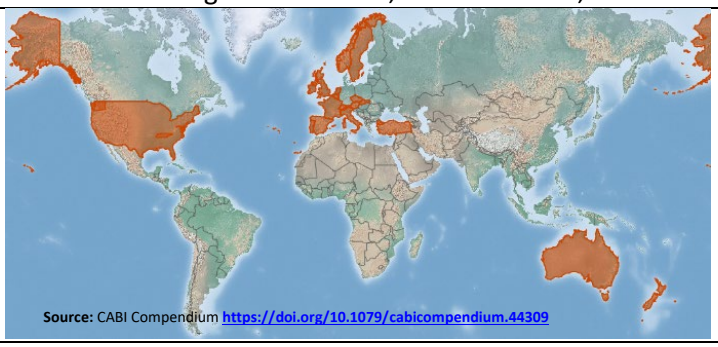
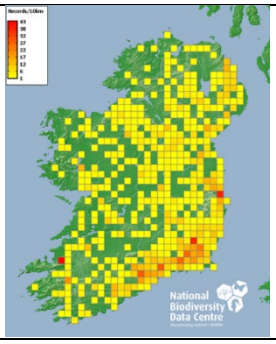
Detailed Risk Assessment
Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)
Summary Sheet: Stakeholder and Public Comment Version 1.0

An tIonad Náisiúnta Sonraí Bithéagsúlachta
National Biodiversity Data Centre

Key points	A highly variable, vigorous, resilient evergreen shrub or tree, with many cultivated horticultural varieties. Introduced in the 17th century in estates to provide shelter and cover for game. Established and spreading across the island of Ireland. Recorded in 63% of 10km^2 hectads, increased from 4% pre-1970. Ornamental and horticultural cultivars are economically important for hedging and use in the cut foliage industry. Noted as invasive in much of its introduced range; banned for sale in horticulture and landscaping in Switzerland.
Native	Balkan Peninsula, western Caucasus and northern Iran.
Introduced	Countries and regions in Eurasia, North America, South America, Australia, and New Zealand.
Maps	 
Introduction pathways	Although already established, entry continues *via* cultivation and commercial sale. Horticulture and ornamental planting are key pathways, driven by their large-scale and risks from inappropriate disposal of cuttings.
Spread pathways	Natural dispersal occurs vegetatively and via seed. Human-assisted spread poses a high risk, facilitating rapid expansion through planting and movement of green waste.
Impacts	**Biodiversity and ecosystem** (major with high confidence): Significant driver of biodiversity loss; documented impacts on EU Habitats Directive Annex I habitats and a pressure in many SACs. Damages native woodlands and hedgerows through competition, shading, and soil alteration. Impacts to nationally and internationally protected Irish species under the EU Habitats Directive Annex II and the Flora Protection Order 2022, e.g. the Killarney Fern. **Ecosystem services** (major with high confidence): Impacts to commercial forestry and regulating services through reduced ecological integrity of woodlands and native tree regeneration. Risks to natural heritage, recreation and conservation value, and likely impacts on soil. **Economic impacts** (major with medium confidence): Limited published data, but control costs can exceed €10,000/ha over many years. Impacts likely significant and comparable to rhododendron control costs. **Social and human health** (moderate with low confidence): Leaves, fruit stones, and seeds contain toxic cyanogenic glycosides; human poisoning possible and domestic animal fatalities recorded. **Other impacts** (moderate with high confidence): Hosts serious (including regulated) pests and diseases, potentially facilitating spread to native and commercially important species.
Climate change	Likely to increase the threat by enhancing seed production, dispersal, spread, growth, and invasion opportunities, exacerbating impacts on native biodiversity and ecosystem services. The range and severity of associated pests and diseases may expand, and wildfire risk may rise due to high flammability.

Overall	**Response**	**Confidence**
Entry	Likely	Medium
Establishment	Already established	
Spread	Rapidly	Medium
Impact	Major	High
Overall risk	High	High


Shared Island Initiative

NPWS An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra National Parks and Wildlife Service

An tIonad Náisiúnta Sonraí Bithéagsúlachta
National Biodiversity Data Centre

Name of organism:	*Prunus laurocerasus* L. Cherry Laurel
Objective:	Non-native Species Risk Assessment for *Prunus laurocerasus* L. Cherry Laurel in Ireland and Northern Ireland
Risk assessment area:	The island of Ireland
Version:	Stakeholder and Public Comment Version 1
Status of Risk Assessment:	In progress
Template version	*Shared Island Detailed Non-native Risk Assessment Template; Version 2.1; Date Issued: 17.11.2025*
Author(s):	Dr Frances Giaquinto CEnv MCIEEM
Peer reviewer 1	Dr Darren Reidy, National Botanic Gardens, OPW
Peer reviewer 2 (if applicable)	*Not applicable*
Invasive and Non-native Species Risk Analysis Advisory Panel review date(s):	23/4/2026
Date of completion:	To be determined
Date of next review (if required):	To be determined
Date final version published online:	To be determined

Contents

About this Risk Assessment

The methods in this Risk Assessment have evolved from Ireland's NAPRA tool (version 2.66). Updates align with the GB Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) Risk Assessment (NNRA_word_template_v2.2GB) and the adapted EU Risk Assessment (Contract No 09.0201/2023/893829/ETU/D.2).

Amendments support compliance with Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on IAS and relevant legislation, including Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/968, and aim to keep pace with good practices and the latest evidence.

Notes:

- Likelihood is rated as very unlikely, unlikely, moderately likely, likely or very likely
- Rate of spread is rated as very slowly, slowly, moderately rapidly, rapidly, very rapidly
- Distribution is rated as very isolated, isolated, moderately widespread, widespread, ubiquitous
- Confidence is rated as low, medium, high
- The percentage categories are 0% - 10%, 11% - 33%, 34% - 67%, 68% - 90% or 91% - 100%.
- N/A = not applicable.

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National Biodiversity Data Centre

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Name of Organism: *Prunus laurocerasus* L. Cherry Laurel			
N	**Question**	**Comment**	
1.01	What is the reason for performing the Risk Assessment?	This Risk Assessment has been commissioned by the National Biodiversity Data Centre at the request of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). This risk assessment was requested following: • Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss recommending that "the State must act immediately to put a timeline on the phasing out of, and eventual ban of, the sale of invasive species, e.g. Cherry Laurel". • Stakeholder advocacy raising awareness of the potential threat posed by *P. laurocerasus*; and • The recommendations from the Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration specifically recommending that "the Minister of State for Nature should include Cherry Laurel on the List of Invasive Species of National Concern to restrict its sale and distribution nationally and submit to the European Commission a proposal to include Cherry Laurel on the EU Alien Invasive Species List" (this was published during the process of drafting the risk assessment).	
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Comment**
1.02	Identify the organism. Is it clearly a single taxonomic entity and can it be adequately distinguished from other entities of the same rank?		*Prunus laurocerasus* L. (hereafter abbreviated to *P. laurocerasus*) is a single but highly variable species in the Family Rosaceae. It is an extreme polyploid (2n = 22x) which has been extensively cultivated. Cultivated *P. laurocerasus* originates from a broad genetic base and shows genetic divergence between ornamental and fruit-bearing selections, probably due to long-term selection pressure (Halász et al., 2021). The following Information on *P. laurocerasus* identity has been sourced from Abrahamczyk, S. Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309 (Accessed 8 May, 2026).

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			Preferred scientific name: *Prunus laurocerasus* L. **Preferred common name**: Cherry Laurel **Other common names**: English Laurel (particularly in N. America) Ireland: Labhras silíní Black Sea region: Taflan, Laz kirazi, Karayemis., Laz Cherry France: Laurier-cerise Spain: Laurocerasо Germany: Pontischer Lorbeer-Kirschbaum Italy: Laurocerasо Netherlands: Laurierkerseboom EPPO Code: PPNLR (*Prunus laurocerasus*) **Other scientific names**: Cerasus laurocerasus (L.) Lois Laurocerasus macrophylla Briot Laurocerasus officinalis Roem. Padus laurocerasus (L.) Mill. Prunus grandifolia Salisb. Classification • **Kingdom:** Plantae • **Phylum:** Streptophyta • **Class:** Equisetopsida • **Order:** Rosales • **Family:** *Rosaceae* • **Genus:** *Prunus* • **Species:** *Prunus laurocerasus* L.

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			There are many cultivars. Among the most common in the Risk Assessment Area and Europe are: • Aureovariegata, variegated, leaves with a yellow margin • 'Magnifolia', vigorous, with large leaves up to 30-cm wide and 11-cm broad • 'Otto Luyken', half-dwarf, with small leaves 10-cm wide and 2–3-cm broad • 'Zabeliana', selected for winter cold tolerance • Cultivars used in the cut foliage industry in the Risk Assessment Area include 'Etna', 'Caucasica', and 'Novita' (Teagasc Factsheet 4/21. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). • Caucasia and Rotundifolia are two of the most common cultivars in the Risk Assessment Area, based on a review of large horticultural suppliers and their catalogues. Abrahamczyk (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309. Accessed 8 May, 2026) lists common cultivars selected commercially for their growth form, height, leaf shape, colour, and frost hardiness: Broadly upright growing cultivars: 'Etna', 'Herbergii', 'Otto Luyken', 'Prudonti'. Broad and flat growing cultivars: 'Cherry Brandy', 'Mischeana', 'Mount Vernon', 'Piri', 'Zabeliana'. Erect growing cultivars: 'Caucasica', 'Novita', 'Rotundifolia', 'Schipkaensis Macrophylla'.
1.03	If not a single taxonomic entity, can it be redefined? (if necessary, use the response box to re-define the organism and carry on)		It is a single taxonomic entity
1.04	Describe the organism.		An evergreen woody shrub or small to medium-sized tree, growing 5–15 metres tall, with a trunk up to 60 cm broad. The leaves are

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			alternate right up to the tip, dark green, leathery, shiny, (5–)10–25(–30) cm long and 4–10 cm broad, with a finely serrated margin. The leaves can have the scent of almonds when crushed. The flower buds appear in early spring and open in early summer in erect 7–15 cm racemes of 30–40 flowers, each flower 1 cm across, with five creamy-white petals and numerous yellowish stamens with a sweet smell. The cherry-like fruit is a small glossy red drupe 1–2 cm broad, turning black when ripe in early autumn. *P. laurocerasus* has a lifespan of 30–50 years. Sources: Encyclopedia of Life. *Prunus laurocerasus*. Accessed 20 Feb, 2026. Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI: *Prunus laurocerasus* L.).
1.05	List other species that look very similar [that may be detected in the Risk Assessment Area, either in the environment, in confinement or associated with a pathway of introduction]		Superficially, the shrubby growth, evergreen leaves and leaf shape resemble *Rhododendron ponticum*, but Rhododendron branches end in a whorl of leaves, whereas the leaves are arranged alternately, right to the tip of the branch in *P. laurocerasus* (Giaquinto and O'Brien, 2025). Evergreen Portuguese Laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*) can also spread into the wild. The petioles and young stems are red. It has more pointed leaves than *P. laurocerasus*, and the leaves have a more sharply toothed edge. The central stem of the raceme of the flowers is longer than the leaves (Giaquinto and O'Brien, 2025). It readily produces seed, which may indicate invasive potential (Stace and Crawley, 2015). Spotted Laurel (*Aucuba japonica*) has spotted leaves and it is also dispersing into the wild (Giaquinto and O'Brien, 2025).

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			Flower arrangement is similar to Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) which is a rare native deciduous shrub that is increasingly planted in hedgerows (Giaquinto and O'Brien, 2025. Its foliage and appearance are similar to the unrelated *Laurus nobilis* Bay Laurel (Family *Lauraceae*). Misidentification between *P. laurocerasus* and *L. nobilis* has led to poisoning (Malaspina et al., 2022). Source:
1.06	Does a relevant earlier Risk Assessment exist? (give details of any previous risk assessment for Ireland)	No, but see note	No risk assessments for *P. laurocerasus* have been identified that comply with the requirements as outlined in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/968 supplementing regulation (EU) no. 1143/2014. However, it is worth noting that the rapid risk assessments conducted in 2013 (Kelly et al., 2013a) scored *P. laurocerasus* as 'High Risk'. Also, Dehnen-Schmutz et al. (2022) investigated how British and Irish botanical experts assessed impacts of invasive species in small-scale areas where they were familiar with the flora. They also scored the local impacts of 10 plant species that had been previously scored to have the highest impact at the scale of 'Great Britain' (GB). Impacts were scored using the modified classification scheme of the EICAT framework (IUCN: Environmental Impact Classification for Alien Taxa. Accessed Feb 2026). The GB scoring marked *P. laurocerasus* as 'moderate' and it did not fall into the top list of high impact species. However, reviewers were also asked to score the potential maximum impact if it were established in all areas that are suitable (based on current biotic and abiotic conditions). *P. laurocerasus* was scored as

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			major in this respect. In 2004, in response to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's international obligations to address invasive species issues, the Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Ireland) commissioned an All-Ireland review of invasive species with the objective of presenting the recommendations to both Governments. Stokes et al. (2004) conducted the assessment. They assessed the negative effects that some non-native (alien) invasive species have on biodiversity in the Risk Assessment Area, including categorization according to the mechanism by which native biota may be affected. In this regard, *P. laurocerasus* was listed as a species that can threaten the favourable status of priority habitats, specifically lowland woodland pasture and parkland. Also, it was included in the list of alien plants that are considered established in artificial habitats in the Risk Assessment Area, including cultivated, managed and waste ground, walls, pavements, road verges and railways. In conclusion, Stokes et al. (2004) recommended that all *Prunus* species are subjected to the plant passport scheme, but with the exception of *P. laurocerasus* and *P. lusitanica.* The reasons for this conclusion are not known.
1.07	If there is an earlier Risk Assessment is it still entirely valid, or only partly valid?	Yes / No / Partially / NA	No
1.08	Where is the organism native?	Balkan Peninsula, western Caucasus and northern Iran (Stroh et al., 2023: Volume 1, p271). Its native range is a narrow latitudinal band along the southern and eastern shores of the Black Sea, from southern Serbia and Bulgaria in the west, to Iran in the east. The population in Iran is geographically	

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		isolated from populations along the coast of the Black Sea According to Abrahamczyk (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309. Accessed 8 May, 2026), it is unlikely to be native in Albania, Libya or Tajikistan as listed in Plants of the World Online (Accessed 8 May 2026). Also, Abrahamczyk points out that the status of the population in Romania is controversial. **Native habitat (see Table 1)** In its native range, *P. laurocerasus* typically grows as a shrub or understory tree in montane beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) forests. In southeastern Serbia, it occurs under beech (Tzonev et al., 2006), while elsewhere it is found beneath *Fagus orientalis*, *Castanea sativa*, or *Abies nordmanniana*, often forming dense stands with other shrubs such as *Rhododendron ponticum* (Denk et al., 2001). It tolerates a wide range of ecological conditions. Most populations occur between 200–1650 m elevation (Denk et al., 2001; Tzonev et al., 2006; Nikolov and Dimitrov, 2023) but reach up to 2340 m in the Caucasus (Scholz and Scholz, 1995). It grows in both full sun (e.g., along streams) and deep shade, and on diverse soil types including nutrient-rich, acidic, and alkaline soils (Nikolov and Dimitrov, 2023). **Climatic conditions (see Table 2)** Climatically, *P. laurocerasus* is adapted to (semi-)humid to per-humid conditions with moderate temperatures (Denk et al., 2001; Nikolov and Dimitrov, 2023). The coldest-month mean at its limit is about 2.5°C (Conedera et al., 2018), although it can withstand frost down to −17°C in some regions (Conedera et al., 2018; Nikolov and Dimitrov, 2023). Precipitation requirements vary from ≥1200 mm in Colchis (Denk et al., 2001) to 700–800 mm in Iran (Karami-Kordalivand et al., 2021). Its distribution is mainly limited by climate (Conedera et al., 2018). Prolonged winter frost combined with sun causes drought stress, damaging tissues and reducing reproduction (Hetzel, 2012; 2014). In addition to winter frost, summer drought is a key limiting factor in both native and exotic ranges

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(Karami-Kordalivand et al., 2021).

Table 1 Habitat List: *Prunus laurocerasus* (Abrahamczyk, S. Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309 (Accessed 8 May, 2026)

Category	Sub-Category	Habitat	Presence	Status
Terrestrial		Broad-leaved forest	yes	natively
Terrestrial		Broad-leaved forest	yes	introduced
Terrestrial		forest margin	yes	natively
Terrestrial		forest margin	yes	introduced

Table 2 Climate conditions: *Prunus laurocerasus* Abrahamczyk, S. Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309 (Accessed 8 May, 2026)

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	Climate type	Status	Description
	Cfa - Humid subtropical climate		Warm average temp. > 10°C, Cold average temp. > 0°C, wet all year, warmest month average temp. > 22°C
	Cfb - Maritime temperate climate		Warm average temp. > 10°C, Cold average temp. > 0°C, wet all year, warmest month average temp. < 22°C
	Csa - Mediterranean climate		Warm average temp. > 10°C, Cold average temp. > 0°C, dry summers, warmest month average temp. > 22°C
	Dfb - Warm summer continental or hemiboreal climate		Warm summer continental or hemiboreal climate (Warm average temp. > 10°C, coldest month < 0°C, wet all year, warmest month average temp. < 22°C)
	Dfc - Continental subarctic or boreal climate		Continental subarctic or boreal climate (Warm average temp. > 10°C, coldest month < 0°C, wet all year, <= 3 months @ > 10°C)

1.09	What is the global non-native distribution of the organism outside the Risk Assessment Area?	*P. laurocerasus* has successfully colonized the entire western half of the European continent and is known as a neophyte from 23 European countries. Its distribution reaches from Croatia and Slovakia in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. In the north of Europe, the distribution of *P. laurocerasus* reaches Denmark, Sweden and Norway. It is important to note that, according to Abrahamczyk (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309. Accessed 8 May, 2026), the European neophytic range is neither completely documented in Plants of the World Online nor in Euro+Med PlantBase (see Section 1.08). *P. laurocerasus* was introduced into cultivation in Britain in 1611 and was known from the wild by 1886 (Oxfordshire) (Stroh et al., 2023: Volume 1, p271). Its introduction to Ireland is less clear. The National Biodiversity Data Centre lists its first record as 1941–1950 when it was introduced as a hedging plant and ornamental and has since escaped into the wild (National Biodiversity Data Centre, Species 28940.

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		Accessed 8 May 2026). However, other reports (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), Local botany County Fermanagh. Accessed 16 Feb. 2026) suggest that it was introduced in the 17th Century and planted in demesnes for game cover. In North America, *P. laurocerasus* has colonised an extensive area along the Pacific coast from southern British Columbia to California. In the east of North America, *P. laurocerasus* is known to have colonized single states of the USA, such as Tennessee, Virginia, and Maryland, but a wider distribution in the future seems likely. In South America, *P. laurocerasus* is introduced in central Argentina (Neuquén, Río Negro provinces). In Australia, *P. laurocerasus* has colonized three states in the southeast as well as Tasmania, and both main islands of New Zealand (Abrahamczyk, Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309. Accessed 8 May, 2026).

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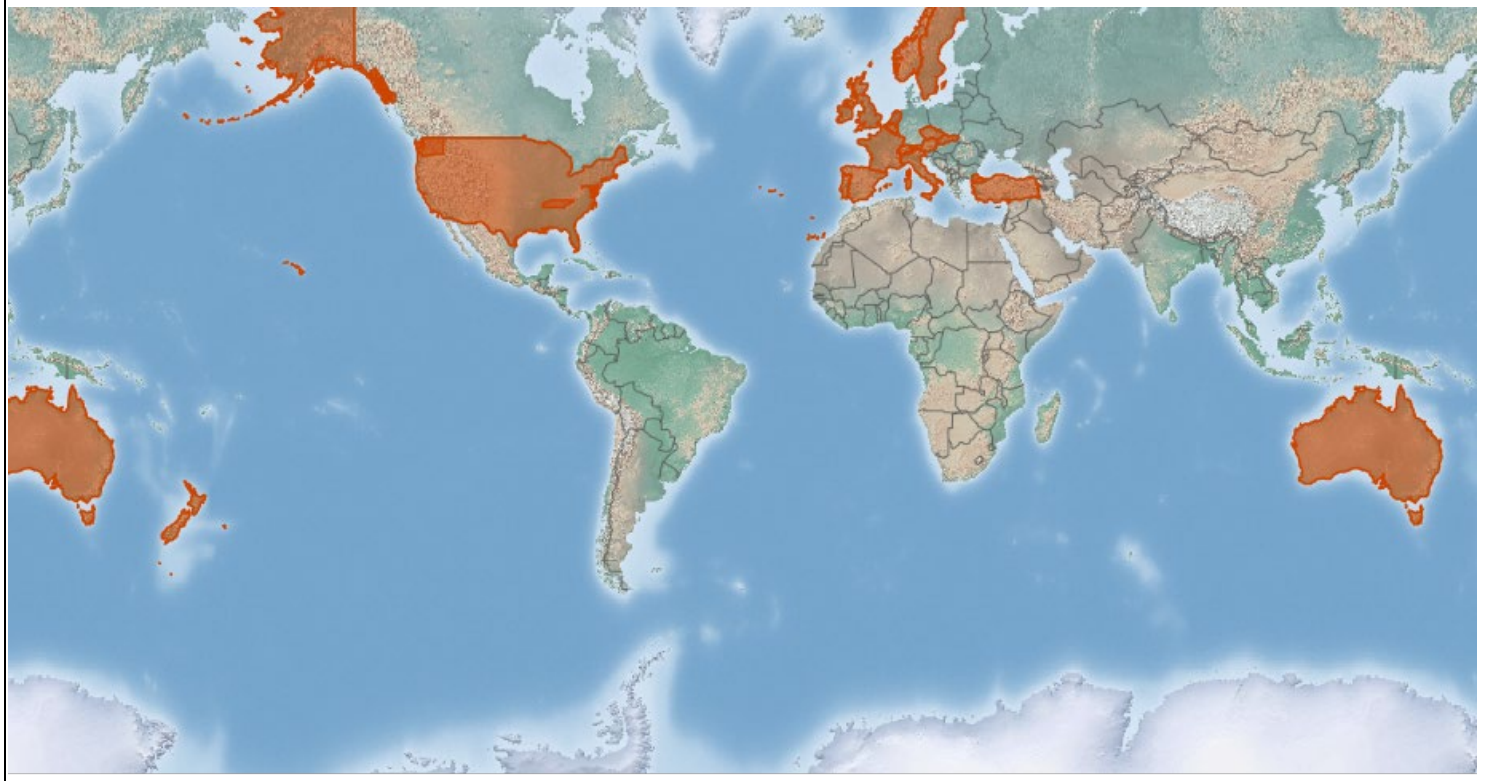
Recorded Global distribution of *Prunus laurocerasus* L.



CABI, 2026. Prunus laurocerasus. In: CABI Compendium. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.

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1.10 What is the current distribution of the organism in the Risk Assessment Area?

The following table is reproduced from Stroh et al. (2023), to show the increase in the number of 10 km hectads in which *P. laurocerasus* has been recorded in Britain (including Northern Ireland) and Ireland. The authors noted the marked increase in the number of 10 km hectads recorded since the 1980s, although they point out that the more systematic recording of alien trees and shrubs must also play a part.

Years	Britain	Ireland
2000–2019	1758	643
1987–1999	1232	336
1970–1986	585	27
Pre 1970	297	39

Stroh et al. (2023) report that *P. laurocerasus* is predominantly a lowland species in Ireland and Britain with a highest precise record of 398 m in Somerset, UK. It has naturalized in woodland, scrub, disused railways, and waste ground where it is self- or bird-sown. It is widely grown in gardens as hedging, in shrubberies, and in roadside and amenity plantings.

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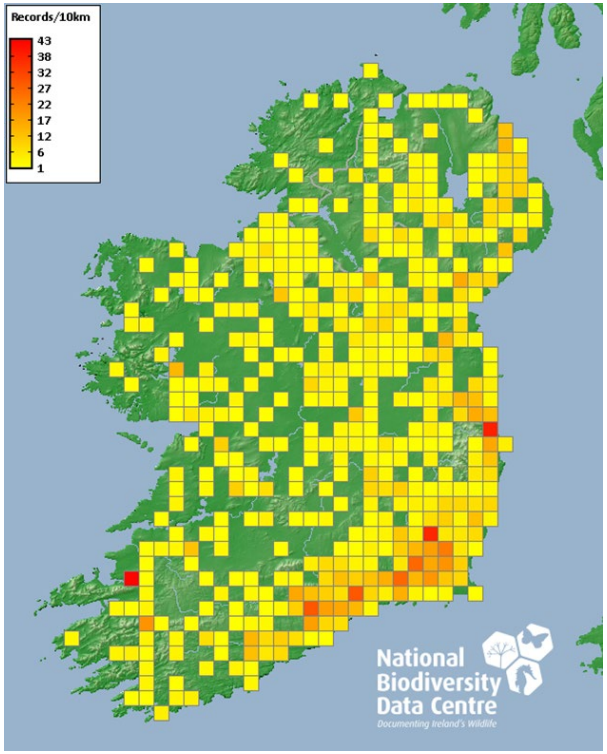
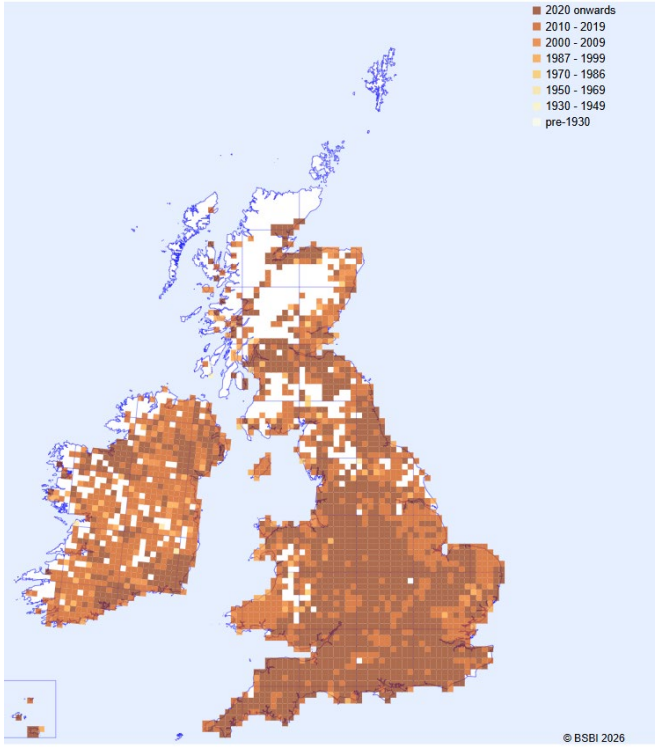
Recorded Distribution of Prunus laurocerasus L. on the island of Ireland
Source: National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), image. Accessed 22 February 2026, https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Species/TerrestrialDistributionMapPrintSize/28940



Recorded Distribution of *Prunus laurocerasus* L. in Britain and Ireland
Source: Stroh et al. (2023): https://bsbi.org/taxa/2cd4p9h.p20/prunus-laurocerasus



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1.11	Is the organism known to be invasive anywhere outside the Risk Assessment Area?	*P. laurocerasus* is demonstrably established and invasive in parts of continental Europe. In **Germany,** structured forest surveys documented persistent, reproducing populations with high local densities, mature individuals up to about 30 years old, and extensive vegetative spread, leading to its classification as an established neophyte with invasive potential (Abrahamczyk et al., 2024). Subsequent reproductive studies confirmed facultative selfing, abundant fruit set, generalist pollination, and effective seed dispersal by birds, demonstrating ecological integration and reproductive assurance under Central European conditions (Abrahamczyk et al., 2025). In **Belgium**, *P. laurocerasus* has been recorded in the wild since 1994 and it is increasingly spreading in woodland habitats, where it forms dense evergreen canopies that suppress native regeneration and reduce biodiversity (Belgian Biodiversity Platform. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Seedlings, indicating seed dispersal, have been recorded considerable distances from original plants. In **Luxembourg**, it is reported as invasive (Abrahamczyk, Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309. Accessed 8 May, 2026). In **Italy**, it is identified among expanding woody non-native trees, with riparian forests particularly vulnerable (Campagnaro et al., 2022). In **Isle of Man**, it has been reported as invasive by the Woodland Trust (Woodland Trust. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). In **Switzerland**, *P. laurocerasus* has been classified as an invasive species and may no longer be traded for cultivation in gardens as of September 2024 (Abrahamczyk, 2025). In **Britain**, it is noted as one of the commonest evergreen shrubs in gardens (Stace and Crawley, 2015). The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland 2020 Plant Atlas (Stroh et al., 2023) report that it was introduced in 1611, reported first in the wild in 1886, and has shown a substantial increase in the number of 10 km hectads in which it is recorded since the 1980s (see Section 1.10).

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		In **North America**, it has been noted as invasive on the west coast and described as a species of concern (Invasive Plant Atlas of the United States: *Prunus laurocerasus.* Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). It is a species of concern in the Vancouver region of **Canada**. It is reported as naturalized and a potential 'sleeper weed' in many parts of southeast **Australia** and regarded as an environmental weed in Victoria, New South Wales, and Adelaide. In these areas, it is dispersed by seed and attracts aggressive introduced birds, such as Myna (Blue Mountains City Council. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). The factsheet recommends that all plants are destroyed. **Policy and legal requirements outside of the Risk Assessment Area:** Abrahamczyk noted that some policy and legal requirements have been introduced in some regions to prevent further spread of *P. laurocerasus* (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309. Accessed 8 May, 2026), as follows: In **Belgium**, *P. laurocerasus* is on the watch list: (www.ias.biodiversity.be/species/show/112). In **Switzerland**, it is listed on the blacklist of invasive species that can no longer be traded: (www.infoflora.ch/de/neophyten/listen-und-infoblätter.html#liste-der-invasiven-neophyten-der-schweiz). In the city of Eugene, Oregon, **USA**, planting of *P. laurocerasus* is forbidden (https://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/53051/Invasive-Species-Prohibited-9_2020). Additionally, in **Slovenia,** *P. laurocerasus* is one of 51 species of alien plants included on the 2017 LIFE ARTEMIS alert list (https://www.tujerodne-vrste.info/vrste/cherry-laurel/). The purpose of the list is to support an early warning and rapid response (EWRR) system. The list supports prevention, early detection, and rapid management of high-risk species.
1.12	Describe any known socio-economic benefits of the organism	**Cut foliage industry** *P. laurocerasus* is an important component of Ireland's cut foliage industry. *Prunus*, *Eucalyptus* and *Pittosporum* are the main species cultivated. The total value of the Irish cut flower industry is valued at

Stage 1 - Organism information and screening *The aim of this section is to gather basic information about the organism*		
		€7 million, with a total of over 200 ha production of the three genera concentrated in counties Cork, Kerry, Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin (Teagasc Factsheet 04/2020. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Teagasc Factsheet 4/21 indicates that 100 ha are under *P. laurocerasus* cultivation. Main exports go to the florist sector in Britain and Netherlands. The industry is supported by Teagasc and Bord Bia with research bases at Kildalton College (Kilkenny) and Tralee (Teagasc Factsheets 04/2020; 0246/2021. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Commercial production relies on vigorous cultivars (e.g., 'Etna', 'Caucasia', and 'Novita') and ongoing cultivar trials are focusing on disease resistance in the Risk Assessment Area (Teagasc Factsheet 0246; Teagasc Factsheet 25/20. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). **Hedging and amenity** *P. laurocerasus* has become one of the most widely planted evergreen hedging species in landscaping, amenity, and private households in the Risk Assessment Area and elsewhere. It is valued for its rapid growth, ease of propagation from cuttings, low purchase cost, and tolerance to a wide range of habitats and climate. There are approximately 400 retail and wholesale nurseries registered with DAFM. DAFM identified twenty one professional operators/nurseries at wholesale level involved in the production of laurel for trade (DAFM, Pers. Comm.24 June 2026). There is evidence that broad leaved species such as *P. laurocerasus* provide superior sound attenuation compared to needle-leaved hedging (Webb et al., 2024). **Edible fruits and medicinal value** *P. laurocerasus* fruit is widely eaten in Central Europe, and there are ongoing breeding programmes in this sector (Abanoz and Okcu, 2022; Demir et al., 2017). Fruit-bearing selections for desirable traits are important in the Black Sea region, particularly Turkey, where the fruits are eaten fresh, dried, or made into jams and fruit juice. They are highly valued and called *taflan* or *laz cherry* (EPPO Global Database. Accessed Feb 2026).

Stage 1 - Organism information and screening *The aim of this section is to gather basic information about the organism*		
		Also, the fruits are used medicinally in Central Europe, prized for their high antioxidant activity (Alasalvar and Chang, 2020) and used traditionally to treat eczema, sore throat, and asthma (Abanoz and Okcu, 2022). They are rich in phytochemicals with anti-inflammatory, ant atherosclerotic, and antidiabetic properties (Demir et al., 2017). There is extensive published literature, primarily from the Balkans and Central Europe, which reports on the isolation of pharmacologically active compounds from *P. laurocerasus* (primarily from fruit stones and fruit) for use as antimicrobials (Sahan, 2011), and in cancer and diabetes treatment (Yazici et al., 2011). **Bioremediation** Two recent studies (Deniz, 2026; Keskin et al., 2025) report on *P. laurocerasus* biomass and stones as bioremediation agents to remove methylene blue and lead from wastewater.

Stage 2 - Detailed Assessment

Section A- Introduction

This section evaluates the probability of introduction and entry of an organism into the Risk Assessment Area.

- ***Introduction** is the movement of the species into the Risk Assessment Area (it may be either in captive conditions and/or in the environment, depending on the relevant pathways).*
- ***Entry** is the release/escape/arrival in the environment, i.e. occurrence in the wild*
- *Introduction and entry may coincide for species entering through pathways such as "unaided", but it also may differ. If different, please consider all relevant pathways, both for the introduction into the Risk Assessment Area and the entry in the environment.*

For organisms which are already present, only complete the introduction and entry section for currently active pathways of introduction and entry and potential future pathways. The introduction and entry section need not be completed for pathways which have allowed an organism to enter in the past but are no longer active.

Identification of Pathways of Introduction and Pathways of Entry into the Environment to the Risk Assessment Area			
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Justification**
2.01	List relevant pathways through which the organism could be introduced into the Risk Assessment Area and/or enter into the environment. Use the pathway categories developed by CBD and adopted by the EU Commission. If deviation from the categorisation system is unavoidable, note the reasons for this. Expand this list as required. For each relevant pathway identified, answer questions 2.02 to 2.10 in the subsequent tables. Please attribute unique identifiers to each question if you consider more	Introduction and Entry have been separated with four pathways identified: **Introduction**: 1. Escape from Confinement: Horticulture: **Entry:** 1. Escape from Confinement: Horticulture 2. Transport Contaminant: Habitat materials 3. Escape from Confinement: Ornamental purpose other than horticulture 4. Release in Nature: Erosion control/dune stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)	For the purpose of this risk assessment, Introduction is defined as importation into the island of Ireland. Entry is defined as the pathway from the point of importation to arrival in the semi-natural environment in the Risk Assessment Area. One pathway has been identified for **Introduction** into the Risk Assessment Area: **Pathway of Introduction 1: Escape from Confinement: Horticulture** Ongoing importation into the Risk Assessment Area, primarily from mainland Britain, Netherlands, and Italy. It is important to note that there is no natural/unaided

Identification of Pathways of Introduction and Pathways of Entry into the Environment to the Risk Assessment Area			
	than one pathway, e.g. 2.02a, 2.03a, etc. and then 2.02b, 2.03b etc. for the next pathway. Copy and paste additional tables at the end of this section as necessary.		introduction into the island of Ireland from Britain or Europe. **Entry** Although *P. laurocerasus* is already well established throughout the island of Ireland, it continues to enter the natural environment via the following four pathways: **Escape from Confinement: Horticulture** The **Escape from Confinement category** refers to the unintentional escape into the semi-natural environment of species intentionally brought into the region to kept in controlled situations. The **Escape from Confinement: Horticulture pathway** focuses on plants kept in commercial culturing facilities (nurseries, greenhouses) from which they may accidentally escape due to mismanagement or during transport to/from locations as part of the nursery trade. It includes the widescale planting for hedging and the cut foliage industry. **Transport – Contaminant: Transportation of habitat material (soil, vegetation, wood)** The **Transport-Contaminant category** refers to the unintentional movement of live organisms as contaminants of a commodity that is intentionally transferred through the movement of people and goods. It includes plant material. The **Transport-Contaminant: Transportation of habitat material (soil, vegetation, wood) pathway** refers to species that are unintentionally introduced as contaminants of habitat material, including soil, vegetation, chips, straw etc). **Escape from Confinement: Ornamental purpose other than horticulture**

Identification of Pathways of Introduction and Pathways of Entry into the Environment to the Risk Assessment Area			
			This pathway is similar to Escape from Confinement: Horticulture but it has been included here to specifically refer to the escape of *P. laurocerasus* from municipal parks and gardens from which it escapes. For the purposes of this risk assessment, it is also used to include cut vegetation that escapes from roadside hedge cutting. **Release in Nature: Erosion control/dune stabilisation (windbreaks, hedges,..)** The **Release in Nature category** refers to species that are intentionally transported and introduced by humans to regions in which they are not native. The **Release in Nature: Erosion control/dune stabilisation (windbreaks, hedges,..) pathway** refers to species that are intentionally introduced to the semi-natural environment for environmental management purposes, such as soil stabilisation, soil erosion control, and windbreaks.

Pathway of Introduction 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture. Importation of plants and seed into the Risk Assessment Area				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
2.02a	As per the CBD categorisations, is entry along this pathway • **intentional** (i.e. "Release in Nature" or "Escape from Confinement"); • **unintentional** (i.e. "Transport Contaminant" or "Transport Stowaway"); or • **corridor and dispersal** (i.e. "Unaided") Where possible give detail about the specific origins and end points of the pathways.	**intentional**	**medium**	This Escape from Confinement: Horticulture pathway covers the intentional importation of plants and seeds into the Risk Assessment Area from outside the Risk Assessment Area (Europe and Britain) for large scale cultivation, either for hedging or for the cut foliage industry. This pathway would have been substantial in the past, but because of phytosanitary regulations it appears to have declined in recent years, particularly from Britain. **Historical introduction** There are some reports that *P. laurocerasus* was intentionally introduced into the Risk Assessment Area in the 17th century, primarily for planting in demesnes and large estates to provide shelter and cover for game (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), Local botany County Fermanagh. Accessed 20 Feb, 2026). The National Biodiversity Data Centre lists its first record as 1941–1950 when it was introduced as a hedging plant and ornamental and has since escaped into the wild (National Biodiversity Data Centre, Species 28940. Accessed 8 May 2026). **Current introduction: Northern Ireland and Ireland** **Legal requirements in Risk Assessment Area** It is noted that *P. laurocerasus* is not specifically listed in current Invasive Alien Species legislation in either Ireland or Northern Ireland. However, both jurisdictions have existing legislation prohibiting the release of this and other non-native plant species into the wild (The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended); Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended)).

Pathway of Introduction 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture. Importation of plants and seed into the Risk Assessment Area				
				The approach taken in Northern Ireland specifically states species that are not currently "ordinarily resident", while the approach taken in Ireland is that under section 52(7) of the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state any non-native plant (or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of it). *P. laurocerasus* is regarded as a high risk species because it is host to a number of pests and diseases (most notably *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *pruni*)(Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019. Accessed 8 May, 2026). This means that the import of *P. laurocerasus* from outside the EU (including England, Scotland and Wales) is prohibited pending a risk assessment and it has not taken place since 2020 (Conor Francis McGee, Plant Sciences Division, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland. Pers. Comm., 6 March 2026). In accordance with SI 310(2021), DAFM must be notified. if *P. laurocerasus* is imported from another Member State within the EU. In vitro material and naturally or artificially dwarfed plants require a phytosanitary certificate. Seeds are exempt. **Current introduction for personal use: Northern Ireland and Ireland** Importation of plants in personal baggage from a non-EU country (including Scotland, England Wales) must be accompanied by a valid phytosanitary certificate which attests they are free from specific pests and diseases (DEFRA (a) Plant Health Portal.

Pathway of Introduction 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture. Importation of plants and seed into the Risk Assessment Area				
				Accessed 20 Feb 2026). In relation to SI 310 of 2021, pre-notification of *P. laurocerasus* importation from the EU, because of the risk of introduction of *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *pruni,* is no longer required because Ireland currently does not have Protected Zone status. The legislation is being updated (J. Eivers, DAFM. Pers. Comm., 26 May 2026).
2.03a	How likely is it that large numbers of the organism will travel along this pathway from the point(s) of origin over the course of one year? *Subnote: In your comment discuss how likely the organism is to get onto the pathway in the first place.*	**moderately likely**	**medium**	The scale of importation of *P. laurocerasus* into Ireland and NI from the EU has not been established. However, anecdotal evidence from wholesale suppliers within the Risk Assessment Area suggest that import is limited because of the regulatory constraints, and suppliers generally source material from growers within the Risk Assessment Area. However, the author made enquiries to large scale suppliers in the Risk Assessment Area and the responses indicated that imported plants continue to be introduced into the Risk Assessment Area, primarily from the Netherlands and Italy. For this reason, confidence is given as medium. Since 2021, all plants entering Northern Ireland from all non-EU countries including Britain must do so via a Point of Entry (POE) (approved by EU). POEs are Belfast Port, Larne Harbour, Warrenpoint Port, and Foyle Port. Until June 2025, Belfast International Airport was also a POE but has now been suspended. Online purchase of bareroot and potted plants and seed are widely available online from Amazon UK, Amazon EU, Amazon Ireland, eBay, Donedeal (Ireland platform), Etsy, and other seller platforms where the source of the material may be unknown.

Pathway of Introduction 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture. Importation of plants and seed into the Risk Assessment Area				
2.04a	How likely is the organism to enter the Risk Assessment Area undetected or without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities?	**moderately likely**	**medium**	*P. laurocerasus* seeds can be purchased online from seller platforms such as eBay where the country of origin, source of the material and potential infection by pests and diseases are unknown. Small packages may evade phytosanitary inspections. There are multiple online websites selling seed which indicates that it is moderately likely *P. laurocerasus* will be introduced via this pathway, but confidence is given as medium as there is only sparse published data.
2.05a	How likely is the organism to survive, reproduce, or increase during transport and storage along the pathway (excluding management practices that would kill the organism)?	**likely**	**low**	Live plants for import will be packaged according to horticultural best practice, and they are likely to survive along the pathway to the point at which they are delivered to their destination (e.g., wholesale nurseries for ongoing sale; cut-foliage growers). However, they are unlikely to reproduce or increase. Confidence is considered low without more specific published data.
2.06a	How likely is the organism to survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along the pathway?	**likely**	**low**	Horticultural best practice is likely to be adopted for all imports, so they are likely to survive management practices before and during transport and storage. This may not be the case with unregulated suppliers which sell and introduce seed into the Risk Assessment Area. Confidence is considered low without more specific published data.
2.07a	How isolated or widespread are possible points of introduction and/or entry into the environment in the Risk Assessment Area?	**moderately widespread**	**medium**	*P. laurocerasus* plants commercially imported into the Risk Assessment Area will be delivered to specific destinations within the Risk Assessment Area and horticultural best practice is likely to be adopted. Online, there are many suppliers that sell seeds which may be introduced by importation to small-scale growers or private households. Some online suppliers sell up to 100 seeds per

Pathway of Introduction 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture. Importation of plants and seed into the Risk Assessment Area				
				consignment. Not all of these may be used, with the rest discarded via household brown bin green waste services, composting systems, or into the semi-natural environment. The risk may be compounded because there are only low levels of awareness about the invasive potential of *P. laurocerasus* (Rusterholz et al., 2012; 2018).
2.08a	How likely is the organism to be able to transfer from the pathway to a suitable habitat or host?	**moderately likely**	**low**	For the purposes of this risk assessment, Introduction is defined as importation into Ireland to the point of delivery to the purchaser. In most cases, purchasers will be large scale growers and suppliers, which will adopt horticultural best practice. However, if a consignment is delayed or damaged, it is possible that small bareroot or potted plants could be discarded inappropriately and then transfer into the semi-natural environment. Confidence is low as there is no direct evidence.
2.09a	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area and/or entry into the environment based on this pathway?	**moderately likely**	**medium**	The overall likelihood is moderately likely. This estimate is based on personal communication with commercial nurseries and suppliers within the Risk Assessment Area which indicates that *P. laurocerasus* continues to be imported into the Risk Assessment Area, albeit at a moderate scale. The risk associated with private imports through online sales is higher, reflected by the large number of adverts on seller platforms such as eBay. These are unregulated and therefore associated with more risk of entry into the environment. However, confidence is medium as there is limited direct evidence.
2.10a	Do other pathways of Introduction need to be considered?			No

End of Pathway 1 assessment, repeat as necessary for other pathways

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
No	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
2.02b	As per the CBD categorisations, is entry along this pathway ·**intentional** (i.e. "Release in Nature" or "Escape from Confinement"); ·**unintentional** (i.e. "Transport Contaminant" or "Transport Stowaway"); or ·**corridor and dispersal** (i.e. "Unaided") Where possible give detail about the specific origins and end points of the pathways.	**unintentional**	**medium**	This pathway focuses on plants kept in commercial culturing facilities (nurseries, greenhouses) from which they accidentally escape due to mismanagement, or during transport to/from locations as part of the nursery trade. Escape from confinement is unintentional. Although most horticultural suppliers will adopt best practice, the sheer scale of *P. laurocerasus* supply means that escape is likely, primarily because of accidental or irresponsible disposal of green waste (Harrower et al., 2020). This pathway, as described here, includes 1) the horticultural sale of plants for hedging and 2) the cut foliage industry. The cut foliage sector has been included, following the guidance set out in Section 2.8 of the CBD document, which states: 'plants being cultivated commercially for any other reasons (e.g., cut or decorative flowers), should be included in this Horticulture pathway' (Harrower et al., 2020).
2.03b	How likely is it that large numbers of the organism will travel along this pathway from the point(s) of origin over the course of one year? *Subnote: In your comment discuss how likely the organism is to get onto the pathway in the first place.*	**very likely**	**medium**	It is very likely that large quantities of *P. laurocerasus* will travel along this pathway over the course of one year because the sale of *P. laurocerasus* in the Risk Assessment Area is substantial. Evidence of this scale comes from a review of horticultural suppliers in the Risk Assessment Area, which indicates that most large and small scale nurseries and garden centres supply *P. laurocerasus* for hedging. Indeed, it is often described as one of the 'most popular hedging plants' in the Risk Assessment Area. The majority of plants are propagated from stem cuttings and sold as bare-rooted or as potted plants. *P. laurocerasus* is also an important component of Ireland's cut foliage industry. Commercial production is expanding substantially, with 25 growers and about 100 ha of *P. laurocerasus* under current cultivation (Teagasc Factsheet

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
				04/21. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). Plantations for the industry, which include *P. laurocerasus* and other species, are currently located in the southeast and southwest of the Risk Assessment Area where the mild climate is regarded as ideal and gives the cut foliage industry in Ireland a competitive advantage over other European countries. Large volumes of *P. laurocerasus* travel along this pathway as part of the cut foliage sector, particularly during peak seasons such as Christmas and St Valentine's Day. Teagasc Factsheet 04/21 (Accessed 20 Feb. 2026) describe the sector as growing 2200 *P. laurocerasus* plants per ha. At harvest (which takes place from the fourth year of growth), 150 stems are tied together and placed in buckets of water. When fully operational, a plantation can harvest 80,000–100,000 stems twice a year. One of the key features of *P. laurocerasus* is its vigorous and resilient growth, and plants require regular, hard pruning in order to remain contained. This, combined with large-scale propagation of cuttings, will almost inevitably result in substantial volumes of brash that are likely to end up in a waste disposal cycle at large scale nurseries, garden centres, and, indeed, wherever it is grown. At least some of this may be mismanaged or irresponsibly disposed of. However, it is important to note that the cut foliage industry has biosecurity measures and waste management protocols to prevent escape from plantations because of the risk of disease (Conor Francis McGee, in-person personal comm., 23 April 2026). Shothole disease on *P. laurocerasus* (caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *syringae* in Ireland) is a serious concern in the cut foliage

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
				industry (Teagasc Factsheet 0246. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). With regards to the cut foliage industry, the origins of this pathway may include importation of cultivars into the Risk Assessment Area from outside the Risk Assessment Area. Other origins include the Teagasc research stations in Kilkenny and Tralee in Ireland which are involved with screening trials to identify disease resistant cultivars (Teagasc Factsheet 0246; Teagasc Factsheet 25/20. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026), and to screen new species (Teagasc Factsheet 0246; Teagasc Factsheet 1/20; 25/20. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). Another origin may be specialist growers in the Risk Assessment Area that provide plants for growing in plantations. The end points are the substantial plantations in Counties Kerry, Cork and Wexford where *P. laurocerasus* is grown on a large scale for cut foliage. The cut foliage is exported mainly to Britain and the Netherlands for the floristry sector (Teagasc Factsheet 4/21. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). With regards *P. laurocerasus* hedging, the origins of the pathway are large and small-scale horticultural suppliers, nurseries, garden centres, and private sellers. There are approximately 400 retail and wholesale nurseries registered with DAFM. DAFM identified twenty one professional operators/nurseries at wholesale level involved in the production of laurel for trade (DAFM, Pers. Comm.24 June 2026). The end points are commercial landscapers and private landowners. Confidence is medium, based on professional and anecdotal evidence, as there is a lack of published data.

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
2.04b	How likely is the organism to enter the Risk Assessment Area undetected or without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities?	**likely**	**medium**	*P. laurocerasus* is likely to enter the Risk Assessment Area undetected as discarded pot plants and stem cuttings, which are accidentally or irresponsibly disposed of as green waste. However, as noted in Section 2.03a, discarded material is less likely to enter the Risk Assessment Area from the cut foliage industry because disease-prevention biosecurity measures are adopted around plantations. In Ireland, businesses are required to dispose of their waste through an authorised waste collection provider or by bringing their waste to an authorised waste management facility. In Northern Ireland, managing green waste in the horticultural sector requires strict adherence to DAERA regulations, which requires on-site composting, anaerobic digestion or using licensed waste carriers to avoid landfill (DAERA. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026). General awareness of the invasive potential of *P. laurocerasus* is low. Therefore, there is a risk that *P. laurocerasus* waste materials may be inappropriately composted or disposed of within a horticultural facility, or it is transported by authorised waste collection providers which do not use sealed and covered vehicles for the movement of green waste, leading to escape into the semi-natural environment. There is no documented evidence of inappropriate green waste disposal by the horticultural trade, although there are numerous instances of illegal disposal of commercial waste in the Risk Assessment Area (EPA, 2005; Resourcefutures, 2023). Illegal dumping of commercial waste in general is a substantial concern in the Risk Assessment Area, so the likelihood of *P.*

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
				laurocerasus entering into the semi-natural environment via this pathway without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities is regarded as likely. Confidence is medium as there is no published evidence of illegal disposal of *P. laurocerasus* in the horticultural trade. However, there is documented evidence of illegal disposal of green waste by private householders and landscapers in the Risk Assessment Area. Ní Dhúill and Smyth (2021) reported on the escape of >30 alien garden escapes from green waste disposed of along the path to Howth Head in Co. Dublin. In other countries, irresponsible disposal of green waste has been reported as a substantial cause of invasive-species entry into the environment. Abrahamczyk specifically describes *P. laurocerasus* establishment from discarded rootstock (Abrahamczyk, Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel) datasheet. CABI Compendium, 44309 (Accessed 8 May, 2026). Rusterholz et al. (2012) reported that in NW Switzerland illegally dumped garden waste frequently occurs in urban forests, with a mean of 2.6 m^3 (17.8 m^3 annually) resulting in the escape of numerous non-native horticultural plant species. In Australia, *P. laurocerasus* is reported as being spread primarily by green waste and birds (weedsbluemountain.org.au. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). There is also a risk of entry at the point of introduction into the island of Ireland if an imported consignment is rendered unusable for ongoing sale or cultivation because of substantial transport delays or climate-related difficulties, such as floods and extreme temperatures. In this case, the consignment could be dumped which may lead to escape into the semi-natural environment. Also, if a consignment fails phytosanitary

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
				standards, it could lead to unregulated disposal and subsequent entry into the environment. Overall, confidence is considered medium, as there is little direct published evidence available specifically for *P. laurocerasus.* However, published studies document the entry of invasive species, including *P. laurocerasus*, through the disposal of green waste within the Risk Assessment Area and other countries.
2.05b	How likely is the organism to survive, reproduce, or increase during transport and storage along the pathway (excluding management practices that would kill the organism)?	**likely**	**low**	It is likely that *P. laurocerasus* potted or bareroot plants and cuttings will survive transport because it is known for its resilience and most large scale suppliers will adopt horticultural best practice to ensure high rates of survival. However, it is unlikely to reproduce or increase along this pathway. Confidence is considered low without direct published evidence.
2.06b	How likely is the organism to survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along the pathway?	**likely**	**low**	Most large scale suppliers will adopt horticultural best practice before and during transport and storage, so *P. laurocerasus* is likely to survive existing management practices. If *P. laurocerasus* is disposed of with other green waste in a designated location at commercial horticultural premises, it is likely to survive from rootstock, cut stems, and seed. However, confidence is low as there is no direct published evidence.
2.07b	How isolated or widespread are possible points of introduction and/or entry into the environment in the Risk Assessment Area?	**widespread**	**medium**	Available data for the number of garden centres shows a total of 202 businesses across the island of Ireland, 160 in Ireland (Bord Bia, 2026) and 42 in Northern Ireland (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, 2011). Additional communication with DAFM informed that they have

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
				approximately 400 retail and wholesale nurseries registered with them (DAFM, Pers. Comm.24 June 2026). Since the Covid outbreak, online sales have accelerated. This indicates that the sale of *P. laurocerasus* for hedging is very substantial and there are multiple possible points of entry into the semi-natural environment. The scale of the cut foliage industry and the volumes of material transported across the Risk Assessment Area and exported to Britain and the Netherlands suggests that possible points of introduction are also very widespread for this sector. However, confidence is low because there is no direct published evidence.
2.08b	How likely is the organism to be able to transfer from the pathway to a suitable habitat or host?	**likely**	**medium**	The likelihood that *P. laurocerasus* will transfer from this pathway to a suitable habitat is considered likely. The species is tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions, including different soil types, habitat types and climatic conditions (Conedera et al., 2018), which greatly increases the probability that material discarded from this pathway will encounter suitable conditions for establishment. However, confidence is medium as there is insufficient published data.
2.09b	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area and/or entry into the environment based on this pathway?	**likely**	**low**	The cut foliage industry has controls on *P. laurocerasus* waste as its escape outside growing areas could act as an uncontrolled reservoir for disease. Similarly, cut foliage is subject to controls during preparation and transport (Conor Francis McGee, In-person personal comm., 23 April 2026). However, confidence is low because there is no substantial direct evidence of escape from the cut foliage sector. Similar controls on transport and management of green waste is likely to be in place for large scale horticultural suppliers of

Pathway of Entry 1 – Escape from Confinement: Horticulture				
				hedging plants, but this may not be the case for smaller growers and suppliers. The overall likelihood is therefore given as likely but confidence is low as there is no direct evidence.
2.10b	Do other pathways need to be considered?	YES		

End of Pathway 2 assessment, repeat as necessary for other pathways

Pathway of Entry 2 – Transport Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Materials				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
2.02c	As per the CBD categorisations, is entry along this pathway ·**intentional** (i.e. "Release in Nature" or "Escape from Confinement"); ·**unintentional** (i.e. "Transport Contaminant" or "Transport Stowaway"); or ·**corridor and dispersal** (i.e. "Unaided") Where possible give detail about the specific origins and end points of the pathways.	**unintentional**	**medium**	This category differs from the Horticulture pathway because it refers to the unintentional transport of species between regions, while the Horticulture pathway refers to intentional transport (Harrower et al., 2020). It focuses on the substantial volumes of soil, stone and other materials transported across the Risk Assessment Area, which may be contaminated with invasive species from an infested source. This pathway is also used to describe the unintentional transport of *P. laurocerasus* material, which arises as a result of municipal or private hedge cutting and verge maintenance along roads and lanes in the Risk Assessment Area. *P. laurocerasus* is planted along roadways and although there are no published data to support this pathway, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that *P. laurocerasus* can enter the environment in this way.
2.03c	How likely is it that large numbers of the organism will travel along this pathway from the point(s) of origin over the course of one year? Subnote: In your comment discuss how likely the organism is to get onto the pathway in the first place.	**likely**	**medium**	Ireland's *Soil and Stone Pathway Action Plan 2023–2027* (National Biodiversity Data Centre, 2023) was developed specifically to address the risks associated with the movement of soil, stone, and other materials within the Risk Assessment Area that may contain invasive species material originating from source sites. *P. laurocerasus* is identified as a species that may be unintentionally spread along this pathway. *P. laurocerasus* may enter this pathway through the movement of discarded soil, vegetation, and other contaminated materials from sites where the species is present. The risk is considered low for large-scale horticultural operations, which are generally

Pathway of Entry 2 – Transport Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Materials				
				expected to apply appropriate biosecurity and horticultural best practice measures. However, professional evidence suggests that the likelihood is higher at construction and brownfield sites that have remained unmanaged for extended periods and have become colonised by invasive species, including *P. laurocerasus*. Invasive species management is recognised as a project abnormality requiring consideration in the context of brownfield land activation, although *P. laurocerasus* is not specifically referenced in the relevant guidance (Brownfield Land Activation, 2024; NESC, 2025). Professional evidence indicates that enabling works associated with construction projects commonly involve the excavation, handling, and off-site transport of substantial quantities of soil, stone, and vegetation. At brownfield and previously abandoned sites, these materials are also likely to contain irresponsibly disposed green waste. Although no published studies specifically quantify the occurrence of *P. laurocerasus* in such material streams, the author's professional experience in invasive species management during enabling works indicates that non-regulated invasive species and green waste, including *P. laurocerasus*, are frequently encountered. In addition, the extensive use of *P. laurocerasus* in municipal and private hedge planting across the Risk Assessment Area, combined with the requirement for regular trimming to maintain hedges, is likely to generate substantial quantities of brash. This material is likely to be transported to amenity landfill facilities, composting sites, or other waste management destinations following cutting. Overall, it is considered likely that significant volumes of *P.*

Pathway of Entry 2 – Transport Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Materials				
				laurocerasus material are transported annually through these pathways. Confidence in this assessment is rated as medium, as it is supported primarily by professional and anecdotal evidence rather than published quantitative data.
2.04c	How likely is the organism to enter the Risk Assessment Area undetected or without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities?	**likely**	**low**	Projected volumes of transported stone and soil waste in the Risk Assessment Area are expected to increase substantially, reaching an estimated 8.7 million tonnes by the end of 2029 across the Eastern and Midland Region, the Northern and Western Region, and the Southern Region in Ireland (Government of Ireland, Construction and Demolition Waste, 2020). This increase may raise the likelihood of unintentional dispersal of viable plant material, including shoots, cuttings, seeds, and whole plants. As identified under the Stone and Soil Action Pathway (see Section 2.03c), contaminated stone and soil could facilitate the introduction and secondary spread of *P. laurocerasus* where biosecurity controls are insufficient or absent. The scale of this risk is also likely to increase under projected climate warming scenarios (Nolan, 2024). In the short term, warming temperatures (up to 25°C) may enhance seed production, survivability, and establishment success, thereby increasing the probability that viable materials are transported undetected through soil and stone movements before appropriate mitigation measures can be implemented by competent authorities. However, the current level of confidence in this pathway remains low due to limited direct published evidence which

Pathway of Entry 2 – Transport Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Materials				
				shows entry following transport.
2.05c	How likely is the organism to survive, reproduce, or increase during transport and storage along the pathway (excluding management practices that would kill the organism)?	**likely**	**low**	*P. laurocerasus* is very resilient. Cuttings and viable seed are likely to survive during transport and storage along this pathway as long as there is sufficient moisture, but confidence is low without published evidence.
2.06c	How likely is the organism to survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along the pathway?	**moderately likely**	**medium**	For scheduled invasive species, there are stringent requirements under SI477 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitat) Regulations 2011 regarding the transport of plant biomass and vector materials, such as contaminated soil (Irish Statute Book. Accessed 31 May 2026). Contaminated materials must be transported under licence from the source to the destination, which is generally licensed landfill. However, there are no such requirements for non-scheduled plant materials which contaminate soil, stone and other materials that are transported from source site to another area. Given *P. laurocerasus'* resilience, the abundance of illegally disposed green waste which may contain *P. laurocerasus,* and the potential for viable seed to contaminate soil, it is concluded that it is moderately likely that *P. laurocerasus* will survive management practices along this pathway. Confidence is medium as the evidence is based on professional and anecdotal information, not published data.
2.07c	How isolated or widespread are possible points of introduction and/or entry into the environment in the Risk Assessment Area?	**widespread**	**low**	There are widespread points of entry in the Risk Assessment Area: • Movement of soil, stone, construction waste, and other materials from brownfield and other development sites. • Movement of soil, mulch and gravel for the landscaping

Pathway of Entry 2 – Transport Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Materials				
				sector. • Movement of stone from quarries. • Movement of soil, stone, gravel and other materials from local authority depots. In the author's experience, these depots are frequently infested with non-scheduled invasive species although there is no published evidence to confirm this. These points of entry are geographically widespread across the island of Ireland. However, confidence is considered medium as it is supported primarily by professional and anecdotal evidence rather than published quantitative data.
2.08c	How likely is the organism to be able to transfer from the pathway to a suitable habitat or host?	**likely**	**medium**	It is likely that *P. laurocerasus* will transfer from this pathway to the natural environment because suitable habitat is ubiquitous. Confidence is considered medium and based on evidence for other invasive species. For example, professional and anecdotal evidence robustly indicates that Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites pyrenaicus*) and Montbretia (*Crocosmia crocosmiiflora*) are primarily spread through the movement of soil in the Risk Assessment Area.
2.09c	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area and/or entry into the environment based on this pathway?	**likely**	**medium**	The overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area along this pathway is likely, but confidence is regarded as medium as it is based on professional data and inference from other species, while direct published data are lacking.
2.10c	Do other pathways need to be considered?	YES		

Pathway of Entry 3 – Escape From Confinement: Ornamental Purpose Other Than Horticulture				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
2.02d	As per the CBD categorisations, is entry along this pathway ·**intentional** (i.e. "Release in Nature" or "Escape from Confinement"); ·**unintentional** (i.e. "Transport Contaminant" or "Transport Stowaway"); or ·**corridor and dispersal** (i.e. "Unaided") Where possible give detail about the specific origins and end points of the pathways.	**unintentional**	**medium**	This pathway focuses on species that are introduced into private collections by hobbyists or used in landscaped habitats for aesthetic and ornamental purposes, and which then accidentally enter into the semi-natural environment (Harrower et al., 2020). It is unintentional but may arise because of irresponsible management practices, such as illegal disposal of green waste. It differs from Release in Nature category, which entails the direct and intentional release of species in the wild with no intent to contain the species to a confined area. It differs from Escape from Confinement: Horticulture pathway which focuses on plants kept in commercial culturing facilities, such as nurseries, from where they may accidentally escape due to mismanagement or during transport.
2.03d	How likely is it that large numbers of the organism will travel along this pathway from the point(s) of origin over the course of one year? Subnote: In your comment discuss how likely the organism is to get onto the pathway in the first place.	**likely**	**medium**	It is likely that large numbers of *P. laurocerasus* will enter the semi-natural environment along this pathway over the course of one year. *P. laurocerasus* is already well established in domestic gardens and parks throughout the Risk Assessment Area, and it continues to be widely sold for landscaping. Some cultivars, such as 'Otto Luyken' are prized for their compact spreading habit, glossy leaves, and abundance of white flowers and they are widely sold as ornamental plants. It is highly likely to enter the pathway in the first place because it is extensively planted and routinely managed by pruning and trimming, which leads to high volumes of brash. This may be accidentally or irresponsibly discarded, leading to wide-scale entry into the semi-natural environment.

Pathway of Entry 3 – Escape From Confinement: Ornamental Purpose Other Than Horticulture				
				Evidence for entry via discarded brash comes from Abrahamcyz (2024) who reported that *P. laurocerasus* can establish from rootstock in green waste. In Slovenia, 10% of people with residential gardens admitted to discarding of garden waste to the nearby environment, primarily nearby forests (Sipek and Sajna, 2020). In Britain less than half of the garden waste generated by rural gardens enters waste streams operated by waste service providers, with 2% of survey respondents admitting to fly tipping garden waste into the environment (Eades et al., 2019). It is likely that the true figures are higher than 2% owing to a reluctance to admit to fly tipping. Similar trends are likely for Ireland, but the evidence is primarily from professional and anecdotal reports and not published data. Rusterholz et al. (2012) reported that in NW Switzerland illegal dumped garden waste frequently occurs in urban forests, with a mean of 2.6 m3 (17.8 m3 annually) resulting in the escape of numerous non-native horticultural plant species, including *P. laurocerasus*. Langmaier and Lapin (2020) reported that invasion by *P. laurocerasus* is associated with the presence of nearby settlements, with most *P. laurocerasus* individuals originating from gardens. The risk associated with this pathway is exacerbated because *P. laurocerasus* leaf litter decomposes slowly and is rarely eaten by herbivores because it is poisonous, and shoots and cut branches are capable of rapid regeneration (Stace and Crawley, 2015; Malaspina et al., 2022). Furthermore, the scale of ornamental planting is substantial, indicating that large quantities of brash are likely to move along this pathway

Pathway of Entry 3 – Escape From Confinement: Ornamental Purpose Other Than Horticulture				
				annually. Although quantitative data are limited, strong visual and observational evidence supports the conclusion that high numbers of plants or viable propagules travel via this pathway each year. Confidence is considered medium.
2.04d	How likely is the organism to enter the Risk Assessment Area undetected or without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities?	**likely**	**medium**	The likelihood of *P. laurocerasus* entering the Risk Assessment Area undetected or without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities via this pathway is considered likely. In general, illegal disposal of commercial waste is a substantial concern in the Risk Assessment Area, which increases the probability that brash and other plant material from *P. laurocerasus* may be discarded outside of regulated waste management systems without oversight by competent authorities. Although there is limited direct evidence of illegal dumping of green waste originating specifically from the horticultural trade, there is clear evidence that private householders and small-scale landscapers frequently dispose of garden waste irresponsibly. Such disposal has been identified as a significant pathway for the introduction and spread of invasive plant species into semi-natural environments in Ireland (Ní Dhúill and Smyth, 2021), Australia (Blue Mountains City Council. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026) and Switzerland (Rusterholz et al., 2012). Because *P. laurocerasus* is extremely common in domestic gardens and amenity plantings, and because pruning and removal activities generate substantial volumes of viable plant material, it is likely that some proportion of this material enters the wider environment without detection. *P. laurocerasus* can also regenerate readily from cut branches

Pathway of Entry 3 – Escape From Confinement: Ornamental Purpose Other Than Horticulture				
				and shoots, meaning that discarded material is likely to enter the environment, establish, and then spread following unregulated disposal. As illegal dumping typically occurs outside formal waste collection and monitoring systems, these movements are unlikely to be detected or recorded by relevant authorities.
2.05d	How likely is the organism to survive, reproduce, or increase during transport and storage along the pathway (excluding management practices that would kill the organism)?	**likely**	**low**	The likelihood that *P. laurocerasus* will survive during transport and storage along this pathway is considered likely. The species is highly resilient, and rootstock and stem fragments are capable of remaining viable provided sufficient moisture is available. It is unlikely that it will reproduce or increase significantly during transport or storage itself. However, viable material is expected to remain capable of establishment and entry following disposal at a suitable site. Confidence in this assessment is low because there is limited direct evidence relating specifically to survival during transport and storage conditions associated with this pathway.
2.06d	How likely is the organism to survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along the pathway?	**likely**	**low**	The likelihood that *P. laurocerasus* will survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along this pathway is considered likely. Horticultural best practice is expected to be adopted by most growers; however, such practices are generally designed to maintain plant viability rather than eliminate it. As a result, viable seeds, cuttings and other propagules are likely to survive routine handling, transport and storage procedures associated with this pathway. Confidence in this assessment is low because there is little direct published evidence examining the survival of *P. laurocerasus* propagules under routine transport and storage

Pathway of Entry 3 – Escape From Confinement: Ornamental Purpose Other Than Horticulture				
				management conditions.
2.07d	How isolated or widespread are possible points of introduction and/or entry into the environment in the Risk Assessment Area?	**widespread**	**high**	Possible points of introduction are regarded as widespread because of large-scale planting for ornamental purposes other than horticulture across a wide range of different habitats (urban and rural) in the Risk Assessment Area.
2.08d	How likely is the organism to be able to transfer from the pathway to a suitable habitat or host?	**likely**	**high**	The likelihood that *P. laurocerasus* will transfer from this pathway to a suitable habitat is considered likely. The species is tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions, including different soil types, habitat types and climatic conditions (Conedera et al., 2018), which greatly increases the probability that material discarded from this pathway will encounter suitable conditions for establishment. Stroh et al. (2023) showed that *P. laurocerasus* is now recorded as established across most hectads in Britain and Ireland, indicating that suitable habitats are ubiquitous throughout the Risk Assessment Area. It was also noted there has been a marked increase since the 1980s in the number of 10 km squares in which *P. laurocerasus* has been recorded across Britain and Ireland (see Section 1.10). Although some of this increase may reflect improved recording effort, the observed expansion strongly suggests substantial ongoing entry that may occur without detection. Transfer from the pathway to the semi-natural environment is likely because green waste is frequently discarded directly into or adjacent to semi-natural habitats, including hedgerows, roadside verges, woodland edges and entrances to bog habitats. *P. laurocerasus* brash and cuttings are capable of regenerating after disposal, while viable seed may also germinate following dumping in suitable habitats.

Pathway of Entry 3 – Escape From Confinement: Ornamental Purpose Other Than Horticulture				
				Increasing evidence of fruit production, potentially linked to milder temperatures associated with climate warming, may further enhance entry and subsequent establishment and spread.
2.09d	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area and/or entry into the environment based on this pathway?	**likely**	**medium**	The overall likelihood of entry into the Risk Assessment Area along this pathway is likely. Confidence is considered medium without more substantial direct published evidence.
2.10d	Do other pathways need to be considered?			YES

Pathway of Entry 4 – Release in Nature: Erosion Control/Dune Stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
2.02e	As per the CBD categorisations, is entry along this pathway ·**intentional** (i.e. "Release in Nature" or "Escape from Confinement"); ·**unintentional** (i.e. "Transport Contaminant" or "Transport Stowaway"); or ·**corridor and dispersal** (i.e. "Unaided") Where possible give detail about the specific origins and end points of the pathways.	**Intentional**	**high**	This pathway concerns species that are intentionally introduced into the semi-natural environment for environmental management purposes, including substrate stabilisation, erosion control, control of animal movement, or management of wind, water, or fire (Harrower et al., 2020). Historical examples in Ireland include the intentional planting of *P. laurocerasus* in oak woodlands at Druid's Glen (Co. Wicklow), Glenbower Wood and Lake (Co Cork), and Cratloe Woods (Co. Clare). In these locations, *P. laurocerasus* was introduced to provide evergreen cover for game and for perceived amenity value. Subsequent spread from the original planting sites has occurred , primarily by vigorous vegetative layering (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), Local botany County Fermanagh. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). More recent examples of this pathway include the intentional planting of *P. laurocerasus* for erosion control and soil stabilisation on motorway embankments along sections of the M1 in Ireland (Darren Reidy, Pers. Comm. Accessed 5 May 2026).
2.03e	How likely is it that large numbers of the organism will travel along this pathway from the point(s) of origin over the course of one year? Subnote: In your comment discuss how likely the organism is to get onto the pathway in the	**very likely**	**high**	Abrahamczyk (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel). CABI Compendium datasheet 44309. Accessed 8 May 2026) reports that *P. laurocerasus* has been deliberately introduced for environmental management purposes (and as an ornamental) across its entire exotic range. Seeds are dispersed into the natural environment by birds and mammals, especially into forests and woodlands close to settlements. Their conclusion is based on the large number of seedlings observed in many areas

Pathway of Entry 4 – Release in Nature: Erosion Control/Dune Stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)				
	first place.			(Abrahamczyk et al., 2025) as well as by a few studies documenting direct dispersal (Pereira et al., 2019). These studies suggest that large numbers will travel along this pathway in the Risk Assessment Area as a consequence of intentional planting. Moreover, Abrahamczyk et al. (2024) provides evidence that in several regions, populations of *P. laurocerasus* reproduce and the species has thus to be regarded as an established neophyte. From established populations, further colonization deeper into forests are highly likely. One area where this has been documented is in Insubria (Abrahamczyk et al., 2024). In the Risk Assessment Area, Coillte has confirmed that *P. laurocerasus* is having a very serious negative impact, particularly in woodland Biodiversity Areas that are assessed under the Bioclass system, including old woodland, long established and ancient sites (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026). In these cases, introduction into the environment is considered to have been historical deliberate planting, followed by uncontrolled entry and subsequent spread.
2.04e	How likely is the organism to enter the Risk Assessment Area undetected or without the knowledge of relevant competent authorities?	**likely**	**high**	The source of *P. laurocerasus* material intentionally planted into the natural environment is likely to come from direct purchase from suppliers and from cuttings taken from established plants grown in contained areas (e.g., gardens).
2.05e	How likely is the organism to survive, reproduce, or increase during transport and storage along the pathway (excluding management practices that would kill the organism)?	**very likely**	**high**	*P. laurocerasus* is highly likely to survive, reproduce, and increase following intentional release in the semi-natural environment for erosion control, soil stabilisation, or use as windbreaks and hedges. Once planted for these purposes, the species may be left unmanaged or only sporadically managed, allowing it to enter, spread and persist in the new environment.

Pathway of Entry 4 – Release in Nature: Erosion Control/Dune Stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)				
				It can reproduce vigorously through vegetative layering, regeneration from rootstocks, and seed dispersal. Abrahamczyk et al. (2024) further reports that establishment can occur from discarded green waste, particularly viable rootstock material. Historical evidence from Druid's Glen (Co. Wicklow) demonstrates that plants intentionally introduced to provide cover for game have survived and reproduced extensively, forming dense thickets that are extremely difficult to control (Scott Cawley, 2022). These traits indicate a high likelihood that the species will survive and increase following intentional release along this pathway.
2.06e	How likely is the organism to survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along the pathway?	**likely**	**high**	*P. laurocerasus* is likely to survive existing management practices before and during transport and storage along this pathway. Existing management measures are often insufficient to prevent its unaided entry, particularly where plants are only intermittently controlled. Once established, it is extremely challenging to prevent further entry and spread. *P. laurocerasus* can enter undetected into the semi-natural environment by several mechanisms, including viable seed production and dispersal, discarded green waste, and vegetative layering. While there are no published studies which specifically address seed viability in the Risk Assessment Area, there is a general consensus that seed is viable in its invasive range, and seed can be a source of significant dispersal (Abrahamczyk et al., 2025; Belgian Biodiversity Portal. Accessed 20 Feb 2026; Pereira et al., 2019; Webb, 1982) Management of green waste is inadequate with regards the

Pathway of Entry 4 – Release in Nature: Erosion Control/Dune Stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)				
				prevention of entry. Although there is only limited evidence for *P. laurocerasus*, disposal of green waste containing invasive species into the semi-natural environment has been reported across the Risk Assessment Area, allowing viable material to survive, establish, and persist. Ní Dhúill and Smyth (2021) documented >30 alien garden escapes associated with illegally disposed green waste in Co. Dublin. Rusterholz et al. (2012) reported that in NW Switzerland illegal dumped garden waste frequently occurs in urban forests, with a mean of 2.6 m^3 (17.8 m^3 annually) resulting in the escape of numerous non-native horticultural plant species. In Australia, *P. laurocerasus* is reported as being spread primarily by green waste and birds (weedsbluemountain.org.au. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Vegetative layering further increases the likelihood of survival under existing management regimes, as dense stands can persist even following attempted control (Scott Cawley, 2022). In Druid's Glen (Co. Wicklow) stands have been challenging to control despite a targeted control programme in 2018. Here, cessation of management has allowed continued entry and spread (Coillte, 2018). Evidence from Glenbower Woods (Co. Cork) also shows ongoing entry in ancient woodland habitats (Glenbower Wood and Lake Committee, 2015). This evidence suggests that *P. laurocerasus* is likely to survive current management practices associated with this pathway and confidence is considered high.
2.07e	How isolated or widespread are possible points of introduction and/or	**ubiquitous**	**high**	The distribution maps from the National Biodiversity Data Centre and Stroh et al. (2023) presented in Sections 1.05 and

Pathway of Entry 4 – Release in Nature: Erosion Control/Dune Stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)				
	entry into the environment in the Risk Assessment Area?			the recorded hectads outlined in Section 1.10 indicate that *P. laurocerasus* is widely established across most regions of the Risk Assessment Area. Together with its tolerance of a broad range of environmental conditions, with the exception of coastal and high-altitude areas (see Section 1.08), and its broad climatic suitability (Table 2), this indicates that potential points of introduction and entry into the (semi-)natural environment are widespread. The likelihood of widespread introduction and entry points is further increased by the extensive planting of *P. laurocerasus* throughout the Risk Assessment Area for hedging, screening and amenity purposes. The species requires regular pruning to maintain its form and amenity value, resulting in substantial quantities of green waste. Brash and other garden waste are sometimes disposed of inappropriately, particularly by private householders, as the transport and disposal of bulky material can be inconvenient and costly. Illegal dumping or informal disposal of green waste therefore represents an important pathway for release into the environment. The role of green waste disposal in the spread of alien plant species has been documented in Ireland by Ní Dhúill and Smyth (2021), elsewhere in Europe by Rusterholz et al. (2012), and in Australia by Blue Mountains City Council (Accessed 20 February 2026).
2.08e	How likely is the organism to be able to transfer from the pathway to a suitable habitat or host?	**very likely**	**high**	The likelihood of *P. laurocerasus* transferring from this pathway to a suitable habitat is very likely. The species is already widely distributed throughout the Risk Assessment Area and is tolerant

Pathway of Entry 4 – Release in Nature: Erosion Control/Dune Stabilisation (windbreaks/hedges)				
				of a broad range of environmental and climatic conditions (Sections 1.08 and Table 2). Suitable habitats, including woodland, hedgerows, scrub, and disturbed ground, are widespread and frequently occur in close proximity to areas where the species is planted as hedging or for amenity purposes. This is further supported by communication with Declan Little (Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026) who reported that Coillte faces substantial costs as a result of *P. laurocerasus* entry into native woodland commercial plantation habitats.
2.09e	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area and/or entry into the environment based on this pathway?	**likely**	**high**	This pathway highlights species that are introduced intentionally and specifically into the semi-natural environment to control the environment or to act as physical barriers (e.g., stabilise substrate, control animal movement or to manage the action of wind, water, or fire) (Harrower et al., 2020). The evidence given in this section indicate that there is a high overall likelihood of introduction and entry into the Risk Assessment Area based on this pathway.
2.10e	Do other pathways need to be considered?			**NO**

Pathways of Introduction and Entry – Overall Likelihood				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
2.11	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area or entry into the environment based on all pathways in current conditions.	**likely**	**medium**	Based on the evidence across all assessed pathways, the overall likelihood of introduction and entry into the environment is assessed as **likely** with medium confidence. This assessment is based on the following factors: **Substantial propagule pressure**: *P. laurocerasus* is very widespread in the Risk Assessment Area because of commercial horticulture, the cut foliage industry, municipal, roadside and amenity planting, ornamental landscaping, private gardens, and historical introductions. **There are at least four pathways operating simultaneously** and entry into the semi-natural environment may occur through unintentional escape from confinement in the horticultural and cut foliage sectors; unintentional transport contaminants associated with the movement of soil, stone, and other materials, and green waste; unintentional ornamental escape from gardens and landscaped areas, and intentional release for environmental management, such as erosion control and soil stabilisation. **High frequency and geographical spread**: Large quantities of viable material, including bareroot and potted plants, cut foliage, and brash are transported annually across the risk assessment rea, with widespread points of potential entry into semi-natural habitats. Its increasing geographical spread is confirmed by data from the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, published in the 2020 Plant Atlas (Stroh et al., 2023). **Growth characteristics that facilitate entry**: *P. laurocerasus* is

Pathways of Introduction and Entry – Overall Likelihood				
				fast growing, can readily regenerate from cut stems and rootstock, reproduces by seed and vegetative layering, and tolerates a wide range of soil and climatic conditions. **Evidence of ongoing entry**: There is reasonable published evidence (mostly from outside the Risk Assessment Area) and observational evidence from within the Risk Assessment Area which demonstrates that *P. laurocerasus* can establish from discarded brash and it can persist following attempted control. **Widespread suitable habitat**: Suitable habitats are ubiquitous in the Risk Assessment Area, including native and commercial woodland, hedgerows, roadside verges and embankments, disturbed ground, and abandoned or brownfield sites. **Confidence is considered medium** because there is substantial supporting professional, observational, and indirect evidence within the Risk Assessment Area, and there are documented examples of entry from other regions outside the Risk Assessment Area. However, quantitative published data which specifically measures pathway volumes, survival rates, and rates of illegal disposal of brash remain limited.

Pathways of Introduction and Entry – Overall Likelihood				
2.12	Estimate the overall likelihood of introduction into the Risk Assessment Area or entry into the environment based on all pathways in foreseeable climate change conditions (See Appendix 1 for guidance)	**likely**	**medium**	Under foreseeable climate change conditions, the overall likelihood of entry into the semi-natural environment is assessed as **likely** with **medium confidence**. This assessment is based on the expectation that climate change will substantially increase the likelihood of entry because warming temperatures favour the production of fruit and seed. Professional observations indicate that *P. laurocerasus* is fruiting more readily as a result of rising temperatures within the Risk Assessment Area. It is also likely that climate change will increase the frequency of disturbed habitats because of storm damage and this may facilitate spread into habitats that are currently only marginally suitable Aranda et al., 2024). Confidence remains medium because the trajectory of climate-related impacts is based on emerging evidence, such as increased fruiting, but there remains considerable uncertainty. For example, prolonged winter frost combined with sun causes drought stress, damages tissues and limits reproduction (Hetzel, 2012; 2014) and summer drought is a key limiting factor in both native and exotic ranges (Karami-Kordalivand et al., 2021). Overall, however, foreseeable climate change conditions are expected to increase both the frequency and success of entry into the semi-natural environment.

Section B – Establishment				
This section evaluates the probability of establishment of an organism within the Risk Assessment Area. For organisms which are already well established in the Risk Assessment Area there is no need to complete this section - move straight to the Spread section.				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
3.01	Is the organism well established in the Risk Assessment Area (if there is any uncertainty answer 'unsure')	**Yes**	**high**	*P. laurocerasus* is already well established in the Risk Assessment Area (please see Section 1.10), and this section has not been completed.
3.02	How likely is it that the organism will be able to establish in the Risk Assessment Area based on similarities between local climatic conditions and other abiotic conditions in the organism's current global distribution?			
3.03	How widespread are habitats or species necessary for the survival, development and multiplication of the organism in the Risk Assessment Area?			
3.04	How likely is it that the organism will become established in protected conditions (in which the environment is artificially maintained, such as wildlife parks, glasshouses, aquaculture facilities, terraria, zoological gardens) in the Risk Assessment Area? Subnote: gardens are not considered protected conditions.			

Section B – Establishment				
3.05	How likely is it that establishment will occur despite competition from existing species in the Risk Assessment Area?			
3.06	How likely is it that establishment will occur despite predators, parasites or pathogens already present in the Risk Assessment Area?			
3.07	How likely is it that establishment will occur despite existing management practices? Explain if existing management practices could facilitate establishment.			
3.08	How likely is it that the biological characteristics of the organism will facilitate its establishment, e.g. its ability to spread or its adaptability?			
3.09	Based on the history of invasion by this organism elsewhere in the world, how likely is it to establish in the Risk Assessment Area? If possible, specify the instances of invasion elsewhere in the justification box			
3.10	If the organism requires another species for critical stages in its life cycle then how likely is the organism to become associated with such species in the Risk Assessment Area?			

Section B – Establishment				
3.11	Estimate the overall likelihood of establishment in the Risk Assessment Area under current climatic conditions.			
3.12	Estimate the overall likelihood of establishment in the Risk Assessment Area under foreseeable climate change conditions (See Appendix 1 for guidance).			

Section C – Spread				
This section evaluates the probability of spread of an organism within the Risk Assessment Area. Spread is defined as the expansion of the geographical distribution of an organism within the Risk Assessment Area.				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
4.01	How rapid is the spread of this organism by natural (unaided) means expected to be in the Risk Assessment Area? (List and comment on each of the mechanisms for natural spread.)	**rapid**	**medium**	Natural dispersal is defined as species that spread unaided without anthropogenic assistance from regions in which they are alien and were introduced to by another pathway. This category always refers to secondary dispersal. It differs from the transport-contaminant pathway which is unintentional but requires human assistance (Harrower et al., 2020). *P. laurocerasus* naturally disperses in two ways: vegetative layering and suckering, and seed dispersal (Stace and Crawley, 2015). **Vegetative layering** *P. laurocerasus* vegetatively propagates by layering of its lower branches (Stace and Crawley, 2015) which encourages slow and local expansion from the original plant and results in dense thickets. This formation of impenetrable thickets, also seen in *Rhododendron ponticum*, is the trait that unites high-impact invasive species because they can form dense monocultures that exclude virtually all other vascular plants (Stace and Crawley, 2015; Gioria et al., 2018a, b). There are several woodland habitats in the Risk Assessment Area where *P. laurocerasus* was historically planted to provide cover for game and has since spread unaided by vegetative layering. Examples include Druid's Glen (Co. Wicklow); Glenbower Wood and Lake (Co. Cork); and Cratloe Woods (Co. Clare). In these three examples, *P. laurocerasus* has escaped its original planting areas, primarily by vegetative layering, to form dense thickets which become very

Section C – Spread				
				challenging to control (Coillte, 2018; Cratloe Biodiversity Action Plan; Glenbower Wood and Lake Committee. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). **Seed dispersal** The extent to which *P. laurocerasus* disperses by seed in the Risk Assessment Area is less clear. While there are no published studies of seed viability in the Risk Assessment Area, there is a general consensus that it is very likely. The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI, Local botany, County Fermanagh (Accessed 20 Feb. 2026) gives several references indicating self-sown plants and emphasises that climate warming may increase seed production. The Royal Horticultural Society notes that it can be propagated by seed in autumn (Royal Horticultural Society: Cherry Laurel. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Webb (1982) reported that *P. laurocerasus* was recorded on the island in Lough Corrib in Ireland, suggesting that seed, dispersed by birds, was viable in this instance. Elsewhere in Europe, there is ample evidence that *P. laurocerasus* produces viable seed which are dispersed by birds (mostly blackbirds), red foxes and pine martens. These animals disperse seeds into adjacent natural areas, close to settlements where new populations develop (Abrahamczyk et al; 2025 Pereira et al., 2019). Research by Abrahamczyk (2025) showed that *P. laurocerasus* outcrosses in its native range, but it is capable of facultative selfing in newly colonized areas. The flexibility by which *P. laurocerasus* can adapt its reproductive capacity to new environmental conditions underlines its invasive potential. In Belgium, although *P. laurocerasus* was introduced as late as 1994, abundant seedlings are now observed in the natural environment, considerable distances from existing stands. This strongly indicates

Section C – Spread				
				viable seed dispersal (Belgian Biodiversity Platform. Accessed 20 Feb 2026; Halford et al., 2011). Fruit development tends to be adversely affected by late spring frosts, wet weather during flowering, and drought. However, Teagasc screening programmes have focused on increased hardiness, increased tolerance to drought, and more abundant fruiting, all of which may increase *P. laurocerasus*' capacity to disperse by seed if these cultivars escape into semi-natural habitats (Halász et al., 2021; Sulusoglu et al., 2015). In conclusion, historical spread has been primarily by vegetative layering which results in dense thickets which gradually expand in size. This has resulted in a high impact, but it has been relatively localised and facilitated by the absence of ongoing management. Although there is no published evidence for viable seed production in the Risk Assessment Area, research from Europe strongly suggests that seed dispersal is becoming increasingly frequent, particularly as a result of climate warming. This may greatly accelerate dispersal over much wider areas.
4.02	How rapid is the spread of this organism by human assistance expected to be in the Risk Assessment Area?	**very rapidly**	**high**	The spread of *P. laurocerasus* by human assistance in the Risk Assessment Area is likely to be very rapid. This is primarily due to its widespread intentional planting in gardens, parks, commercial landscapes, and for environmental management such as erosion control, which has enabled repeated entry into the semi-natural environment and facilitated the establishment of persistent populations. Once established, it can spread readily into adjacent habitats. Human activities further accelerate its spread. Large amounts of garden waste are generated following pruning, and the improper disposal of this brash creates new foci for establishment and

Section C – Spread				
				secondary spread. This pathway is considered particularly important because *P. laurocerasus* is widely cultivated and generates substantial biomass that is difficult and costly to manage appropriately (Rusterholz, 2012). Published studies from other regions demonstrate a strong link between human presence and activities and invasion success. For example, Aranda et al. (2024) found in Switzerland that the probability of presence decreased with increasing distance from buildings, indicating that spread is strongly associated with anthropogenic activity and proximity to settlements. Collectively, this evidence indicates that human-assisted spread is likely to remain very rapid and continuous throughout the Risk Assessment Area, and it is likely to be far more significant than unaided dispersal.
4.03a	List and describe relevant pathways of spread other than "unaided". Use the definitions developed by CBD and adopted by the EU Commission. If deviation from the categorisation system is unavoidable, note the reasons for this. For each pathway then answer questions 4.04 to 4.10 (copy and paste additional rows at the end of this section as necessary). Please attribute unique identifiers to each question if you consider more than one pathway, e.g. 4.04a, 4.05a, etc. and then 4.04b, 4.05b etc. for the next pathway.	1. Transport Contaminant – habitat materials		The *Transport Contaminant: Transportation of habitat material* pathway refers to the unintentional spread of *P. laurocerasus* in soil, vegetation wood chips, mulch and other materials which became contaminated at the source point. This pathway is discussed under Entry. This pathway is also included under Spread to specifically focus on 1) contaminated habitat material that arrives at its destination and is then unintentionally spread across an area, which leads to the dispersal and spread of viable *P. laurocerasus* propagules, including cut stems, rootstock and seed, and 2) spread arising from hedgerow cutting along linear roads and waterbodies. The brash from hedge cutting where *P. laurocerasus* is present may be left in situ and then allowed to spread by other vehicles, water, or animals, or it may be

Section C – Spread				
				collected in an unsealed trailer from which it escapes and spreads into the environment with subsequent persistence.

End of Pathway 1 assessment, repeat as necessary for other pathways

Pathway of Spread 1: Transport – Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Material				
4.04a	As above – copy questions 4.04a-4.10a from Pathway 1			
4.05a	How likely is it that a number of individuals sufficient to originate a viable population will spread along this pathway from the point(s) of origin over the course of one year?	**moderately likely**	**medium**	The likelihood that a number of individuals sufficient to originate a viable population of *P. laurocerasus* will spread along the Transport – Contaminant: Transportation of habitat material pathway over the course of one year is considered **moderately likely**, with **low** confidence. This assessment is based on two principal mechanisms of spread: 1. **Movement of contaminated topsoil, stone, mulch, and other habitat materials** Viable propagules of *P. laurocerasus*, including rootstock, stem material, and seeds may be transported unintentionally within contaminated soil or vegetation originating from sites where *P. laurocerasus* is present. Following deposition at the destination site, these propagules may persist with subsequent spread over an area, particularly where suitable habitat and sufficient moisture are present. Although there is no direct published evidence documenting the spread of *P. laurocerasus* specifically through contaminated topsoil in the Risk Assessment Area, analogous spread pathways are known to occur for other invasive plant species, particularly Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*). Professional evidence from invasive species management within the Risk Assessment Area indicates that topsoil delivered to private householders and subsequently spread over an area may contain viable non-scheduled invasive plant material with subsequent establishment and spread (Frances Giaquinto, unpublished). The regenerative ability of *P. laurocerasus* from rootstock, stem

Pathway of Spread 1: Transport – Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Material				
				cuttings and seed suggests that even relatively small quantities of viable material transported in contaminated soil could lead to subsequent spread. 2. **Local transport of hedge-cutting and verge-management material** Regular trimming of hedges and roadside vegetation generates substantial quantities of brash and cut stem material. Where this material is left adjacent to roadsides or watercourses, temporarily stockpiled, or inadequately contained during transport, viable stem fragments and seeds may spread into adjacent habitats. Because P. laurocerasus is capable of regenerating from cut stems and vegetative material, repeated small-scale dispersal along transport corridors, hedgerows, roadside embankments, riparian margins, and disturbed ground may collectively result in the spread of viable populations over time. There is limited direct published evidence quantifying the frequency of spread, and successful spread depends on propagule viability and the availability of suitable habitat. However, the combination of extensive planting across the Risk Assessment Area, high volumes of green waste and soil movement, the species' regenerative capacity, and widespread suitable habitat, indicates that sufficient viable propagules are reasonably likely to spread annually along this pathway and give rise to new local populations. Confidence is assessed as medium because the assessment relies primarily on professional experience, observational evidence, and inference from comparable invasive species pathways rather than

Pathway of Spread 1: Transport – Contaminant: Transportation of Habitat Material				
				direct quantitative studies for *P. laurocerasus.*
4.06a	How likely is the organism to survive, reproduce, or increase during transport and storage along the pathway (excluding management practices that would kill the organism)?	**moderately likely**	**low**	There is a moderately likely risk that *P. laurocerasus* could survive along this pathway. If seed production increases in the Risk Assessment Area, the risk is likely to become higher but confidence is low as there is no direct published evidence.
4.07a	How likely is the organism to survive existing management practices during spread?	**moderately likely**	**low**	Inadequate management practices, such as allowing contaminants in transported soil and stone without appropriate checks, or transporting brash in unsealed vehicles, or leaving brash in situ, will increase the likelihood of survival, but confidence is low without direct published evidence.
4.08a	How likely is the organism to spread in the Risk Assessment Area undetected?	**likely**	**low**	It is likely that *P. laurocerasus* will spread into the Risk Assessment Area undetected along this pathway, particularly if there are inadequate management measures, as described in Section 4.07a.
4.09a	How likely is the organism to be able to transfer from the pathway to a suitable habitat or host during spread?	**likely**	**low**	*P. laurocerasus* is moderately likely to transfer to a suitable environment from contaminated habitat materials because it is tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions and suitable habitat is ubiquitous, but confidence is low without direct evidence.
4.10a	Estimate the overall potential rate of spread based on this pathway in relation to the environmental conditions in the Risk	**rapidly**	**low**	Due to the widespread planting and presence of *P. laurocerasus* across the island of Ireland, this pathway is likely to result in localized spread at a **rapid** rate of spread, but confidence is **low** without direct published evidence.

End of Pathway assessment, repeat as necessary for other pathways

Spread Potential				
4.11	In what proportion (given as % of 10km squares) of the Risk Assessment Area could the organism establish?	0% - 10% 11% - 33% 34% - 67% **68% - 90%** 91% - 100%	**high**	**68% - 90% High confidence.** The proportion of the Risk Assessment Area in which *P. laurocerasus* could establish is considered high and is estimated to be up to 68%–90% of the Risk Assessment Area, particularly if climate conditions become more favourable to extend its habitat range to more upland habitats. Evidence for this estimation comes from other parts of its introduced and native range, which suggests that *P. laurocerasus* is capable of tolerating substantially broader environmental conditions than currently colonised in Ireland and Britain, particularly with regards altitude. Stroh et al. (2023) report that *P. laurocerasus* is predominantly a lowland species in Ireland and Britain with a highest precise record of 398 m in Somerset, UK. However, this is not the case in other regions. For example, Pourgharib et al. (2026) reported successful growth at altitude in Northern Iran; Rusterholz et al. (2018) documented the species at approximately 1000 m elevation in the Swiss Alps; Denk et al. (2001) and Nikolov and Dimitrov (2023) reported populations commonly occurring between 200 m and 1650 m elevation, and populations in Anatolia and the Caucasus have been recorded up to 2000–2340 m (Scholz and Scholz, 1995). This assessment of the proportion of the Risk Assessment Area in which *P. laurocerasus* could establish is supported by the substantial increase in the number of occupied 10 km squares since the 1980s, indicating widespread entry, establishment, and continuing spread (Stroh et al., 2023). This is a result of multiple intentional introductions and many unintentional introductions (although empirical evidence is lacking), leading to the high number and increase in records.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5">Spread Potential</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>The following data from Stroh et al. (2023) illustrate this expansion:

<table><tr><td>Years</td><td>Great Britain</td><td>Island of Ireland</td></tr><tr><td>2000–2019</td><td>1758</td><td>643</td></tr><tr><td>1987–1999</td><td>1232</td><td>336</td></tr><tr><td>1970–1986</td><td>585</td><td>27</td></tr><tr><td>Pre 1970</td><td>297</td><td>39</td></tr></table></td></tr>
<tr><td>4.12</td><td>What proportion (%) of the area in the Risk Assessment Area suitable for establishment, if any, has already been colonised by the organism?</td><td>0% - 10%
11% - 33%
34% - 67%
68% - 90%
91% - 100%</td><td>high</td><td>68% - 90% High confidence.
Overall, the available evidence indicates that suitable habitat for establishment is already widespread and nearly continuous throughout most of the Risk Assessment Area, and that the proportion of occupiable 10 km squares is therefore very high (>75%). This coverage is illustrated in the maps of recorded data published by the National Biodiversity Data Centre and the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland 2020 Plant Atlas for Britain and Ireland (Stroh et al., 2023) (See Maps, Section 1.10).

Stroh et al. (2023) describe P. laurocerasus as predominantly a lowland species that has naturalised widely in woodland, scrub, waste ground, disused railways, hedgerows, roadside habitats, and amenity landscapes. It is also extensively planted for hedging and ornamental purposes, creating continuous propagule pressure across large areas of the landscape.

At present, establishment appears to be partially constrained by higher altitudes, exposure to coastal salt winds, and some extreme western coastal conditions (Stroh et al., 2023).</td></tr>
</table>

Spread Potential				
4.13	What proportion of the area in the Risk Assessment Area suitable for establishment, if any, do you expect to have been invaded by the organism five years from now (including any current presence)?	0% - 10% 11% - 33% 34% - 67% **68% - 90%** 91% - 100%	**high**	**68% - 90% High confidence** The continued and widespread entry of *P. laurocerasus* is likely to cause such high propagule pressure that 68%–90% of the area in the Risk Assessment Area could have been invaded, with the possible exception of the west coast where salty Atlantic winds are unfavourable.
4.14	What other timeframe would be appropriate to estimate any significant further spread of the organism (10, 20, 40, 80 or 160 years)? Please comment on why this timeframe is chosen.	10 years **20 years** 40 years 80 years 160 years	**high**	The combination of climate warming, widespread sale of *P. laurocerasus*, and unmanaged green waste active (Ní Dhúill and Smyth, 2021) will likely lead to extensive further entry and spread. A timeframe of 20 years has been selected, based on professional observations of the rate of spread of other non-native invasive species in the Risk Assessment Area (e.g., Rhododendron ponticum, Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites pyreniacus*). This estimated timeframe is supported by Stroh et al. (2023) who recorded a doubling of the number of hectads in which *P. laurocerasus* was recorded in the last 20 years in Britain and Ireland (Section 1.10).
4.15	In this timeframe, what proportion of the area (including any currently occupied areas) is likely to have been invaded by this organism?	0% - 10% 11% - 33% 34% - 67% 68% - 90% **91% - 100%**	**high**	The estimate is based on the records of *P. laurocerasus* published in Stroh et al. (2023), which have shown a marked increase in the number of records over the last 20 years in the Risk Assessment Area. Absence of existing records in 10 km hectads could reflect under-recording.
4.16	Estimate the overall potential rate of spread under current climate conditions for this organism in the Risk Assessment Area (indicate any key issues and provide quantitative data where possible).	**rapidly**	**high**	The rate of spread over the last 20 years has been fast under current climate conditions (The table, reproduced from Stroh et al. (2023) presented in Section 4.11 illustrates that the number of occupied hectads more than doubled in a 20 year reporting period. This may be due in part to increased recording but it is also because of the active promotion of *P. laurocerasus* as hedging and as an ornamental shrub.

Spread Potential				
				The climate has already shown sufficient warming to stimulate fruit production, and there is a general consensus that *P. laurocerasus* produces viable seed in the Risk Assessment Area. It is important to note that plant species with fleshy fruits, like *P. laurocerasus,* have a high potential to be spread successfully and very widely, mainly by birds and small mammals (Rusterholz et al., 2018). For these reasons, the overall potential rate of spread is given as rapidly, with high confidence.
4.17	Estimate the overall potential rate of spread in foreseeable climate change conditions (provide quantitative data where possible). See Appendix 1 for guidance.	**rapidly**	**low**	The influence of climate change on the overall potential rate of spread is uncertain, as some factors may promote growth and seed production (e.g., rising temperature up to 25^{o}C, an extended growing season, and increased CO_2 levels) (Conedera et al., 2018; Hetzel, 2014), whereas other factors may impede growth, such as prolonged drought, high precipitation leading to waterlogged soils, and mild winters which may not provide a sufficient cold scarification period for seed germination (Conedera et al., 2018). Milder, wetter winters may also increase disease prevalence which could negatively impact *P. laurocerasus* growth (IPCC, 2025). Overall, the potential rate of spread in foreseeable climate change conditions is likely to be rapid, but confidence is considered low without greater certainty.

Section D – Impact

This section evaluates the probability of impact of an organism within the Risk Assessment Area.

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N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
5.01	How important is the impact of the organism on biodiversity at all levels of organisation caused by the organism in its non-native range excluding the Risk Assessment Area?	**major**	**high**	*P. laurocerasus* is recorded as being highly competitive and invasive in areas where it has been planted and escaped from cultivation. In **Britain**, Stace and Crawley (2015) describe thicket-forming woody species, like *P. laurocerasus* and *Rhododendron ponticum,* as high impact on the habitats they invade. They form dense monocultures to the exclusion of virtually all other vascular plants. Individual plants are highly tolerant of intraspecific competition and exert very strong interspecific competition on native vegetation. The thickets cast dense shade that prevents recruitment by seed and their competitive root systems can resist ingress of other species by vegetative means. This can have long term negative impacts on native woodland regeneration. In **Switzerland**, Rusterholz et al. (2018) assessed the impact of *P. laurocerasus* on native vegetation and soil properties in suburban deciduous forests in the region of Basel. In *P. laurocerasus* invaded habitats, there was a lower native plant species richness in both the ground vegetation and shrub layer, and a different species composition in the ground vegetation. Invaded plots had a lower soil moisture content, and the intensity, diversity and substrate richness of the carbon sources were increased. The effects of *P. laurocerasus* became more pronounced over time. Langmaier and Lapin (2020) conducted a systematic review of the impact of invasive species on forest regeneration in **European**

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				temperate forests. They showed that the main negative impacts of *P. laurocerasus* are competition for resources, structural impacts on regeneration, and indirect impacts through interaction with other species. The presence of *P. laurocerasus* reduces native plant species richness. Soil moisture and the activity of soil microbial communities are affected. Similar negative impacts of *P. laurocerasus* have also been described for Luxembourg (Neobiota.lu. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Aranda et al. (2024) used the deciduous broadleaved forest belt of Canton Ticino, **Switzerland** to identify the main factors determining the presence of non-native invasive woody species in recently disturbed forests. They identified and selected forest gaps caused by natural, silvicultural or other anthropogenic disturbances and studied the presence of invasive species within each gap to determine colonisation risk. They demonstrated that *P. laurocerasus* and other shade-tolerant and late-successional evergreens can colonise intact mature broadleaved stands and then take advantage of disturbances that cause the opening of the main tree cover. However, they are limited in gaps that have experienced repeated disturbances such as recurrent forest fires in short intervals. *P. laurocerasus* was one of the most frequently recorded species in the gaps. The presence of *P. laurocerasus* was associated with sites that were orientated south-west with drier soils. As a shade-tolerant evergreen, *P. laurocerasus* can colonise intact broadleaved forests by regenerating in the shady understorey prior to disturbances and can then develop abundantly when a gap is created. In **SW Australia**, *P. laurocerasus* attracts aggressive introduced birds,

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				such as Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) (Blue Mountains City Council. Accessed 20 Feb 2026).
5.02	How important is the current known impact of the organism on biodiversity at all levels of organisation (e.g. decline in native species, changes in native species communities, hybridisation) in the Risk Assessment Area (include any past impact in your response)?	**moderate**	**high**	**Impact on Killarney Fern *Vandenboschia speciosa*** (Emer Ní Dhúill, Pers. Comm. 11 May 2026). Evidence from Irish conservation management and site assessments indicates that *P. laurocerasus* is interacting negatively with habitats supporting *Vandenboschia speciosa* (Killarney Fern), a protected Annex II species associated with humid, shaded ravine and woodland habitats of high conservation value. Although *P. laurocerasus* and *Rhododendron ponticum* currently provide canopy cover and shading that can maintain the humid microclimatic conditions required by Killarney fern, their continued dominance is considered ecologically problematic. The invasive shrub layer is altering habitat structure and geomorphology and is expected to negatively affect Killarney Fern populations over time. Documented evidence identifies the following impacts associated with *P. laurocerasus* at Killarney Fern sites: • **Bank slippage and substrate destabilisation** at two multi-colony populations in Counties Cork and Waterford. These impacts are considered significant because Killarney Fern depends on stable, humid rock faces, stream banks, and ravine habitats. • **Excessive shading and habitat modification**, which may progressively reduce habitat suitability despite *P. laurocerasus*' short-term provision of canopy cover. • **Potential long-term habitat degradation** through suppression of native vegetation and alteration of ecological processes within designated woodland habitats. • A **lower-level impact** has also been identified at a population in

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				County Limerick. Any Killarney Fern site where *P. laurocerasus* occurs in proximity to colonies is considered potentially vulnerable to future impacts. **Relevance to European Designated Sites** The interaction between *P. laurocerasus* and Killarney Fern is relevant to European designated sites because: • *V. speciosa* is a species of European conservation concern protected under the EU Habitats Directive; • affected sites occur within ecologically sensitive Atlantic woodland and ravine systems; • invasive shrub encroachment may undermine the favourable conservation condition of qualifying habitats and species over time; • management interventions may require ongoing financial and operational commitments to balance invasive species removal with protection of sensitive microhabitats. Although the habitat of *V. speciosa* was assessed nationally as "Favourable" under Article 17 reporting (NPWS, 2025), conservation authorities have identified *P. laurocerasus* (and *R. ponticum*), as emerging threats likely to affect habitat quality in the future. **Other documented impacts** Current evidence indicates that *P. laurocerasus* has a negative impact on biodiversity in the Risk Assessment Area, although quantitative population-level data remain limited. The species is now well established and has colonised multiple ecosystem types with substantial adverse effects on native biodiversity and ecosystem functioning (Balogianni et al., 2016). Its impacts are primarily

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				associated with the formation of dense evergreen stands that outcompete native vegetation, suppress natural regeneration, alter soil conditions, and reduce habitat quality for protected flora and fauna (NPWS, 2025). Several regional biodiversity action plans identify *P. laurocerasus* as a major driver of biodiversity loss. The Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan 2025–2030 describes invasive species, particularly *P. laurocerasus*, as among the most pressing threats to biodiversity in the county. Management action included the clearance of 1 ha of *P. laurocerasus* from Clermont Estate in 2024 due to risks posed to the adjacent Murrough Wetlands (Wicklow County Council. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Similarly, the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025–2030 reported that dense shading caused by *P. laurocerasus* in woodlands prevents regeneration of native tree saplings and ground flora (Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025–2020. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). The Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025–2030 also identified extensive stands of *P. laurocerasus* across the county and highlighted the need for management interventions in Lacken Woods, Newpark Marsh wet woodland, and Woodstock Estate. The plan concluded that control of the species would significantly improve habitat biodiversity value (Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Site-specific ecological assessments further demonstrate impacts on native woodland ecosystems. Scott Cawley (2022), in an Ecological Impact Assessment for the Cherrywood Green Routes Network in Dublin 18, highlighted biodiversity impacts associated with historical infestations of *P. laurocerasus* in Druid's Glen, Co. Wicklow.

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				The Glenbower Wood and Lake Committee (2015) documented extensive degradation of native oak woodland caused by *P. laurocerasus*, including displacement of native plant communities, alteration of habitat composition, and difficulties in restoration following failed control attempts. The report also noted that toxic leaf litter alters soil composition and inhibits regeneration of native flora. Furthermore, invasion by *P. laurocerasus* was identified as a threat to habitats used by protected species including the Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), and Bird's Nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) (Glenbower Wood and Lake Committee, 2015). On a landscape scale, replacement of native hedgerows by *P. laurocerasus* is a concern in the Risk Assessment Area, which has one of the lowest levels of forest cover in Europe (Iremonger et al., 2007). Native hedgerows are important ecological corridors supporting approximately 600 plant species and 65% of Irish bird species, while also contributing substantially to carbon sequestration (Black et al., 2014; Heritage Council, 2016; Montgomery et al., 2020). The replacement of these structurally diverse native hedgerows with monospecific *P. laurocerasus* hedges is likely to reduce native species richness, simplify habitat structure, alter soil microhabitats, reduce available ecological niches, and lower ecosystem service provision including carbon storage (Rusterholz et al., 2018; Langmaier and Lapin, 2020). Coillte (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026) reported that *P. laurocerasus* has a very serious negative impact on Coillte lands,

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				especially on the Biodiversity Areas that are assessed under the Bioclass system re biodiversity status. Some of the best Old Woodland, Long established and/or Ancient sites have serious infestations, as well as commercial plantation sites. The cost of planning and control is very appreciable. In summary, although there is insufficient quantitative evidence of population declines attributable solely to *P. laurocerasus*, the widespread reporting of the need for active management demonstrates that the species currently represents a substantial and ongoing conservation concern within the Risk Assessment Area.
5.03	How important is the potential future impact of the organism on biodiversity at all levels of organisation likely to be in the Risk Assessment Area?	**major**	**high**	As illustrated by Glenbower Woods and Lakes (Section 5.02), once *P. laurocerasus* has become established it is very difficult to control and eradication requires many years of systematic treatment because cut stumps resprout, cut branches regenerate, and new growth quickly recolonises. The combination of shading out of native vegetation and the deposition of poisonous leaf litter prevents regeneration of native species, which will have long term impacts on native woodland regeneration ability. Similar results can be seen in Rosshill Woods in Galway City which is infested with *P. laurocerasus* and other non-native trees. Here, a control programme was initiated in 2023 but has since been abandoned because of the cost. Drawing on the relevant literature, the following *P. laurocerasus* biological traits indicate its potential future impact: • Fast growth rate, enabling it to quickly reach canopy height and begin reproducing earlier than many native trees and shrubs. • Evergreen leathery leaves form a dense canopy that casts permanent deep shade over woodland floor throughout the year.

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				• High tolerance for low light and poor soil conditions gives a competitive advantage and it can easily establish in woodland understoreys. • Prolific fruiting where fruits occur, dispersed by birds, allowing it to escape rapidly and escape garden//landscaped boundaries. • Spreads vegetatively by root suckering and layering, where branches touching the ground can root and form new plants. • Once established, leaves contain toxic cyanogenic glycosides, causing foliage to be avoided by most native herbivores, and thus allows a layer of undecomposed leaves to accumulate on woodland floor which prevent regeneration of native species and alters soil structure and composition. • A significant reduction in native biodiversity where it becomes established. • Forms impenetrable dense thickets which crowd out native understorey vegetation by blocking light. This creates a simplified habitat structure, leading to a loss of native flora and associated loss of native insect and animal populations. • It is often listed on watchlists because of its proven ability to escape cultivation. • Formation of dense thickets can put a financial burden on landowners and conservation groups due to the costs associated with its removal and habitat restoration. Recommendations on the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss (2024), Recommendation 140 specifically states: *'The State must immediately put a timeline on the phasing out and eventual ban of the sale of invasive species; e.g., Cherry Laurel'* because of its devastating impact on biodiversity (NPWS, 2024).
5.04	How important is decline in conservation	**major**	**high**	*P. laurocerasus* has been widely planted in Irish woodlands, estates,

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Impacts				
	value regarding European and national nature conservation legislation caused by the organism **currently** in the Risk Assessment Area? *e.g. sites of nature conservation value, WFD or MSFD classification, etc.			and demesnes and has subsequently spread extensively into semi-natural habitats. Evidence from recent habitat monitoring demonstrates that the species poses a significant and increasing threat to European designated habitats in the Risk Assessment Area due to its invasive growth habit, capacity to outcompete native flora, and suppression of natural woodland regeneration. NPWS (2025) identified *P. laurocerasus* as the most frequent invasive shrub recorded in Yew Woodland (91J0), occurring in 33.3% of monitored sites. It was also the second most frequent invasive shrub in Old Sessile Oak Woodland (91A0) (9.5% of sites) and the fourth most frequent in Alluvial Woodland (91E0) (5.0% of sites). The species forms tall, dense, evergreen thickets that create deep shade, suppressing native ground flora, shrub layers, and tree seedling establishment while supporting comparatively little native wildlife. The most recent National Parks and Wildlife Service Article 17 conservation assessments (NPWS, 2025) specifically identify *P. laurocerasus* as a threat or pressure to several Annex I habitats, including: • Transition Mires (7140) • Alkaline Fens (7230) • Old Sessile Oak Woodland (91A0) • Alluvial Woodland (91E0) • Yew Woodland (91J0) There are multiple documented examples of impacts within sites of high conservation value in the Risk Assessment Area. Some examples are given, as follows: At the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC and Kiltartan Cave SAC, *P.*

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Impacts				
				laurocerasus has been identified as a significant pressure on qualifying interest habitats and species, including Yew Woodland (91J0), Limestone Pavement (8240), *Juniperus communis* formations (5130), Semi-natural Dry Grasslands (6210), Turloughs (3180), and habitat supporting the Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) (1303). Within the Coole woodland complex, the species has developed a dense invasive understorey that inhibits regeneration of native trees and shrubs and smothers the natural shrub and canopy layers. This has resulted in a substantial loss of natural woodland structure and ecological integrity in affected areas. A further example occurs within the Killarney National Park, part of the Killarney National Park, McGillicuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC. This site contains the largest Yew Woodland habitat in Ireland and represents a priority habitat under the EU Habitats Directive. The woodland is currently experiencing no natural regeneration due to overgrazing pressures, while invasive non-native plant species present an additional significant threat. *P. laurocerasus* is identified as the principal invasive plant species affecting this habitat, and active management measures are currently underway to control its spread. More broadly, the National Parks and Wildlife Service Article 17 report (2025) indicates that 51% of assessed habitats are subject to pressures from invasive non-native species, including *P. laurocerasus*, although the relative severity of impacts varies between species and habitats. Similarly, the Woodland Monitoring Survey 2017–2018 identified invasive non-native species and overgrazing as the principal pressures

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Impacts				
				affecting Annex I woodland habitats in Ireland, including Old Sessile Oak Woods (91A0), Alluvial Forests (91E0), Bog Woodland (91D0), and Yew Woods (91J0). The following Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within the Risk Assessment Area specifically identify *P. laurocerasus* within conservation objectives, management documentation, or site pressures. Additional SACs are known to contain the species, although these records have not yet been comprehensively compiled. **Ireland** • St Gobnet's Wood SAC • Curragh chase Woods SAC • Glen of the Downs SAC • Clare Glen SAC • Lough Forbes Complex SAC • Unshiu River SAC • Lough Gill SAC • Bally seedy Wood SAC • Wicklow Mountains SAC • Lower River Suir SAC • Girley (Drews town) Bog SAC • River Moy SAC **Northern Ireland** • Ballynamona Bog SAC • Banagher Glen SAC • Hollymount SAC • Peatlands Park SAC • River Roe and Tributaries SAC • Rostrevor Wood SAC **Wildfires in European designated habitats**

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Impacts				
				Globally, increasing summer temperatures and drought is leading to a significant increase in the scale, location, and intensity of wildfires. Ganteaume et al. (2013) tested the flammability of undisturbed litter beneath seven species that are frequently planted for hedging in Provence, south-west France. Their findings showed that *P. laurocerasus* took longer to ignite than other species but had a very high flame propagation. Of all seven species, *P. laurocerasus* was the most flammable. The research concluded that *P. laurocerasus* should not be used in hedges in wildland-urban interfaces**.** Overall, the available evidence indicates that *P. laurocerasus* represents a moderate to high ecological risk to European designated habitats in Ireland. Its ability to establish persistent, dense stands and fundamentally alter woodland structure, regeneration dynamics, and native biodiversity makes it a significant threat to the conservation status and ecological integrity of Annex I habitats and associated protected species Daly et al., 2023; NPWS, 2025; Perrin et al.. 2008).
5.05	How important is decline in conservation value with regard to European and national nature conservation legislation caused by the organism **likely to be in the future** in the Risk Assessment Area?	**major**	**high**	The decline in conservation value caused by *P. laurocerasus* is likely to be highly important in the future within the Risk Assessment Area, particularly in relation to European protected habitats and species under the EU Habitats Directive and associated national conservation legislation. At the Coole-Garryland Complex, ongoing encroachment of *P. laurocerasus* poses a significant threat to the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, through degradation and alteration of suitable foraging habitat. In addition, the species may prevent the natural expansion and regeneration of *Taxus baccata* woodland, which is a qualifying interest habitat (91J0 Yew Woodland) for the site.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Impacts				
				Evidence from woodland monitoring indicates that *P. laurocerasus* is already negatively affecting Annex I woodland habitats protected under the Habitats Directive. Future prospects for Old Sessile Oak Woodland (91A0) were assessed as unfavourable ("red") at Erne Head due partly to invasion by *P. laurocerasus* and beech. The species was also recorded frequently within 91E0 Alluvial Forest habitats and was identified as problematic within woodland habitats in the Burren region. Daly et al. (2023) further recorded *P. laurocerasus* at three out of four surveyed woodland sites. Because dense infestations suppress native ground flora and inhibit regeneration of native tree species, *P. laurocerasus* is likely to continue causing long-term declines in the structure, function, and conservation status of Annex I habitats, including Alluvial Woodland (91E0), Yew Woodland (91J0), and Oak Woodland habitats, if unmanaged. Consequently, its impact on conservation value is expected to remain significant under both European and national nature conservation legislation into the future (Daly et al., 2023; NPWS, 2025; Perrin et al., 2008).

Ecosystem Services Impacts				
This section evaluates the probability of impact of an organism within the Risk Assessment Area.				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
5.06	How important is the impact of the organism on provisioning, regulating, and cultural services in its non-native range excluding the Risk Assessment Area? For a list of services use the CICES classification V5.2.	**major**	**low**	Based on CICES classification V5.2, the impact of *P. laurocerasus* is in the following areas: ***Provision of timber, particularly native species****:* negatively impacts commercial forestry by making access more difficult and costly, and native woodlands. ***Provision of genetic resources***: reduces native biodiversity; results in extensive monocultures; threat to and loss of native species; monopolizes resources ***Regulation of soil formation, composition and quality***: Rusterholz et al., (2018) showed in Switzerland that sites invaded by *P. laurocerasus* had a lower soil moisture content, and the intensity, diversity and substrate richness of the carbon sources were increased. The effects of became more pronounced over time. Langmaier and Lapin (2020) showed that soil microbial communities are affected by *P. laurocerasus.* ***Impact on pollinators***: No specific data on pollinators was found. However, in Britain, Stace and Crawley (2015) describe thicket-forming woody species, like *P. laurocerasus* and *Rhododendron ponticum,* as high impact on the habitats they invade. They form dense monocultures to the exclusion of virtually all other vascular plants. Rusterholz (2018) showed that in *P. laurocerasus* invaded habitats there was a lower native plant species richness in both the ground vegetation and shrub layer, and a different species composition in the ground vegetation.

Ecosystem Services Impacts				
				Regulation of water: competes for water resources. ***Cultural heritage***: reduces amenity value; damages cultural resources ***Tourism*****:** reduces access to the natural environment Recreation, amenity and aesthetic qualities However, confidence is low without more substantial published evidence.
5.07	How important is the impact of the organism on provisioning, regulating, and cultural services currently where the species has established in the Risk Assessment Area (include any past impact in your response)?	**major**	**high**	Based on the CICES V5.2 classification, *P. laurocerasus* has a major negative impact on provisioning, regulating, and cultural ecosystem services within the Risk Assessment Area, with current and likely future impacts. For provisioning services, *P. laurocerasus* significantly affects the provision of timber, particularly native woodland resources. Coillte (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026) reported severe impacts on high biodiversity Bioclass woodlands and commercial plantations, where dense infestations can become impenetrable and require costly long-term management. Eradication is regarded as impossible, which increases the likelihood of ongoing negative impacts. *P. laurocerasus* suppresses regeneration of native tree species and reduces the ecological integrity of woodland habitats through shading and smothering of native shrub and canopy layers (Daly et al., 2023; NPWS 2025; Perrin et al., 2008). It also has substantial negative impacts on regulating services. NPWS (2025) identified *P. laurocerasus* as a significant pressure on protected Annex I woodland habitats, including Old Sessile Oak Woodland (91A0) and Yew Woodland (91J0). Dense stands of *P. laurocerasus* alter woodland structure, reduce biodiversity, and inhibit natural ecosystem functioning.

Ecosystem Services Impacts				
				Although direct evidence regarding soil formation and composition is limited, studies indicate that *P. laurocerasus* leaf litter contains cyanogenic glycosides which can negatively affect herbivores, while the species' high water-retention capacity may influence local hydrology (Langmaier and Lapin 2020; Rusterholz et al., 2018). Additionally, research by Ganteaume et al. (2013) demonstrated that *P. laurocerasus* is highly flammable due to rapid flame propagation, increasing fire risk in wildland-urban interface areas. Impacts on cultural and supporting ecosystem services are also evident through biodiversity loss and habitat degradation. NPWS (2025) reports negative impacts on habitats supporting the Annex II Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), indicating wider ecological consequences for protected species and conservation value landscapes. The degradation of native woodland structure and biodiversity also diminishes the natural heritage, recreational, and conservation value of affected sites. Overall, the available evidence indicates that *P. laurocerasus* has major and long-term adverse impacts on ecosystem services in the Risk Assessment Area, particularly within native woodland ecosystems and protected habitats.
5.08	How important is the impact of the organism on provisioning, regulating, and cultural services likely to be in the different biogeographic regions or marine	**moderate**	**low**	The Risk Assessment Area is entirely in the Atlantic biogeographic region (European Environment Agency, 2017. Accessed 31 May 2026), which is characterised by an oceanic climate with mild winters, cool summers, and moderate rainfall all year round. Please see question 5.07.

Ecosystem Services Impacts				
	sub-regions where the species can establish in the Risk Assessment Area in the future?			

Economic Impacts				
5.09	How great is the overall economic cost caused by the organism within its current area of distribution (excluding the Risk Assessment Area), including both costs of / loss due to damage and the cost of current management	**major**	**low**	Data are not available for the direct costs (management and eradication) and indirect costs (loss of ecosystem services) for *P. laurocerasus* outside of the Risk Assessment Area. However, Harris et al. (2024) estimated that the control of *Rhododendron ponticum*, a similar thicket-forming, evergreen shrub in Britain can cost between £150 and £10,000 per hectare depending on size, density, habitat, and site accessibility. This does not include restoration.
5.10	How great is the economic cost of / loss due to damage (excluding costs of management) of the organism currently in the Risk Assessment Area (include any past costs in your response)?	**major**	**Medium**	Coillte (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026) reported that *P. laurocerasus* has a very serious negative impact on biodiversity-rich Bioclass native woodlands and commercial plantations. Costs of control can exceed €10,000/ha and require management over many years. Drone surveys are required where stands are impenetrable. Complete eradication is not regarded as possible. Coillte allocates resources to the biodiversity (BioForest) sites preferentially on a case by case basis.
5.11	How great is the economic cost of / loss due to damage (excluding costs of management) likely to be in the future in the Risk Assessment Area?	**major**	**low**	Data are not available for the Risk Assessment Area. Although not specific to *P. laurocerasus,* Bradshaw et al. (2024) reported that countries which have a high proportion of land devoted to agriculture, such as Ireland and Northern Ireland, experience larger damage costs from invasive species over time than countries with a lower agricultural land proportion.

Economic Impacts				
				Roy et al. (2023) reported that, globally, the cost of invasive species doubles every six years because of the loss of ecosystem services. **Wildfires** Globally, increasing summer temperatures and drought is leading to a significant increase in the scale, location, and intensity of wildfires. Ganteaume et al. (2013) tested the flammability of undisturbed litter beneath seven species that are frequently planted for hedging in Provence, south-west France. Their findings showed that *P. laurocerasus* took longer to ignite than other species but had a very high flame propagation. Of all seven species, *P. laurocerasus* was the most flammable and could lead to extensive damage. The research concluded that *P. laurocerasus* should not be used in hedges in wildland-urban interfaces. Overall, the economic costs associated with *P. laurocerasus* is likely to be major, but confidence is considered low without more specific data.
5.12	How great are the economic costs / losses associated with managing this organism currently in the Risk Assessment Area (include any past costs in your response)?	**major**	**mediu m**	Substantial data are not available. However, Kelly et al. (2013b) reported that in 2008, *P. laurocerasus* removal from Glenbawn Fox Covert in Clonmel (Ireland) cost €45,000. The National Parks and Wildlife Service reported that the cost of a similar species, *Rhododendron ponticum* control in Killarney National Park increased from €254,000 in 2017 to €1.08 million in 2024 (The Journal, 2025). Coillte (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026) reported that the cost of planning and control of *P. laurocerasus* is very appreciable and in severe cases management costs exceed €10,000/ha. Follow up control and monitoring is also necessary as complete eradication is not possible.

Economic Impacts				
5.13	How great are the economic costs / losses associated with managing this organism likely to be in the future in the Risk Assessment Area?	**major**	**medium**	If the species continues to spread, the cost is likely to increase. For example, The National Parks and Wildlife Service reported that the cost of a similar species, *Rhododendron ponticum* control in Killarney National Park increased from €254,000 in 2017 to €1.08 million in 2024 (The Journal, 2025). An approximate estimate of future costs can be drawn from Roy et al. (2023) who reported that, globally, the cost of invasive species doubles every six years because of the loss of ecosystem services.

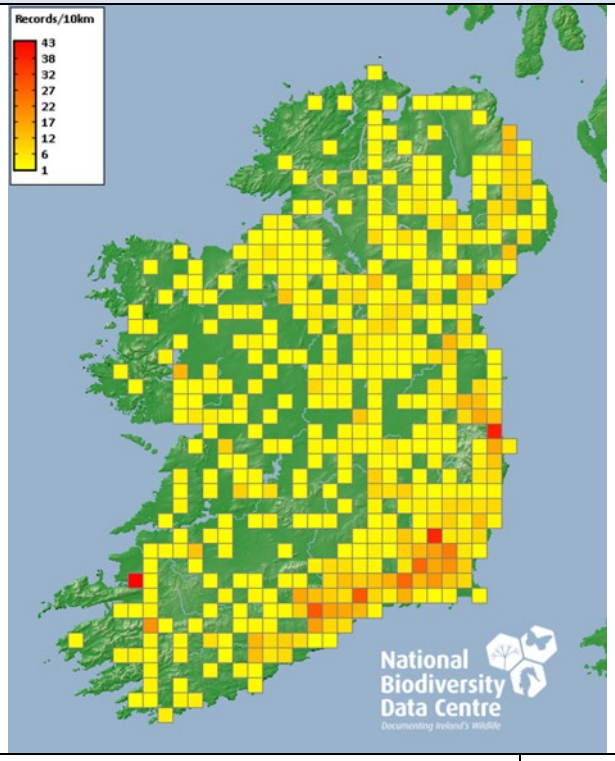
Social and Human Health Impacts				
5.14	How important is social, human health or other impact (not directly included in economic and environmental categories) caused by the organism for the Risk Assessment Area and the organisms global distribution, if relevant (e.g. with similar eco-climatic conditions)?	**major**	**high**	**Poisoning** The leaves, fruit stone, and seeds of *P. laurocerasus* contain cyanogenic glycosides (mainly prunasin and amygdalin) which, in cut or crushed material, becomes hydrolysed to form hydrocyanic acid that starves tissues of oxygen (EMEA, 2000). This affects the central nervous system and can be fatal. The glucoside concentration is higher in young plants and during the summer. Malaspina et al. (2022) highlighted the risks associated with misidentification of *P. laurocerasus* with the unrelated *Laurus nobilis* Bay Laurel, which is superficially similar in leaf appearance and used as a culinary herb. It is unknown how significant this is in the Risk Assessment Area, as *L. nobilis* is largely restricted to southern Munster

Social and Human Health Impacts				
				with scattered occurrences elsewhere. In Ireland, 35 dairy weanlings died following ingestion of *P. laurocerasus* when they were allowed into a field with a *P. laurocerasus* hedge boundary. Postmortem showed cyanide poisoning (Kennedy et al., 2021). One kilogram of leaves is sufficient to kill a 500 kg cow (Stace and Crawley, 2015). In Britain and France, fatal poisoning of goats has been reported (UK Vet Livestock; Bery, 2024) and, in Britain, donkeys have fatally ingested *P. laurocerasus* (Bates, 2022). Schmidt et al. (2013) reported on cyanide toxicosis in goats after ingestion of improperly stored green waste of *P. laurocerasus.*
5.15	How important is social, human health or other impact (not directly included in any earlier categories) caused by the organism in the future for the Risk Assessment Area likely to be?	**moderate**	**low**	There are 1000 cyanogenic plant species, but most do not contain sufficient amounts to create serious toxicity. *P. laurocerasus* is an exception. *P. laurocerasus* hedging, which animals have access to is increasing in the Risk Assessment Area and could lead to an increase in poisonings and fatalities among livestock in the future. The risks associated with *P. laurocerasus* for humans and livestock is not widely known or discussed.

Other impacts and considerations				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
5.16	How important is it that genetic traits of the organism could be carried to other organisms / species, modifying their genetic nature and making their economic, environmental or social effects more serious?	**minor**	**low**	Unknown. However, screening trials to improve vigour, hardiness, and disease resistance in the Risk Assessment Area (Teagasc Factsheet 0246. Accessed 20 Feb. 2026), and breeding to improve fruit production and quality as food and for phytochemicals research in Turkey/Balkans (Demir et al., 2017) has led to a proliferation of cultivars that could hybridise in the future and result in varieties that could have the potential for invasive attributes, including increased hardiness, vigour, and increased fruit/seed production. Without published evidence the likelihood is given as minor and confidence is considered low.
5.17	How important is the organism in facilitating other damaging organisms (e.g. diseases) as food source, a host, a symbiont or a vector etc.?	**moderate**	**high**	**Pests and diseases** *P. laurocerasus* is host to a number of pests and diseases, some of which are quarantine pathogens within the EU. ***Phytopthora ramorum*** Although not a major host, *P. laurocerasus* can harbour *Phytopthora ramorum,* an oomycete that was first diagnosed in USA where it killed large numbers of Pacific oaks in western California and was given the name 'Sudden Oak Death'. *P. ramorum* is present in the Risk Assessment Area, currently affecting Larch (Garbelotto and Frankel: Phytophthora ramorum. CABI Compendium 40991. Accessed 20 Feb 2026; Abrahamczyk (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel). CABI Compendium datasheet 44309. Accessed 8 May 2026; DEFRA (c). Accessed 20 Feb 2026). ***Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *pruni*** *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *pruni* is the causal agent of bacterial spot of stone fruits and almond and is considered a quarantine organism in the EU according to the Council Directive 2000/29/EC and by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation. In *P. laurocerasus*, it

Other impacts and considerations				
				is an organism of concern in the cut foliage industry because it causes blemishes and fruit drop. In Ireland, infected plant material represents the highest risk of introduction and spread. It is widespread on *P. laurocerasus* in the Netherlands and Italy, and there have been several outbreaks in Britain since 2013. Even low levels of damage are of major importance and can substantially affect crop value (DEFRA (c), 2023). **Shot hole disease** Shot hole disease is a bacterial disease, mainly caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *Syringae,* but it can also be caused by *Micrococcus aloeverae* and *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *pruni.* It destroys the appearance of cut foliage and is a major concern for Teagasc in the cut foliage industry. (Grogan et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2020; Teagasc Factsheet 04/21. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). Other diseases of concern include *Phytopthora cambivora* (Milenkovic et al., 2018), *Phytopthora cryptogea* which causes root rot (Vettraino et al., 2016), *Diplodia serrata* (Quaglia et al., 2014), and leaf spots caused by downy mildews (*Peronospora sparsa*) and powdery mildew (*Podosphaera* spp.). Pests include Tortrix moth (*Epiphyas postvittana)*, thrips (*Thrips flavus*) which can form entry points for bacterial pathogens, leaf miners and Citrus Red Mite (*Panonychus citri*) (Teagasc Factsheet 4/21. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). *P. laurocerasus* is a high risk host for *Xylella fastidiosa* (Royal Horticultural Society, 13977 Prunus laurocerasus. Accessed 20 Feb 2026). **Host to invasive insects** *P. laurocerasus* is used for feeding and hiding by several invasive polyphagous insects that can cause severe damage to crops. Examples

Other impacts and considerations				
				are two hemipteran species, *Nezara viridula* and *Halyomorpha halys* that also feed on several fruits and vegetables (Morkel and Renker, 2019; Karpun et al., 2022). Additionally, the fruits of *P. laurocerasus* are commonly used for larval development by *Drosophila suzukii*, an invasive fruit fly infesting a large variety of commercially cultivated fruits in Europe (Kenis et al., 2016). **Host of significant pests.** Abrahamczyk (Prunus laurocerasus (cherry laurel). CABI Compendium datasheet 44309. Accessed 8 May 2026) lists six pests for which *P. laurocerasus* is a major host and a minor host of 24 other pests.
5.18	Based on the answers to questions on both the potential for establishment and spread in the Risk Assessment Area, define the area endangered by the organism. Be as specific as possible. If available, provide a map showing the area most likely to be endangered.	**major**	**high**	The entire Risk Assessment Area is endangered by *P. laurocerasus*. Stroh et al. (2023) provide a map in the Plant Atlas 2020, which shows that *P. laurocerasus* is already established in >75% of hectads in the Risk Assessment Area and its distribution more than doubled in a 20 year period (see map 1.10). The National Biodiversity Data Centre map of recorded data (shown below) also defines the current area endangered by *P. laurocerasus.* It has not yet been recorded on the western coastline of the Risk Assessment Area, which may be an unfavourable habitat because of salty Atlantic winds.
	Recorded Distribution of Prunus laurocerasus L. on the island of Ireland Source: National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), image. Accessed 22 February 2026, https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Species/TerrestrialDistributionMapPrintSize/28940			

Other impacts and considerations				
				
5.19	How important might other impacts not already covered by previous questions be resulting from introduction of the organism? Specify in the justification box.	n/a	n/a	No information has been found on the issue.
5.20	How important are the expected impacts of the organism despite any natural control by other organisms, such as predators, parasites or pathogens that may already be present in	**major**	**high**	Although *P. laurocerasus* is host to a number of pests and diseases (Section 5.17), they do not appear to exert a substantial level of control on its entry and spread in the semi-natural environment, currently. It is uncertain if this may change under future climate change scenarios.

Other impacts and considerations				
	the Risk Assessment Area?			The expected impacts of *P. laurocerasus* are important and substantial. **Impacts on ecosystem services** Coillte reports that *P. laurocerasus* significantly affects the provision of timber, particularly biodiversity-rich native woodland resources (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026). It alters woodland structure, reduces biodiversity, and inhibits natural regulatory ecosystem functioning (NPWS, 2025). It prevents the regeneration of native tree species (NPWS, 2025). The degradation of native woodland structure and biodiversity also diminishes the natural heritage, recreational, and conservation value of affected sites. Its high water-retention capacity may influence local hydrology (Langmaier and Lapin 2020; Rusterholz et al., 2018). **Adverse impacts on priority habitats and species** The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS, 2025) identified *P. laurocerasus* as a significant pressure on protected Annex I woodland habitats, including Old Sessile Oak Woodland (91A0) and Yew Woodland (91J0). The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS, 2025) reported negative impacts on habitats supporting the Annex II Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*). Evidence from Irish conservation management and site assessments indicates that *P. laurocerasus* is interacting negatively with habitats supporting Killarney Fern (*Vandenboschia speciosa*), a protected Annex II species associated with humid, shaded ravine and woodland habitats of high conservation value. (Emer Ní Dhúill, Pers. Comm. Accessed 11 May 2026). **Wildfire risk**

Other impacts and considerations				
				P. laurocerasus is highly flammable and represents a substantial fire risk. For this reason, Ganteaume et al. (2013) recommends that it is not planted at urban-natural environment interfaces. **Livestock poisoning** *P. laurocerasus* contains cyanogenic glycosides in its leaves, seeds, and fruit stones that release toxic hydrocyanic acid when plant material is cut or crushed (EMEA, 2000). This can cause serious poisoning affecting the nervous system and may be fatal to humans and animals. Fatal poisoning incidents have been reported in Ireland, Britain, and France, including deaths of cattle, goats, and donkeys, with as little as 1 kg of leaves capable of killing a 500 kg cow (Bates, 2022; Bery 2024; Schmidt et al., 2013; Stace and Crawley, 2015). Overall, the available evidence indicates that *P. laurocerasus* is expected to have major and long-term adverse impacts in the Risk Assessment Area.

Impact summary				
5.21	Estimate the overall impact in the Risk Assessment Area under current climate conditions. Use the justification box to indicate any key issues.	**major**	**high**	The overall impact is estimated to be major under current climate conditions, for the following reasons: • Severe negative ecological impact on native woodland habitats (including priority Yew Woodland and Oak Woodland) by inhibiting native tree regeneration, supressing shrub and ground cover, and the associated impacts on ecosystem services provided by native woodlands (NPWS, 2025). • Severe negative economic impact on commercial forestry managed by Coillte, by preventing the development of high quality stands, creating impenetrable stands where the land cannot be planted, and increasing the cost of management (Declan Little, Pers. Comm. Accessed 21 May 2026). • Accelerated biodiversity loss associated with loss of habitat for Annex II and other species (Emer Ní Dhúill, Pers. Comm. Accessed 11 May 2026; NPWS, 2025). • Likely damage to ecosystem services with associated economic costs (although there is no specific published data to confirm this). • Increased risk of wildfires, including the intensity and rate of spread of wildfires (Ganteaume, 2013). • Risk of livestock poisoning (Bates, 2022; Bery, 2024; Schmidt et al., 2013). • Damage to crops, particularly fruit orchards, because *P. laurocerasus* acts as a host to pests and diseases, including *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv *pruni* (DEFRA (c), 2023); *Drosophila suzukii* (Kenis et al., 2016), and *Xylella fastidiosa* (Royal Horticultural Society, 13977 Prunus laurocerasus. Accessed 20 Feb 2026).
5.22	Estimate the overall impact in the Risk Assessment Area in foreseeable climate change conditions. See Appendix 1 for	**major**	**medium**	There is considerable uncertainty about the overall impact of *P. laurocerasus* in the Risk Assessment Area in foreseeable climate change conditions.

Impact summary				
	guidance. Use the justification box to indicate any key issues.			• Rising temperatures and an extended growing season may cause more vigorous growth, resulting in larger, more impenetrable stands that are very challenging to control. This is likely to lead to larger volumes of brash, following pruning to manage stands (particularly planted hedges and ornamental specimens). • More vigorous growth will increase the negative impacts on priority habitats, Annex II species, and ecosystem services (NPWS, 2025). • Rising temperatures are likely to lead to increased fruit production and the abundance of viable seed that can be dispersed into the semi-natural environment. This will result in an increasing number of stands in the wild, which may be inaccessible (Fermanagh species accounts. Accessed 31 May 2026). • Warmer temperatures and increased humidity are likely to increase the prevalence of pests and diseases, which could migrate to commercially important crops (IPCC, 2025). • Increasing severity and frequency of storms are likely to create gaps in native and commercial woodlands, and these gaps may be rapidly colonised by *P. laurocerasus*, thus preventing natural regeneration of existing species (Aranda et al., 2024). • However, prolonged summer droughts or winter droughts combined with sun may impede *P. laurocerasus* growth (Conedera et al., 2018; Karami-Kodalivand et al., 2021; Hetzel, 2014). Also, prolonged periods of hot weather above 25°C may not be optimal for growth.

Section E – Climate Change Summary				
This section is used provide a summary of key climate change information from the relevant questions in Sections A to D.				
N	**Question**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
6.01	What aspects of climate change, if any, are most likely to affect the risk assessment for this organism? If any climate change models exist, please refer to them.	**moderate**	**medium**	Updated high-resolution climate projections for Ireland (Nolan, 2024) indicate that: • Near-surface temperature is projected to increase by 0.5–0.7°C for SSP1-2.6 (2021–2050) and 2.4–3.0°C for SSP5-8.5 (2071–2100), with the largest increases in the east. • Warming is enhanced for the extremes, resulting in substantial projected increases in heatwaves and decreases in frost and ice days. • The future autumn and winter months are projected to be wetter (increases of up to 10% for SSP5-8.5, 2071 2100), while summer is projected to be drier (decreases of 8% for SSP5-8.5, 2071–2100). • The precipitation climate is projected to become more variable, with substantial projected increases in both dry periods and heavy rainfall events. • Snowfall is projected to decrease by between 31% (SSP1 2.6, 2021–2050) and 84% (SSP5-8.5, 2071–2100). • The projections indicate an average increase in the length of the growing and grazing seasons, soil temperature, crop heat units and growing degree days for a range of crops. The effect of climate change on *P. laurocerasus* is uncertain, but its growth, reproduction and persistence are likely to be affected by the following factors: • The optimal temperature for *P. laurocerasus* is 15–25°C, so the warming climate in Ireland may increase vigour, fruiting, and seed production. It may also extend the elevation limits in upland habitats (Conedera et al., 2018). However, temperatures

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				significantly above 25°C may start to impede growth and vigour. • Spring frosts, which can damage bud formation, may decrease in frequency and intensity. • *P. laurocerasus* does not respond well to prolonged waterlogging and drought, both of which may become more frequent as the climate warms. • *P. laurocerasus* seeds require 2–3 months cold stratification to germinate. Potentially, milder winters in Ireland may not provide the stratification period required, which could reduce spread of *P. laurocerasus* into the semi-natural environment (Sulusoglu et al., 2015). **Effect of elevated CO_2** Increased CO_2 from carbon emissions (which contribute to climate warming) may increase *P. laurocerasus* biomass and contribute to its spread. A study in Swiss temperate forests demonstrated that elevated CO_2 increased *P. laurocerasus* biomass by 56% in a deeply shaded forest. The results indicate that elevated CO_2 may be contributing to the rapid spread of *P. laurocerasus* in natural forests in Europe (Hatten Schwiler and Korner, 2003). **Increased prevalence of pests and diseases** In 2025, the IPCC published a scientific review of the impact of climate change on plant health. It concluded that climate change has already expanded the range of some pests. This could lead to *P. laurocerasus* harbouring a greater prevalence of pests and diseases, with the potential to then transfer to crops (IPPC, 2025). **Wildfires** Globally, increasing summer temperatures and drought is leading to a significant increase in the scale, location, and intensity of wildfires.

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				Ganteaume et al. (2013) tested the flammability of undisturbed litter beneath seven species that are frequently planted for hedging in Provence, south-west France. Their findings showed that *P. laurocerasus* took longer to ignite than other species but had a very high flame propagation. Of all seven species, *P. laurocerasus* was the most flammable. The research concluded that *P. laurocerasus* should not be used in hedges in wildland-urban interfaces. **Extreme weather events** Atlantic storms are creating fragmentation within native woodlands and commercial forests. Although there is no direct evidence for the Risk Assessment Area, Campagnaro et al. (2022) and Wagner et al. (2017) reported that in Italy and other European forests, vulnerability to non-native tree invasions increases with disturbance levels and fragmentation. Aranda et al. (2024) showed that *P. laurocerasus* exploits gaps that are created by fallen trees in woodlands as a result of storms.
6.02	What is the likely timeframe for such changes?	5 years **10 years** 15 years 20 years 50 years 100 years	low	It is uncertain. Climate change may lead to more vigorous growth and increased production of seed because of warming temperatures and increased CO_2 levels. However, growth may be impeded if temperatures rise substantially above 25°C for extended periods. Also, *P. laurocerasus* requires cold winter scarification for seed germination and warming winters could reduce seed germination rates. More extreme rainfall events and prolonged drought could impede growth (Conedera et al., 2018, Hetzel 2012; 2014; Karami-Kordalivand et al., 2021). However, although there is uncertainty about specific climate scenarios in the Risk Assessment Area, there is documented evidence that the rate of climate change is accelerating globally (Hausfather, 2026. Accessed 31 May 2026). For this reason, the timeframe is

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				considered to be 10 years, but confidence is considered low as there is no specific published data on the potential impacts of climate change on *P. laurocerasus*.
6.03	Estimate the overall likelihood that climate change will increase the threat posed by this organism to the Risk Assessment Area in future. Use the justification box to indicate any key issues.	**likely**	**low**	In the short to medium term, climate change is likely to increase the threat posed by *P. laurocerasus* because increasing temperatures (up to 25°C), an extended growing season, fewer frost days (Conedera et al., 2018) and increasing CO_2 levels (Hatten Schwiler and Korner, 2003) are likely to promote vigorous growth. An increased severity in storm events is likely to create gaps in woodlands and commercial forests, which *P. laurocerasus* can exploit (Aranda et al., 2024). An increase in pests and diseases on *P. laurocerasus* as a result of warming temperatures could lead to an increase in the transfer of these pests and diseases to commercial crops. This could have an impact on food security. This, in turn, could lead to an increase in the use of toxic pesticides (IPPC Secretariat, FAO, 2021), which will further damage biodiversity and healthy ecosystem services. However, the projected climate change model for the Risk Assessment Area also includes more extreme precipitation events leading to waterlogged and flooded soils, and more extreme periods of drought. In these scenarios, *P. laurocerasus* growth may be impeded (Hetzel, 2012; 2014; Karami-Koralivand et al., 2021), thereby reducing the overall likelihood that climate change will increase the threat posed by this species. Without further specific published data, confidence is considered low.

Stage 3: Risk Assessment Summary				
This section requires the assessor to provide a score for the overall risk posed by an organism, considering previous answers to entry, establishment, spread and impact questions.				
N	**Summary**	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
7.01	Likelihood of Introduction and Entry* (based on all pathways)	**likely**	**medium**	The evidence given across the assessed pathways indicates that introduction and entry into the Risk Assessment area is occurring at a substantial rate and is likely to continue. The assessment consistently demonstrates that *P. laurocerasus* is widely cultivated and widely commercially available. *P. laurocerasus* produces substantial quantities of viable propagules (rootstock, cuttings, seed) and it can survive transport and disposal. Professional and anecdotal evidence indicates that it is frequently associated with the irresponsible disposal of green waste. The evidence for entry is strong because there are multiple pathways which operate simultaneously, suitable habitat is ubiquitous, *P. laurocerasus* has a strong regenerative capacity, and it is resistant to control measures. The pathways associated with horticulture and ornamental planting are important because of the large scale of planting, and the ongoing generation of viable brash wherever it is planted. The transport contaminant pathway is plausible although there is a lack of published evidence specific *to P. laurocerasus*. However, this pathway may become increasingly important given the projected increases in transport of soil, other materials, and waste in the Risk Assessment Area.
7.02	Likelihood of Establishment*	n/a	n/a	This section was not completed as *P. laurocerasus* is already well established in the Risk Assessment Area.
7.03	Likely rate of Spread*	**rapidly**	**high**	The evidence presented indicates that *P. laurocerasus* has a high likelihood of continued spread throughout the Risk Assessment Area, with human assisted pathways likely to be substantially more important than natural dispersal. The evidence indicates that spread is already occurring extensively and is likely to continue with the potential to accelerate

				under climate warming scenarios. The strongest evidence relates to vegetative expansion from planted stands, and repeated human-assisted spread associated with green waste and unintentional transport.
7.04	Likely magnitude of Impacts*	**major**	**high**	The evidence presented indicates potentially significant impacts on priority woodland and other semi-natural habitats. The impacts are primarily due to formation of dense evergreen thickets that outcompete native flora, inhibition of tree regeneration, alteration of woodland structure, and loss of habitat for Annex II species. *P. laurocerasus* has several traits associated with high invasive potential, including broad climatic and environmental tolerance, rapid vegetative regeneration, creation of dense impenetrable thickets, seed dispersal, low herbivory due to toxicity, and a capacity to exploit gaps in semi-natural habitats, such as gaps created in woodlands following storm events.
7.05	Conclusion	**high**	**high**	The evidence presented supports the conclusion that *P. laurocerasus* poses a substantial ongoing invasion risk within the Risk Assessment Area. It is already widely established and continuously entering the semi-natural environment through multiple pathways. It is highly resilient, capable of regeneration from vegetative material, and able to establish across a broad range of habitats. It is persistent and resistant to current control measures. The greatest risks arise from the horticultural trade, ornamental planting, illegal green waste disposal, and movement of contaminated soil and vegetation. The assessment indicates that existing management measures are insufficient to prevent entry and spread, awareness of its invasive potential is low, and accidental or irresponsible disposal of green waste is a major driver of entry and spread. Overall, *P. laurocerasus* should be regarded as a high-risk invasive shrub with a high likelihood of continued entry and spread. Evidence from recent habitat monitoring demonstrates that the species poses a significant and increasing threat to European designated habitats in the Risk Assessment Area due to its invasive growth habit, capacity to outcompete native flora, and suppression of natural woodland

				regeneration.

*in current climate conditions and in foreseeable future climate conditions

Stage 4: Research recommendations			
This section provides an opportunity for the risk assessor to highlight high priority research that could help improve the risk assessment.			
Question	**Response**	**Confidence**	**Justification**
If there is any research that would significantly strengthen confidence in the Risk Assessment, please note this here. If more than one research area is suggested, please list in order of priority.			There are no published data available on *P. laurocerasus* seed viability in the Risk Assessment Area, although the general published literature indicates a high viability following cold stratification elsewhere in Europe. Until data are available, the full impact of seed dispersal into the semi-natural environment is unknown. Similarly, there are no data on the impact of *P. laurocerasus* on pollinators in the Risk Assessment Area, although it is likely to be substantial because, once established, *P. laurocerasus* outcompetes almost all native vascular plants in its vicinity (Stace and Crawley, 2015). Additional studies on the dispersal, establishment and impact of *P. laurocerasus* on native species are needed to further assess how its colonization affects forest biodiversity, in particular.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Guidance for climate change questions in Stage 2, Sections A to D

Thorough assessment of the risks in foreseeable climate change conditions: explaining how foreseeable climate change conditions will influence this risk.

With regard to climate change, provide information on

- the applied timeframe (e.g. 2050/2070)
- the applied scenario (e.g. RCP 4.5)
- what aspects of climate change are most likely to affect the question likelihood (e.g. increase in average winter temperature, increase in drought periods)

The thorough assessment does not have to include a full range of simulations based on different climate change scenarios if an assessment of likely introduction/entry/establishment/spread/impact is made within a medium timeframe scenario (e.g. 30-50 years) and a clear explanation of the assumptions is provided.

However, if new, original models are executed for this Risk Assessment, the following RCP pathways shall be applied: RCP 2.6 (likely range of 0.4-1.6°C global warming increase by 2065) and RCP 4.5 (likely range of 0.9-2.0°C global warming increase by 2065). Otherwise, the choice of the assessed scenario must be explained.