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Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil



EPA Research Programme 2021-2030

EPA Research Call 2026 – Technical Description Document

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Document Version History

Version No.	Changes Made
Version 1	Initial version of document for EPA Research Call 2026

EPA Research Call 2026

This document provides the Technical Description for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Research Call 2026. Applicants should read this document carefully and also consult the other call documentation: (i) EPA Research 2021 - 2030 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions; (ii) EPA Research Evaluation Process.

Contents

Introduction	1
EPA Research 2030.....	1
EPA Research Hubs.....	1
EPA Research Call 2026.....	2
Overview	2
Available Funding	2
Co-funding partnerships.....	2
Timeframe	2
Application Process	3
Evaluation Process.....	4
Expected Outputs	4
Scope of EPA Research Call 2026	4
Cross-cutting theme*	6
Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs.....	7
Delivering a Healthy Environment.....	9
Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy.....	11
Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment.....	13
Further Information	15

Introduction

As part of its wide range of functions, the EPA manages an environmental research programme that delivers essential scientific support for environmental policy development, implementation and broader decision making. The EPA Research Programme focuses on achieving environmental objectives, informing policy and bringing together researchers and research users.

EPA Research 2030

[EPA Research 2030](#) is the ten-year high-level framework for the EPA's research programme (2021-2030), designed to be agile, responsive and flexible. EPA-funded research is essential to:

- Supporting the monitoring, assessment, reporting and regulatory activities of the EPA.
- Generating evidence crucial in assisting Ireland in meeting its commitments and requirements under the various international, EU and national policies and strategies.
- Generating the evidence base that supports decision making, behaviour change and policy development.
- Addressing knowledge gaps, providing the evidence-base and responding to priority challenges.
- Supporting multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnership projects.
- Developing environmental research capacity in Ireland, recognising the importance of not only sustaining the research-base but also of building and training the researchers in specific areas.

EPA Research Hubs

EPA Research 2030 has a thematic structure comprising the following four interconnected hubs, which bring an integrated and cross-sectoral approach, enabling holistic management and protection of our environment:

Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs: Climate change is already having an impact in Ireland, and strong mitigation and adaptation measures are needed. Research is essential in providing the evidence necessary to improve our knowledge systems and inform policy decisions that will advance our ambitions to be carbon neutral and resilient to climate disruption.

Delivering a Healthy Environment: A clean, vibrant and safe environment is a prerequisite for good health and wellbeing. Environmental degradation, pollution, as well as known and emerging substances of concern threaten our health and that of our supporting ecosystems. Research under this hub will contribute to understanding the environmental risks and benefits to our health, and to identifying appropriate policy and behavioural responses.

Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy: Environmental and sustainability challenges are inextricably linked to economic activities and lifestyles. Research under this hub will contribute to the mainstreaming of sustainable management of natural resources and waste, unlocking the potential of the circular and bio-economies, and boosting competitiveness, through resource efficiency and deployment of innovative technologies and solutions.

Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment: Our natural environment provides us with clean air and water, food and the raw materials to sustain us and our economy. Research is required to inform and support a cross-sectoral approach to managing our natural environment and for the development of policies relating to the regulation of emissions and activities, and the protection of our water, land, and ecosystems.

EPA Research Call 2026

Overview

The EPA Research Call 2026 invites submissions under a range of broad research Themes with the aim of supporting innovative projects that will inform policy and build capacity in current and emerging priority areas. The research areas included in the call have been selected from the [EPA Thematic Research Priorities 2024-2026](#). Detailed descriptions, including the background and envisaged scope, of the Themes in this call are provided [later in this document](#) and applicants are advised to review these carefully.

Available Funding

Awards made under this call will be for Medium Scale Projects, which have either:

- A maximum duration of two years and maximum funding available of €330,000.
- A maximum duration of four years and maximum funding available of €660,000.

The permitted duration and funding are specified in the Technical Description for the Theme. The duration and budget for any proposed project should reflect the resources required to achieve the objectives and be justified in the application form and budget template.

It is envisaged that up to three projects will be funded under most research Themes. It is noted that, should funding recommendations be approved for the maximum number of projects to be supported under the call, some projects may be placed on a reserve list to be funded at the beginning of 2027¹.

Co-funding partnerships

The EPA is pleased to announce that the EPA Research Call 2026 involves a partnership with Met Éireann, who may provide co-funding for any proposals selected for funding that are aligned with their research priorities. Other organisations may also provide co-funding, where relevant.



Met Éireann's mission is to monitor, analyse and predict Ireland's weather and climate and to provide a range of high quality meteorological and related information. As Ireland's National Meteorological Service, Met Éireann is maintained by the State under the UN Convention of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). It is the public service scientific organisation responsible to the Irish State for the collection and production of high-quality meteorological data; the communication of authoritative weather and climate services to protect life and property, and to promote wider societal and economic wellbeing; conducting research into weather and climate, to inform decision-making; and representing Ireland to the WMO, ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) and EUMETSAT (European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites). (www.met.ie)

Timeframe

The key dates for EPA Research Call 2026 are listed in Table 1. Applicants and Research Proposal Authorisers should note the deadlines carefully as these will be strictly enforced.

¹ Funding will be subject to confirmation of the EPA Research Budget for 2027.

Table 1: Key dates and deadlines for the EPA Research Call 2026

02 April 2026	Call opening
25 May 2026, 16:00 (Irish standard time)	Deadline for queries relating to the technical contents of this call
28 May 2026, 16:00 (Irish standard time)	Submission deadline
04 June 2026, 16:00 (Irish standard time)	Approval deadline
June-September 2026	Evaluation process
October/November 2026	Notification / Negotiation
November/December 2026	Grant award of successful projects
By 31 March 2027	Start of successful projects

Application Process

All applications must be made using the EPA's Online Grant Management and Application Portal (<https://epa.smartsimple.ie>) in advance of the deadline.

In addition to this document, applicants should review the following documentation in advance of preparing an application, which is available to download from the EPA's Online Grant Management and Application Portal or from [the EPA website](#):

- [EPA Research Programme 2021 - 2030 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions](#)
- [EPA Research Calls Evaluation Process document](#)
- [EPA Online Grant Management and Application Portal System User Guides](#)

Frequently asked questions on the EPA Research Call are available [on our website](#) and will be updated throughout the application period. For other queries, please contact research@epa.ie.

Applications must be submitted under the correct *Research Hub* and *Call Topic Reference* as indicated in the detailed scope for each of the Themes. Proposals submitted under the incorrect Research Hub or Call Topic Reference will be considered ineligible and will not proceed to evaluation.

Applicants are permitted to make multiple submissions to the call but may only make a single submission under any Call Topic Reference. Submissions must be distinct in their scope and applicants must have the capacity to commit to all projects if selected for funding.

Applicants must adhere to the deadlines specified above which will be strictly enforced.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process is set out in detail in the [EPA Research Calls Evaluation Process document](#) and applicants are advised to review this in advance of preparing their proposal.

The purpose of the evaluation process is to ensure that all proposals are assessed in a fair and transparent manner, and that the highest quality and most suitable proposals are selected for funding.

All eligible proposals² will be subject to a two-step evaluation process:

- **Step 1 – Scientific Evaluation:** Proposals will be evaluated for scientific quality by independent international and national experts using predefined evaluation criteria and ratings;
- **Step 2 – National Overview:** Funding recommendations for project proposals will be made with the assistance of a National Overview Committees drawn from relevant government departments, agencies, and the EPA.

Evaluations at both Step 1 and Step 2 will be made in the context of the technical descriptions set out in this document.

Final selection of projects for funding will be made based on the recommendations of the National Overview Committee and subject to the availability of funding. The final funding decision lies with the EPA Board of Directors.

Expected Outputs

It is expected that, in their proposal, applicants clearly demonstrate the policy relevance of the outputs of their proposed research; the applicability of their findings; and how these outputs address a knowledge gap and can be efficiently transferred/applied to the implementation of policies. Applicants should clearly demonstrate how their proposed research will provide the evidence to support environmental policy in Ireland, in terms of identifying pressures, informing policy and developing solutions.

Please consult the [EPA Research Programme 2021 - 2030 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions](#) for the full list of expected outputs and interim/final reporting requirements.

Outputs from all projects should build on recently completed and existing research and other relevant information, where appropriate. Information on current and completed research projects being supported by the programme is available on the [EPA Research Project Database](#). Research Reports for all completed projects are also available on [our website](#).

Scope of EPA Research Call 2026

The Themes included in the EPA Research Call 2026 are listed in Table 2. The scope of these Themes is broad and invites applications for innovative research projects to inform policy and build capacity in current and emerging priority areas. All awards made under these Themes will be for Medium Scale Projects of up to either two or four years in duration. Up to three awards are expected for each of the Themes included in the call.

² All proposals submitted to the Research Call will undergo an eligibility check by the EPA before proceeding to the evaluation stage. Please see the EPA Research Programme 2021 - 2030 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions for more information on eligibility.

Applicants should carefully review the detailed scope of each Theme provided in this document and which can be accessed using the links in the table below. These descriptions provide information on the background, expected scope and outputs for proposals.

Applicants may submit queries on the technical descriptions to the EPA in advance of the deadline for technical queries specified above. These should be directed to research@epa.ie and clearly indicate the Theme to which they refer. Responses to technical queries will be published on the EPA website for reference by all potential applicants.

Table 2: List of Themes in the EPA Research Call 2026. Detailed descriptions can be accessed via the links in the table. It is important that applicants review the full technical descriptions carefully.

		Max Budget (€) Per Project
	Cross-cutting Theme*	
1	Policy Implementation, Effective Regulation and Innovative Governance Models	€ 330,000
	Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs	
2	Bringing Mitigation and Adaptation Together	€ 660,000
3	Improving Cross-Sectoral Governance in Climate Adaptation	€ 660,000
	Delivering a Healthy Environment	
1	Environmental Transmission of Antimicrobial Resistance in a One Health Context	€ 660,000
2	Strengthening the Environmental Dimension of One Health in a Changing Climate	€ 660,000
	Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy	
1	Enabling Material Flows for Sustainability Through Economic, Regulatory and Enforcement Measures	€ 330,000
2	Designing Innovative Sustainable Value Chains and Managing Materials	€ 660,000
	Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment	
1	Integrating Nature into Decision-Making: Accelerating Infrastructure and Simplifying Regulation	€ 330,000
2	Knowledge and Evidence to Support Soil Health – Peat and Peatland Regulation	€ 660,000

**Proposals to this Theme will be submitted under the “Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs” Hub, but submissions may be aligned to any area relevant to the EPA Research Programme.*

Cross-cutting theme*

Policy Implementation, Effective Regulation and Innovative Governance Models

Call Topic Reference:	Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs - Topic 1		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€330,000	Maximum Duration:	24 months

**Proposals to this Theme will be submitted under the "Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs" Hub, but submissions may be aligned to any area relevant to the EPA Research Programme*

Background

Effective implementation of policy and regulation, across all sectors and at all levels from national to local, is critical to Ireland achieving our climate and environmental targets. This requires new integrated approaches to ensure policy coherence; appropriate governance structures; and effective regulation and enforcement.

Research can support this through, for example, international benchmarking, learnings on national and local enforcement strategies, and ex-post analysis of current policies to assess how well they deliver on their environmental objectives, particularly in areas such as industrial emissions, waste management, and drinking and wastewater treatment. Research can also explore new and agile governance models that incorporate systems and socio-ecological considerations in complex, multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral policy areas; and the development of indicators to measure progress in implementation.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland's plan and policy implementation**, including but not limited to:

- Development of a standardised set of environmental indicators aligned to key policy objectives to enable planners and policymakers to integrate these from the outset, supporting their delivery.
- Development of indicators and metrics that assess the effectiveness of cross-sectoral governance approaches.
- Examination of the effectiveness of EPA industrial emissions licensing on emissions for sites in relevant industrial sectors.
- A review of the impact of changes the regulation of the intensive agriculture sector resulting from the recast Industrial Emissions Directive, including risks and opportunities of the new regulation in maintaining environmental protection.
- A review of the impact of the Habitats Directive on licensing and permitting regimes in Ireland and benefits (qualitative and or quantitative) measured to date.

Applicants may wish to consider, where relevant, the recommendations of [The State of Environment Report 2024](#), the OECD's '[Strengthening Policy Development in the Public Sector in Ireland](#)'. and recent EPA-funded project, *Sharing Lessons Learned from Water Governance (2020-W-MS-46)*.

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs

Bringing Mitigation and Adaptation Together

Call Topic Reference:	Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs - Topic 2		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€660,000	Maximum Duration:	48 months

Background

Mitigation efforts aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions are crucial for minimising the severity of climate impacts. However, certain climate impacts are already ‘locked in’ due to our past emissions and adaptation measures are equally critical for building resiliency and minimising vulnerability to climate-related risks in Ireland. By integrating mitigation and adaptation strategies, policymakers can maximise synergies, minimise trade-offs and optimise resource allocation, leading to more cost-effective and holistic approaches to climate action. Such an approach can help to reframe climate action as an opportunity to build future societal resilience. Moreover, such an integrated approach can help mainstream climate considerations into broader policy agendas, foster interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance Ireland’s capacity to effectively respond to the complex and interconnected challenges posed by climate change.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its climate mitigation and adaptation objectives**, including but not limited to:

- Identifying synergies and co-benefits, minimise trade-offs and optimise resource allocation, leading to more cost-effective and holistic approaches to climate action in Ireland.
- Demonstrating the interdependence of mitigation and adaptation in Ireland, measuring any progress in integration and developing indicators to do so in the future.
- Developing tools and guidance for policy makers and public bodies to allow integration of planning and decision-making, particularly in the area of sectoral adaptation plans.
- Analysing the co-benefits and trade-offs associated with integrated climate action.
- Examining financing mechanisms and investment strategies to support integrated climate action through sandbox or pilot programmes with a clear path to scale.
- Exploring the importance of community engagement and social equity in designing and implementing integrated climate strategies using approaches that empower local stakeholders.
- Developing methodologies and risk assessment models for assessing and managing climate risks in a more integrated manner.
- Operationalising adaptation at a local level together with climate mitigation action, water and biodiversity action to realise multiple benefits on the ground and ensuring integrated implementation.

Applicants should consider, where relevant, recent EPA-funded projects, such as *Operationalising Resilience in Irish Climate Action* ([2023-CE-1175](#)) and *Just Resilience and Adaptation in Ireland* ([2021-CE-1042](#)).

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Improving Cross-Sectoral Governance in Climate Adaptation

Call Topic Reference:	Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs - Topic 3		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€660,000	Maximum Duration:	48 months

Background

Climate change in Ireland impacts all aspects of society and climate-related challenges, such as increased flooding, coastal destruction, land-use change, biodiversity loss and degradation, urban pressures and agricultural impacts require multi-sectoral planning and response. To achieve this more effectively it is crucial to have an effective and responsive cross-sectoral governance strategy to manage the move towards a climate-resilient Ireland.

Much recent policy has emphasised the need to move towards integrated and inclusive governance approaches, including employing subsidiarity principles, that can facilitate collaboration amongst the various critical sectors in Ireland – health, land-use, Local Authorities, energy, the marine, water management and planning etc. However, there is a knowledge gap in how to design, implement and scale these structures and systems to achieve a fully integrated and coherent Climate Adaptation Governance system in Ireland.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its climate adaptation objectives**, including but not limited to:

- Analysis of existing structures and their effectiveness
- Research in understanding the barriers that limit adaptation across different sectors include silos and fragmented thinking, as well as the opportunities, such as systems thinking and whole of government approaches, that may emerge.
- Developing examples or narratives that show how adaptation could work across sectors in Ireland supporting systematic consideration of climate risks that may highlight emerging opportunities and barriers.
- Examination of barriers for specific sectors to plan adaptation effectively, addressing cross-sectoral implementation challenges.
- Seeking to bridge specific knowledge gaps and fill research needs identified in sectoral adaptation plans published in 2025 and the [DCEE Statement of Research and Innovation Needs](#).
- Identification of best practice from comparable EU member states.
- Development of policy-relevant recommendations and tools for decision makers that can enhance cross-sectoral governance.

Proposals should look to build upon and incorporate existing research and resources in this area, such as the [National Climate Change Risk Assessment](#), [Sectoral Adaptation Plans](#), Local Authority Climate Action Plans and the [National Climate Services Framework](#).

Applicants should consider, where relevant, previous EPA-funded projects, *TALX2: Place-Based Climate Action Partnerships* ([2023-CE-1227](#)), *Deep Societal Innovation for Sustainability and Human Flourishing* ([2023-CE-1193](#)) and *Addressing the Political-Economic Barriers to Climate Adaptation in Ireland* ([2022-CE-1155](#)).

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Delivering a Healthy Environment

Environmental Transmission of Antimicrobial Resistance in a One Health Context

Call Topic Reference:	Delivering a Healthy Environment – Topic 1		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€660,000	Maximum Duration:	48 months

Background

The environment is a complex reservoir, amplifier and transmission pathway for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and is a critical, but often relatively understudied, dimension of this One Health issue. The environment is now an important component of both national and international AMR policies, stemming from an increased understanding of the complex interplay of AMR and the recognition that resistant organisms and their genes can move between humans, animals and the environment.

There is a continued need to deepen our understanding of the environmental aspects of AMR and to produce robust evidence that informs the development and implementation of effective prevention strategies and risk management across environmental, human health and agricultural policy domains. In particular, gaps remain in the availability of evidence that can support targeted, proportionate and effective interventions in environmental settings.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its One Health objectives**, including but not limited to:

- Needs identified in the Gap Analysis of Research Needs related to Antimicrobial Resistance in Ireland, including coordinated, interdisciplinary research related to the environmental dimension of AMR within a One Health context
- The development, assessment or informing of targeted prevention, mitigation or risk-management interventions.
- Elucidating the impacts and interplay of a changing climate on AMR

Proposals should consider the [EPA's National Climate Change Risk Assessment](#), the [Gap Analysis of Research Needs](#) related to Antimicrobial Resistance in Ireland and Ireland's Third [One Health National Action Plan on AMR 2026-2030](#) (iNAP3).

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Strengthening the Environmental Dimension of One Health in a Changing Climate

Call Topic Reference:	Delivering a Healthy Environment – Topic 2		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€660,000	Maximum Duration:	48 months

Background

One Health is a systems-based approach that seeks to address complex health challenges by recognising the intrinsic connections between the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment. As the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution intensify, the need for integrated cross-sectoral solutions—particularly those that include a robust environmental dimension—is critical. Environmental drivers such as climate variability, land use change, water quality, and pollution—are important determinants of health risks and outcomes. These factors not only influence the burden of non-communicable diseases but also affect the emergence and dynamics of health threats across human and animal populations.

Strengthening the environmental dimension of One Health requires increased understanding of how environmental changes influence disease, non-communicable health outcomes, and overall well-being. It also needs improved data integration across environmental, human, and animal health systems. Ireland’s evolving environment, climate and health policy landscape has highlighted significant knowledge gaps around how climate and environmental pressures interact with human health outcomes, health inequalities and system resilience.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its One Health objectives**, including but not limited to:

- Assessing the burden of disease attributable to environmental exposures and health threats within an Irish context, with an emphasis on non-communicable diseases.
- Integrated surveillance linking environmental monitoring with human and animal health surveillance for One Health threat detection.
- Environmental drivers of existing and emerging health threats – prevention and intervention.
- Investigating the role of climate-driven environmental change and social vulnerability in shaping unequal human health outcomes.
- Scaling up consideration of the environment dimension of One Health to the all-island scale.
- Assess current One Health structures in Ireland and analyse potential benefits and challenges in the expansion of these structures, including recommendations for the development of a One Health framework in Ireland.

Proposals should consider the [EPA’s National Climate Change Risk Assessment](#), and the [Emerging Health Threats Function Expert Steering Group Report](#) and apply One Health as a delivery framework.

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy

Enabling Material Flows for Sustainability Through Economic, Regulatory and Enforcement Measures

Call Topic Reference:	Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy - Topic 1		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 4 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€330,000	Maximum Duration:	24 months

Background

Understanding the flow of materials in our economy is essential for advancing the transition to a circular economy and bioeconomy and improving Ireland's resource self-sufficiency. Material flow analysis in [The Circularity Gap Report Ireland](#) has identified supply and demand gaps within our economy and the need to improve the flow and use of secondary raw materials.

The upcoming EU Circular Economy Act is expected to focus on increasing the supply and demand of high quality secondary raw materials within the single market. Ireland's current low use of secondary materials and high level of consumption and waste generation is demonstrated through our [Circular Material Use Rate](#) (CMUR) which at 2% is currently the third lowest CMUR rate in Europe. A core objectives of the [Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2026-2028](#) is to increase Ireland's CMUR rate by 2% each year. Increasing the CMUR is also a focus at European level where the target in the [Clean Industrial Deal](#) (CID) is to achieve a circularity rate of 24% by 2030. The CID aims increase the circularity of critical raw materials in particular and the need to increase the use of circular critical raw materials is also highlighted in the [European Critical Raw Materials Act](#). Research is needed to further explore and provide evidence to inform Government policies, initiatives and investments to enable sectoral secondary materials flow.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its objective of transitioning to a Circular Economy**, including but not limited to:

- Development of secondary materials flow and use, particularly for critical raw materials, construction materials, electronics, bio-based materials and textiles.
- Further exploration of harmonising national micro and macro-economic measures, green public procurement, regulatory and enforcement approaches to best support circularity.
- Examining the development infrastructure and processing capacity to enable material valorisation, advanced manufacturing and reduce exports of recycling materials.
- Exploring how circular solutions can drive Ireland's economic competitiveness and material security.
- Development of guidance for policy makers and stakeholders to increase their understanding how of such measures can help Ireland achieve a strong circular economy.
- Development of a framework for the implementation of potential measures.

Applicants should consider, where relevant, recent EPA Research funded projects, such as *A critical analysis of Ireland's Circular Material Use Rate (2022-GCE-1162)*, the [DCEE Statement of Research and Innovation Needs](#) as well as the plans, policies and regulations listed above.

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Designing Innovative Sustainable Value Chains and Managing Materials

Call Topic Reference:	Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy - Topic 2		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€660,000	Maximum Duration:	48 months

Background

Digital technologies can help to develop innovative sustainable materials, products, circular businesses and collaborative consumption models and services, that reduce virgin raw material dependency and accelerate Ireland’s circular economy transition. The recently published [Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2026-2028](#) and the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#), identifies digital technologies as having a key role in enhancing resource efficiency and sustainability along each stage of the product value chain.

With the adoption of European Union (EU) legislation such as the [Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation \(ESPR\)](#) and the [‘Right-to-Repair’ Directive](#) plus new regulations for [packaging](#), [batteries](#) and the [textiles strategy](#), sustainable products that are more durable, efficient and easier to reuse, repair, and recycle will become the norm and material surveillance and monitoring requirements will be strengthened. Research is needed to further explore and provide evidence to inform Government policies and initiatives to enable the development of innovative sustainable value chains and manage materials within the circular economy.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its objective of transitioning to a Circular Economy**, including but not limited to:

- Development of sustainable value chains through innovative eco-designs, sustainable production, logistics, reuse, repair, recycling, remanufacturing and servitization.
- Initiatives to facilitate traceability, market surveillance, material management along value chains using digital tools.
- Enhancing Building Information Modelling and pre-demolition audits to integrate circularity principles and enable material reuse.
- Examining key value chains including construction and buildings, food and nutrients; packaging; electronics and batteries and textiles, as well as other key Irish industries.
- Development of guidance for policy makers and stakeholders to increase their understanding how to effectively enable the development of innovative sustainable value chains and manage materials.

Applicants should consider, where relevant, recent EPA Research funded projects, *Mainstreaming Circular Economies Through Collaboration and Co-creation* ([2021-GCE-1071](#)), the [DCEE Statement of Research and Innovation Needs](#), as well as the plans, policies and regulations listed above.

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment

Integrating Nature into Decision-Making: Accelerating Infrastructure and Simplifying Regulation

Call Topic Reference:	Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment - Topic 1		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€330,000	Maximum Duration:	24 months

Background

Investment in water, energy, transport and waste management infrastructure is essential to protect the environment now and into the future. However, the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce has identified a high regulatory burden, slow processes and lack of co-ordination and consistency across semi-state companies and regulatory agencies as barriers to large infrastructure projects in Ireland and has developed plans to tackle these barriers and accelerate these projects ([Accelerating Infrastructure Action Plan](#)). Accelerating infrastructure delivery together with effective integration of the EU Simplification Agenda, EU environmental directives and wider climate and planning obligations will require robust frameworks and risk-based approaches. Knowledge and evidence are required to advance the development, deployment and assessment of approaches to recognise, value and protect nature in public policy in Ireland, while reducing regulatory burden.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland meeting its infrastructure development objectives**, including but not limited to:

- A comparative analysis of EU member states in integrating nature into large infrastructure delivery, including identification of barriers to streamlined delivery.
- Development of frameworks for implementation of the EU Simplification Agenda in Ireland
- Analysis of barriers to achieving accelerated infrastructure or simplification of regulation within the existing Irish decision-making system, recommendations to remove these barriers and risks and opportunities associated with them.
- Inclusion of ecosystem valuation into innovative policy instruments in Ireland, e.g., in priority areas such as climate action, land use and nature restoration.
- Guidance for key sectors in Ireland on the integration of nature into relevant decision-making processes including through the use of Natural Capital Accounting.

Proposals should reflect the dynamic nature of infrastructure delivery planned for the coming years and integrate stakeholder engagement methods to keep informed of changes. Proposals should consider the recommendations of [The State of Environment Report 2024](#), the [EU Simplification Agenda](#), the [Accelerating Infrastructure Action Plan](#) and should also consider the implementation and implications of [Section 15 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Act 2021](#). Applicants should consider, where relevant, recent EPA-funded projects, such as *Artificial Intelligence Supported Expert-Prioritisation of Significant Effects: Streamlining Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping and Improving Effectiveness* ([2025-NE-1318](#)), *Toolkit for Proportionate and Consistent Consideration of Population and Human Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment* ([2022-HE-1171](#)) and *Irish Natural Capital Accounting for Sustainable Environments* ([2018-NC-LS-2](#)).

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Knowledge and Evidence to Support Soil Health – Peat and Peatland Regulation

Call Topic Reference:	Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment - Topic 2		
Project Type:	Medium Scale Project (up to 3 projects to be funded)		
Maximum Budget:	€660,000	Maximum Duration:	48 months

Background

With the critical importance of soil recognised through the EU Soil Strategy, there is a need for mapping, measuring and mitigating known and emerging pollutants and other pressures on our soil, across the range of soil types in Ireland. In particular, understanding and managing peat soils is critically important to achieving Ireland’s climate, water and biodiversity objectives. However, the large-scale extraction of peat is widespread in Ireland and while harvesting of peat is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency for sites above 50 ha, enforcement activities have shown that no site is operating within environmental or planning regulations. Furthermore, on sites where harvesting activities have ceased, monitoring of the outcomes of restoration and rehabilitation of peatlands is required, along with guidance on best practice, to support licencing activities. In particular, knowledge and evidence are required to support the management of peatlands through licencing thresholds, regulation systems, enforcement, and remediation programmes.

Scope

Research proposals are invited that explore themes, **in the context of Ireland’s capacity to manage peatlands for multiple benefits**, including but not limited to:

- Understanding the impacts of climate change on peatland ecosystems in need of restoration or rehabilitation to ensure that the actions selected are effective, sustainable and cost efficient under changing conditions.
- Understanding the water quality and quantity implications up and downstream of rehabilitated/rewetted peatlands in the context of Water Framework Directive and flood protection.
- Review and analysis of the various national and EU directives/policies regarding peatlands and how they complement or contrast each other in delivering Ireland’s climate, water and biodiversity objectives.
- Better knowledge to develop, deploy and assess nature-based solutions in peatlands for multiple benefits.
- Considering scale, connectivity and multiple pressures in restoration and rehabilitation schemes.

Applicants may wish to consider actions laid out in the Soil Monitoring Law, [Draft River Basin Management Plan](#), the [National Biodiversity Action Plan](#) the [Climate Action Plan](#) and be cognisant of the [regulatory role of the EPA](#) with regard to peatland. Applicants should further ensure to build on and leverage the ongoing work of the Peatlands and People LIFE project, and the EPA-funded *PeatHub Ireland* ([2022-NE-1129](#)) project and consider the [DCEE Statement of Research and Innovation Needs](#).

[Return to List of Themes](#)

Further Information

Information on current research projects being supported by the programme is available in the Research section of the EPA website: <http://www.epa.ie/our-services/research/> and on the [EPA Research Project Database](#).

The following additional documents are available from the EPA website:
<http://www.epa.ie/publications/research/current-call-documents/>

- EPA Research Programme 2021 - 2030 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions.
- EPA Research Programme 2021 - 2030 – Communicating Research.

Other relevant EPA Research Programme Strategies and Policies are also available from the EPA website: <http://www.epa.ie/our-services/research/epa-research-2030/strategies-and-policies/>.

For updates on the EPA Research Call 2026:

1. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and on Twitter ([@EPAResearchNews](#))
2. Visit the [EPA Funding web pages](#)
3. Check the [Research Call Frequently Asked Questions web page](#)

Any queries that are not covered in the call documentation or on the FAQs web page must be submitted to research@epa.ie.