urban society and increasing settlement densities.

BGI and NBS are also important in addressing the urgency of Climate Change and planning our settlements sustainability to reduce carbon emissions, mitigate negative impacts on our environment, and improve the health of our natural environment and people.

The EPA State of Environment Report 2020 that state that the current assessment in relation to nature is very poor. Deteriorating trends dominate. 85% of EU protected habitats have an unfavourable status. Habitat changes point towards a deteriorating trend in overall biodiversity. Within this context, BGI and NBS are a necessary intervention to ensure the RSES can be in a reasonable position to achieve its vision to be one of the Greenest Regions in Europe.

## Part 3: Stakeholder Engagement

### 3.1 Regional Stakeholders

The Blue Green City project provided a unique opportunity for the SRA to investigate and understand the shared challenges in the implementation of BGI and NBS through the implementation of the RSES for the Southern Region.

The SRA always aspires to work with all 10 local authorities in its Region. However, due to time and resource constraints, this was not possible during this project. The SRA therefore engaged with three local authorities as an appropriate sample. These local authorities contain the three cities in their functional areas. This assisted in promoting cooperation and collaboration between the three cities to progress BGI and NBS. In addition, relevant State Agencies were included in the stakeholder group.

During the Blue Green City project, the SRA has primarily worked with the following stakeholders:

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Cork City Council
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Local Government
<b>Description</b>	Local authorities provide a range of services within their boundaries. In relation to the Blue Green City project the most relevant services are planning (forward planning and development management), parks maintenance and water services.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	As a constituent local authority within the Southern Region, the Council has an important and statutory role in implement Blue Green Infrastructure policies at the local level.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Limerick City and County Council
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Local Government
<b>Description</b>	Local authorities provide a range of services within their boundaries. In relation to the Blue Green City project the most relevant services are planning (forward planning and development management), parks maintenance and water services.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	As a constituent local authority within the Southern Region, the Council has an important and statutory role in implement Blue Green Infrastructure policies at the local level.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Waterford City and County Council
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Local Government
<b>Description</b>	Local authorities provide a range of services within their boundaries. In relation to the Blue Green City project the most relevant services are planning (forward planning and development management), parks maintenance and water services.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	As a constituent local authority within the Southern Region, the Council has an important and statutory role in implement Blue Green Infrastructure policies at the local level.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Irish Water
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Public Agency
<b>Description</b>	As Ireland's national water utility, Irish Water are responsible for providing water and wastewater services throughout Ireland.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	The correct management of surface water and wastewater is pivotal to sustainable development which is fundamental to the implementation of the RSES. Irish Water are therefore a key contributor to RSES implementation.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO)
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Public Agency
<b>Description</b>	LAWPRO is a national shared service working on behalf of all 31 local authorities in Ireland. They coordinate efforts to achieve good or high water quality in rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, and groundwater, as required by the European Union Water Framework Directive.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	Healthy rivers and catchments support a healthy environment, a robust economy, health, and well-being. LAWPRO provide an excellent overview and insight into how the water environment can be improved by the concepts of the Blue Green City project.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Office of Public Works (OPW)
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Public agency.
<b>Description</b>	The OPW is the lead organisation for flood risk management in Ireland.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	Managing flood risk and linking this to sustainable drainage systems, water quality and biodiversity improvement are all interlinked. The OPW provides an expert view on how flood risk may be mitigated. These elements are important to RSES implementation.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	National Biodiversity Data Centre
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Public agency
<b>Description</b>	The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national centre for the collection, collation, management, analysis and dissemination of data on Ireland's biological diversity.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	The National Biodiversity Data Centre provides a holistic view of biodiversity. This key in identifying opportunities for biodiversity gain in other areas e.g., flood risk, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Improving biodiversity is a key aim of the RSES.

<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>	Climate Regional Action Offices (CAROs)
<b>Type of Stakeholder</b>	Public agency
<b>Description</b>	The CAROs provide guidance, advice and support to Local Authorities to leverage the capability, reach and resources of the sector to effectively address climate change across Ireland.
<b>Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement</b>	According to the RSES, climate change is the most serious threat to human life and the environment. Therefore, its policies are built around creating a more climate resilient region. The CAROs are identified in the RSES as key enablers of climate action at local government level.

### **3.2 Problem Definition**

Southern Region stakeholder engagement in the Blue Green City project has found that there is a general lack of awareness and knowledge of BGI and NBS. Undoubtedly people and organisations are motivated and aspire to become greener and more climate change resilient. However, the pathway to reach this aspiration is not always clear. BGI and NBS concepts often struggle to reach practitioners. Communication issues often rooted in disciplinary silos hinder the effective integration of these concepts into both decision-making and implementation.

Stakeholder engagement found that the basic concepts of BGI and NBS are understood but are not applied at project level on a consistent basis. This implies that there are gaps in the policy approach (framework) and guidance (methodology). For example, in the Southern Region there is a lack of comprehensive BGI strategies for settlements. This in turn means that public authorities are reliant on sometimes vague objectives in Development Plans.

There is also a lack of guidance and limited transfer of knowledge from good practices on how to incorporate NBS into projects. Attenuation and hard engineering solutions (such as water attenuation tanks) still prevail. Thus, greater in-house knowledge, learning from good practices and a broadened understanding of BGI and NBS is needed.

### **3.3 Transfer of Learning for Improving Policy Instrument**

It is evident that some partners, like Växjö Kommun, are very advanced in their use of Ecosystem Services (ES) to inform their planning process. However, it is notable that a strong foundation was already established through strong policy approaches that have evolved over numerous years. This commitment has enabled more complex methods like ES to be implemented in their region.

Embracing an ES system should be a long-term aim for the Southern Region but what is necessary in the short to medium term is ensuring that practical incorporation and implementation of BGI and NBS at policy and project levels are addressed. In short, the Southern Region is at the nascent level in terms of policy development and project implementation.

For this reason, the journey Växjö has taken to arrive at their current level is a source of inspiration to the Southern Region. In 2013, Växjö established a structure and framework to develop Blue Green Infrastructure through a strategy and since then they have been formulating the nature-based methods to implement and complement this strategy. This approach was of particular interest to Cork City Council during the peer review of their Blue Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Prior to the Blue Green City project, no Blue Green Infrastructure Strategy had been prepared for any of the Region's three cities. However, two are currently underway in Cork and Limerick. This will assist in providing the vision for BGI but it needs to be supplemented by guidance on how to implement it.

The Animal-Aided Design (A-AD) concept from Ingolstadt is a species-centred approach which has huge potential to improve biodiversity through more targeting and informed design of developments. It is also an approach that developers will find useful in avoiding unnecessary delays. Supporting the use of this methodology in our Region amongst our partner stakeholders will strengthen the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, assisting with the implementation of RPO 126

Biodiversity, which requires local authorities acting with stakeholders to implement measures to identify, conserve and enhance biodiversity in the Region. This good practice from Ingolstadt shows the value of integrating the advice and inputs of ecologists from within the local authority, shared service between local authorities or as a procured service to input at an early stage in the planning, design, and tendering for projects, especially for local authority projects.

## Part 4: Policy Improvement – Implementation of the RSES

### 4.1 Statutory Submissions

The SRA has a statutory function to ensure alignment of local authority Development Plans with the RSES. The SRA therefore prepares statutory submissions on Development Plan reviews and variations. This is an important RSES implementation tool.

The SRA has used its statutory role as a prescribed body to promote local authority Development Plan alignment with BGI and NBS regional policy. Each submission has specifically cited the Blue Green City project and the importance of a strong local policy approach to BGI and NBS.

These statutory submissions were informed by the stakeholder engagement in the Blue Green City project as well as the emerging good practices. As the Blue Green City project evolved, so too did the BGI and NBS content and recommendations in SRA submissions. This has raised the ambition significantly for local policy and our local authorities have responded positively.

### 4.2 Blue Green Infrastructure Strategies

Two Blue Green Infrastructure Strategies are being prepared for the cities of Cork and Limerick. These are the two largest settlements in our Region. Such strategies have never been prepared before and this represents a new policy and implementation direction for these local authorities. These strategies will provide a clearer and more detailed framework for BGI and NBS. This was inspired by the approach from Växjö in Sweden. The Växjö partners have been in direct contact with Cork to assist in shaping their strategy by sharing their experience.

The work pioneered by Limerick and Cork has created a template for all our settlements to follow. This is not a template in a formal sense. It is simply local authorities consulting with each other on tender preparation and the specifics of what a BGI strategy should deliver and contain. The Blue Green City project was the catalyst for this cooperation.

Developing Blue Green Infrastructure Strategies in two of our three cities will improve placemaking and will greatly assist in retaining and attracting people to these cities. This will have a positive impact on the overall achievement of the RSES and will have a wider social and economic impact on the entirety of the Southern Region.

The good practice of A-AD from Ingolstadt has also benefitted the development of these strategies and projects that will be developed from them, showing the value of early ecologist input to add value to the design of projects. Both Cork City Council and Limerick City and County Council have exchanged advice and experience on inserting ecologist requirements in project tenders for landscaping adjacent to new walking and cycling pathways. This practice follows the principles of A-AD closely.

### 4.3 Other Improvements

Stakeholder engagement brought other issues to the fore including the lack of consistency in relation to sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and specifically the lack of nature-based SuDS. One of the stakeholders - Local Authorities Water and Community Office (LAWPRO) - is has develop a best practice guidance document: [\*"Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas"\*](#). Stakeholder discussions in the Blue Green City project was one of the

main catalysts to undertake and complete this work. The document aims to assist all of those involved in activities relevant to the management of rainwater and surface water runoff in urban areas.

The development of the Framework for BGI and NBS in Phase 1 of the project was informed by the Nature-based Solutions to surface water management document and complements it.

There have been webinars, online workshops and training sessions that have emerged from the stakeholder group. The Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) have led the way in training and workshops and the SRA were able to bring its BGI and NBS knowledge from the project to enhance and shape these initiatives.

#### **4.4 What does this Action Plan aim to achieve?**

The SRA aims to use the Blue Green City project to implement the RSES through better governance and monitoring. This is the policy change expected and this is the added value of the project.

In addition to its statutory role, the SRA uses a lot of 'soft' influencing mechanisms. This requires working with a host of organisation to ensure that better outcomes are reached and policy ambitions are raised to higher standards. This includes addressing knowledge gaps and assisting organisations to develop ways to achieve better alignment with the RSES.

These 'soft' influencing mechanism were applied in Phase 1 of the Blue Green City project as the SRA identified a significant gap in BGI and NBS knowledge. This prevented their application and was a major obstacle. The SRA worked with organisations to address this knowledge gap through training events, workshops and the development of a BGI and NBS Framework. This Framework was essential to inform organisation of BGI and NBS interventions in their plan or project and to plug the knowledge gap.

The purpose of the development of the Framework in Phase 1 was to inform the preparation work of this Action Plan. Actions in this Action Plan focus on improving governance and monitoring the application of education, training and the BGI and NBS Framework that were developed in Phase 1. The emphasis in Phase 2 is to ensure that issues such as governance and monitoring are fully developed to a high standard, which will ensure that the knowledge levels attained in Phase 1 are better applied and are further developed. This is essential to policy instrument improvement.

5.1 Good Practice 1 Animal-Aided Design

Title of G.P.	Animal-Aided Design
G.P. Owner (Region)	City of Ingolstadt
Can this G.P. address the policy need(s) identified in the previous section? If yes, how?	<p>Yes. The planning system is predominantly designed to examine the impact of development on protected habitats and species. Often, the presence of such a protected species at a project site is only revealed during the environmental impact assessment.</p> <p>This type of defensive conservation very often is a source of conflict between project development and species conservation, rather than taking a more proactive approach to finding solutions that promotes the creation of blue green infrastructure and Nature Based Solutions.</p> <p>Animal-Aided Design (A-AD) is a methodology for the design of open spaces and building projects which combine landscape architecture (aimed at humans) and nature conservation (aimed at biodiversity).</p> <p>Supporting the use of this methodology in our Region amongst our partner stakeholders will strengthen the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, assisting with the implementation of RPO 126 Biodiversity, which requires local authorities acting with stakeholders to implement measures to identify, conserve and enhance biodiversity in the Region.</p>
What elements of this G.P. are included in the policy improvement presented?	<p>The example of A-AD and transfer of knowledge in using specialist ecologist inputs at the planning and project design stages (an early and positive intervention). This has influenced the design of the Framework for developing BGI and NBS in the Southern Region which has been prepared in Phase 1 of the project and its application will be monitored in Phase 2..</p> <p>The tool of A-AD can also be used to forge partnership and collaboration between Local Authorities and stakeholders. Such positive approaches have been communicated with our Local Authorities in Phase 1 and will be extended to the two remaining Local Authorities in Phase 2.</p> <p>This will benefit the quality of our environment, placemaking and sustainable design. This will assist implementation of climate action and biodiversity policy objectives in the RSES (policy instrument).</p> <p>The A-AD tool will also assist the development sector in their role in achieving the objectives of the RSES, reducing delays in the planning and environmental assessment processes by</p>

	designing for nature as an early principle and enhancing the sustainable design and quality of projects.
Exchange/Transfer Process	The SRA with our stakeholder LAWPRO attended the on-line Animal Aided Design good practice workshop hosted by project partner City of Ingolstadt on 15th June 2021.

## 5.2 Good Practice 2 Växjö Green Infrastructure Strategy

Title of G.P.	Växjö
G.P. Owner (Region)	Växjö Kommun
Can this G.P. address the policy need(s) identified in the previous section? If yes, how?	<p>Yes. To assist statutory land use and spatial planning to incorporate stronger NBS and GBI principles and actions at the regional and local level, the G.P of applying a citywide Green Infrastructure Strategy and evolving a series of supporting technical guidance /handbooks as practical tools for stakeholders to design, create and maintain NBS and BGI at all stages of project development cycle addresses the policy need for stronger implementation of NBS and BGI objectives.</p> <p>It is a positive example of how the oversight and guidance through high level frameworks can set principles in place to shape city planning and project development positively for NBS and BGI design integration. This example can assist the implementation of NBS and BGI objectives in our Region.</p>
What elements of this G.P. are included in the policy improvement presented?	The transfer of learning from the Växjö Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013 and technical guidance documents such as Blue-Green-Grey systems, led through city and regional authority collaborations, has directly influenced our recommendations to strengthen local level policies and actions. It also informed the preparation of a Framework for Development BGI and NBS in the Southern Region in Phase 1.
Exchange/Transfer Process	The SRA attended an on-line peer review workshop between SRA, Växjö Kommun and Cork City Council hosted on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021

### 6.1 Regional Action 1

**Title of Action: Improve the Governance of the RSES by establishing a network for BGI and NBS in the Southern Region.**

#### 6.1.1 The Background

Stakeholder's consultations in Phase 1 found that there is no dedicated staff to take ownership of BGI and NBS in local authorities. This raises practical questions: who is in charge? Who applies and implements BGI and NBS concepts? Action 1 aims to address this problem.

Action 1 will establish a **network** of relevant people per local authority who will take ownership of BGI and NBS issues. The local authorities will have the choice in nominating their representative/s to the network. The network will also contain representatives of relevant State organisations that can assist the work of the network.

The network will address the issue of ownership and practical application of BGI and NBS. It will be a support to local authorities and will offer a forum to enhance knowledge. Moreover, it will better implement RSES and local policy through better governance and structures.

#### 6.1.2 Main Objective of Action 1

The main objective of Action 1 is to establish better governance and structures at a regional level to ensure BGI and NBS are implemented. This will be done through the establishment of a BGI and NBS network of local authority staff and State Agencies in the Southern Region.

#### 6.1.3 Implementation Steps

**Step 1: Establishment of a Steering Group to prepare and agree the Terms of Reference and working arrangements for the BGI and NBS network.**

A Steering Group will be established to define the Terms of Reference of the BGI and NBS network and its working arrangements. The Steering Group is essential to gain buy-in from organisations and to determine its remit.

*Timescale:* February 2022 to June 2022.

*Cost:* There will be staff costs to the SRA. We estimate that three people dedicating 25% of their time to this step will cost €32,740.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Quarterly meetings of the Steering Group (Minutes and Agenda to be provided). September /December 2022 and every quarter onwards (exact dates subject to confirmation)

- Finalisation of the Terms of Reference (ToR) by the end of June 2022 (final ToR document prepared)

### **Step 2: Consultation with Elected Members**

The Terms of Reference and progress with the Steering Group (as outlined in Step 1) will be presented to the Elected Members of the SRA at the Assembly meeting in July 2022. The purpose is to address any comments or concerns by the Elected Members and to inform them of progress.

*Timescale:* July 2022.

*Cost:* There will be staff costs to the SRA. We estimate that two people dedicating 20% of their time to this step will cost €17,148.

*Performance Indicators:*

- the Agenda and Minutes of the Assembly Meeting in July 2022 (Minutes and Agenda to be provided).

### **Step 3: Establish and commence the work of the BGI and NBS Network**

The SRA will establish and commence the work of the BGI and NBS network. There will be at least one meeting of the network before Phase 2 ends. The SRA will organise the meeting/s and will assist in the preparation of the agenda.

*Timescale:* From September 2022 2022 to January 2023.

*Cost:* There will be staff costs to the SRA. We estimate that three people dedicating 20% of their time to this step will cost €26,192.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Inaugural meeting of the BGI and NBS network in September 2022 (Minutes and Agenda to be provided).

#### **6.1.4 Policy Instrument Improvement and Changes Expected**

There is currently a gap in governance/structures to ensure RSES BGI and NBS policy is implemented. Lack of clarity on who takes ownership and responsibility is the critical problem. This requires improvement and change

This action will improve our policy instrument through establishing a regional structure and governance that will ensure BGI and NBS is better implemented. This will result in better clarification on responsibility and ownership. The establishment of the BGI and NBS network is the change expected.

### **6.1.5 Players Involved**

- Staff of the SRA
- The Blue Green City Stakeholder Forum (Section 3.1 of the Action Plan)
- Elected Members of the SRA

### **6.1.6 Timescale**



### **6.1.7 Costs**

Staff costs are estimated under each step. the overall estimated staff cost to the SRA is €76,080

## **6.2 Regional Action 2: Monitoring the integration and application of BGI and NBS in the Southern Region**

### **6.2.1. The Background**

Stakeholder consultations in Phase 1 identified a significant knowledge gap in BGI and NBS in our Region. This was addressed in Phase 1 by training events, workshops and the development of a Framework for BGI and NBS. The Framework was inspired by the Animal Aided Design good practice from Ingolstadt and the Växjö experience of developing their BGI strategy. It informs the user of the types of NBS that can be applied to various settlements in different types of landscapes. It also assists the user to connect blue and green spaces to form a stronger network of BGI.

Action 2 proposes to monitor the application of this education, training and the BGI and NBS Framework. This will be done by monitoring the integration of BGI and NBS in emerging policy documents in the Southern Region. This includes the Climate Action Plans that will be prepared by local authorities.

### **6.2.2. Main Objective of Action 2**

The aim is to monitor the impact of education, training and the BGI and NBS Framework (all of which were completed in Phase 1). Analysis will be focused on the alignment to the RSES policy objectives and the application of the Framework for BGI and NBS. This work will directly inform the work of the BGI and NBS network as detailed in Action 1. Its purpose is therefore to assist governance through effective monitoring.

### **6.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

#### **Step 1. Prepare a monitoring template report.**

This template will capture the following information:

- Name of policy document
- Responsible organisation
- Synopsis of the approach to BGI and NBS
- Analysis of its alignment with the RSES
- Analysis of the application of the Framework for BGI and NBS

*Timescale:* February 2022.

*Cost:* There will be staff costs to the SRA. We estimate that three people dedicating 10% of their time to this step will cost €13,096.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Finalisation of the monitoring template report by the end of February 2022.

## **Step 2. Prepare monitoring reports on all relevant policy documents**

Relevant policy document will include:

- Development Plans (local authorities)
- Local Area Plans (local authorities)
- Climate Action Plans (local authorities)
- Guidance documents by national Departments
- Policy documents by State Agencies

*Timescale:* March 2022 to December 2022.

*Cost:* There will be staff costs to the SRA. We estimate that three people dedicating 20% of their time to this step will cost €26,192.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Quarterly monitoring reports commencing October 2022

## **Step 3. Submission of an overall Monitoring Report with recommendations to the BGI and NBS network**

An overall monitoring report will be prepared in January 2023. This will provide an overall analysis of the monitoring results throughout the previous period. It will provide a series of recommendation for improvement to the BGI and NBS network for their consideration. This report will therefore inform governance decisions.

*Timescale:* January 2023.

*Cost:* There will be staff costs to the SRA. We estimate that three people dedicating 10% of their time to this step will cost €€13,096.

*Performance Indicators:*

- An overall monitoring report and recommendations will be prepared and submitted to the BGI and NBS network by January 2023.
- Monitoring of policy documents that refer to the application of the BGI and NBS Framework to be reported on in each Quarterly Monitoring Report.

### **6.2.4 Policy Instrument Improvement and Changes Expected**

This action will improve our policy instrument by monitoring the alignment of RSES policy objectives in policy documents. It is a statutory requirement that all policy documents align with the RSES. However, this action will pay particular focus to the alignment of the regional BGI and NBS policy objectives.

. Work in Phase 1 helped bridge the knowledge gap though training and the development of the BGI and NBS Framework, but Phase 2 will monitor how this knowledge is applied and mainstreamed in policy documents. This is a significant change as while the motivation is currently in place to develop

BGI and NBS, it isn't clear if this will be done and to what standard Action 2 proposes to monitor the application of this enhanced knowledge in Phase 2.

Action 2 will enhance governance of BGI and NBS by feeding directly into the BGI and NBS network (see Action 1). This will inform the network of issues and challenges in the application of BGI and NBS.

Improvements in governance and monitoring of BGI and NBS are the most significant changes expected.

#### **6.2.5. Players involved**

- SRA staff:
- Regional stakeholders who will be part of the BGI and NBS network (see Action 1)

#### **6.2.6. Timeframe**



**Regional Action 2**

**Step 1: February 2022**

**Step 2: March 2022 to December 2022**

**Step 3: January 2023**

#### **6.2.7. Costs**

Work in Phase 2 will be covered by the SRA. Staff costs are estimated under each step. The overall estimated staff cost to the SRA is €52,384.

## Appendix A: RSES Policy Objectives Implemented by Blue Green City

The Blue Green City project has the potential to deliver a very significant impact in the area of BGI and NBS. This will assist in delivering the regional policy objectives listed below:

### Ch 1 Introduction

- RPO 1 Environmental Assessment

### Ch 3 People and Places

- RPO 5 Population Growth and Environmental Criteria
- RPO 6 Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas
- RPO 10 Compact Growth in Metropolitan Areas
- RPO 11 Key Towns
- RPOs 12 to 25 inclusive (individual RPOs for the 14 Key Towns)
- RPO 26 Towns and Villages
- RPO 31 Sustainable Place Framework

### Ch 4 A Strong Economy-Innovative and Smart

- RPO 55 Retail
- RPO 61 Health Place Audit (HPA) for Placemaking

### Ch 5 Environment

- RPO 88 National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework
- RPO 89 Building Resilience to Climate Change
- RPO 90 Regional Decarbonisation
- RPO 110 Ecosystem Services
- RPO 111 Water Resources
- RPO 112 Water Quality
- RPO 113 Floods Directive

- RPO 114 Flood Risk Management Objectives
- RPO 115 Flood Risk Management Plans
- RPO 116 Planning System and Flood Risk Management
- RPO 117 Flood Risk Management and Biodiversity
- RPO 119 Flood Relief Schemes
- RPO 120 Flooding and Coastal Erosion
- RPO 121 Effective Collaboration to Implement River Basin Management Plans and Water Framework Directive
- RPO 122 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- RPO 123 River Basin Management Plan and Spatial Planning
- RPO 124 Green Infrastructure
- RPO 125 Green Infrastructure Corridors
- RPO 126 Biodiversity
- RPO 127 Invasive Species
- RPO 128 All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020
- RPO 130 Air Quality

## **Ch 7 Quality of Life**

- RPO 175 Improving Regional Quality of Life through Infrastructure-led Planning
- RPO 200 Green Infrastructure and Recreation
- RPO 201 National Trails, Walking Routes, Greenway and Blueway Corridors
- RPO 202 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Built Heritage assets

## **Ch 8 Water and Energy Utilities**

- RPO 211 Irish Water and Wastewater
- RPO 212 Strategic Wastewater Treatment Facilities
- RPO 213 Rural Wastewater Treatment Programmes
- RPO 214 Eliminating Untreated Discharges and Long-term Planning

- RPO 215 Separation of Foul and Surface Water Networks
- RPO 216 Servicing of Rural Villages
- RPO 217 Storm Water Infrastructure
- RPO 218 Sustainable Urban Drainage and Rainwater Harvesting

#### **Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (CMASP)**

- Cork MASP Objective 1 Cork Metropolitan Area
- Objective 2 Cork City
- Objective 3 Cork Harbour
- Objective 16 Retail
- Objective 17 Metropolitan Open Space, Recreation and Greenbelt Strategy
- Objective 18 Transformational Areas and Public Realm
- Objective 19 Flood Risk Management
- Objective 21 Healthy Cities, Healthy Environment and Health Infrastructure

#### **Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (LSMASP)**

- Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 1 Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area
- Objective 2 Limerick City
- Objective 3 Shannon
- Objective 17 Retail
- Objective 20 Metropolitan Open Space, Recreation and Greenbelt Strategy
- Objective 21 Public Realm and Placemaking
- Objective 23 Healthy Cities and Health Infrastructure

#### **Waterford Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (WMASP)**

- Waterford MASP Objective 1 Waterford Metropolitan Area
- Objective 9 Vibrant City Centre

- Objective 19 Retail
- Objective 21 Metropolitan Open Space, Recreation and Greenbelt Strategy
- Objective 25 Healthy Cities

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022

**Name of the organisation:** Southern Regional Assembly

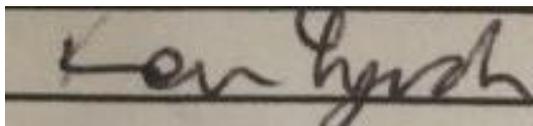
**Signatures of the relevant organisation:**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

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David Kelly,

Director, Southern Regional Assembly

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

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Kevin Lynch,

Assistant Director, Regional Planning Unit, Southern Regional Assembly