



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

Halla an Chontae Sraid Eoin Cill Chainnigh
R95 A39T

Pobail agus Áiteanna Inbhuanaithe a Chruthú

Kilkenny County Council

County Hall John Street Kilkenny
R95 A39T



Creating Sustainable Communities and Places

Date: 13th May, 2025.

To: The Cathaoirleach & Each Member of Kilkenny County Council

Re: Draft Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030

A Chara,

In 2019, the Irish Government declared a biodiversity emergency, examples of biodiversity decline include

- 63 species of birds are of conservation concern
- A third of our native bee species are facing extinction
- Over half of native Irish plant species are in decline
- 85% of our protected habitats are in unfavourable conservation status

In accordance with Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023-2030, Kilkenny County Council has developed the Draft Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 using national guidelines set out by The Heritage Council. The Plan will also assist the Local Authority meeting its new annual reporting requirements under The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 that places obligation on public bodies whose statutory functions could have an impact on biodiversity.

Having considered the submissions made as set out in the attached report, I recommend that the Draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan attached be adopted by the Elected Members.

Mise le meas,

Lar Power,
Chief Executive Officer.

Date: 13th May, 2025.

To: Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive

Re: Draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan

A Chara,

The methodology of the development of the Draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 and responses to the submissions received from the public consultation phases are summarised in the attached report. Having considered the submissions received and the attached report, I recommend that the Draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 be presented to Council for adoption by the Elected Members.

Mise le meas,



Bernadette Moloney,
Biodiversity Officer.

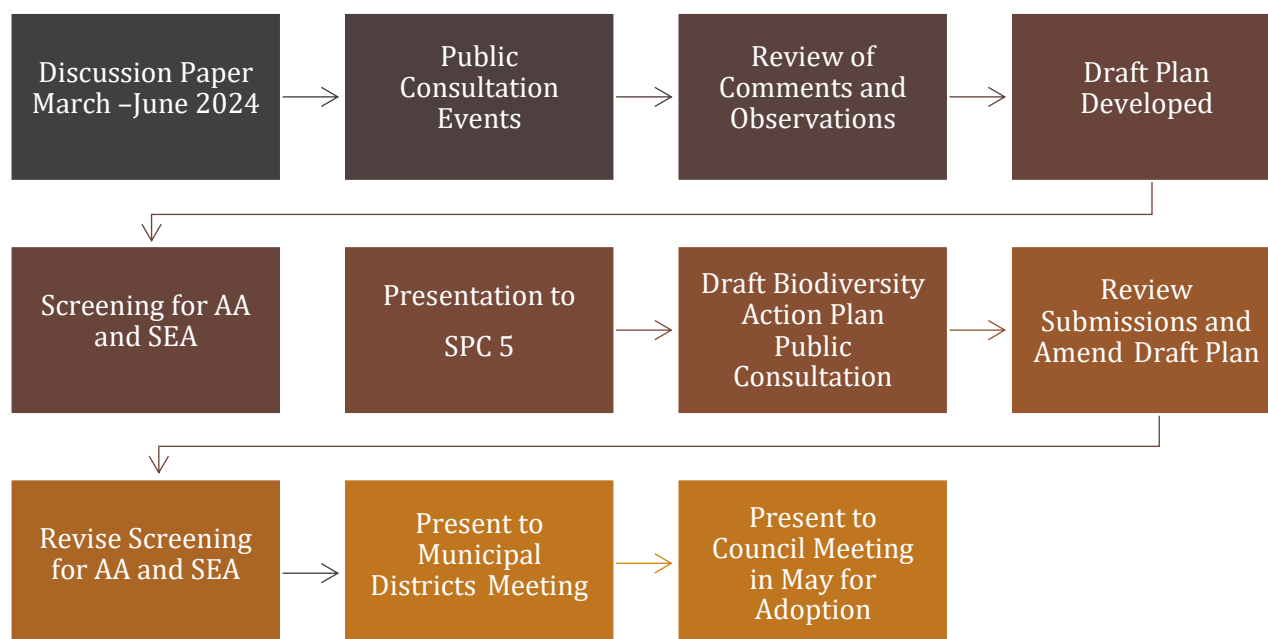


Preparation of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030

Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan is to outline objectives and actions required to protect, enhance and restore biodiversity in County Kilkenny. The Plan is developed in the context of both national and international biodiversity commitments as well as regional and local policies, priorities and local consultation. The Plan sets out 6 objectives and lists 41 actions.

The preparation of Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan was completed following the guidelines set out by The Heritage Council and reflects the commitments of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030.

The process started in March 2024 with the release of a Biodiversity Discussion Paper and a consultation process ran until June. Submissions and feedback were assessed and a Draft Biodiversity Action Plan was developed and then the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan went on public consultation in November-December 2024.



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan, as a non-statutory land use plan requires to be screened for the requirement of a Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with the requirements of

- The SEA Directive, particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) and 3(5) in relation to "screening; and
- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities

(Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011).

The Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination under the EU's Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC Article 6(3) as transposed into Irish law under Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended for the Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 determined that full AA is not required to be undertaken.

Screening Determination for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended for the Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 determined that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the Plan.

Pre-Draft Public Consultation Process

During the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Process (March - June 2024) members of the public and other interested stakeholders were invited to give their views about what they considered to be their biodiversity concerns and biodiversity action priorities for the Council and the county. It included the following programme of public events and engagements.

Table 1; Radio Interviews

Date	Station	Programme
22 nd of April	Kilkenny Community Radio	Frank Tynan
1 st May	KCLR	Ours to Protect Part I and II
21 st May	Kilkenny Community Radio	Maurice O Connor
23 rd May	KCLR	KCLR Live with Shane Casey for Biodiversity Week
6 th June	KCLR	Ours to Protect - Finale

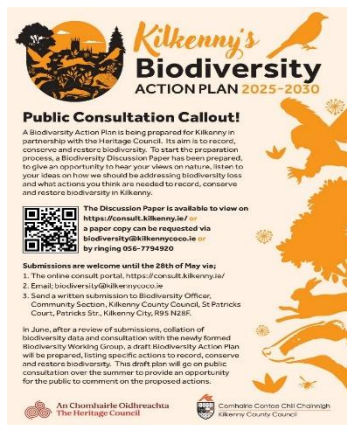
Table 2 Radio Advertising

Start Date	Station	Spot Advertising
23 rd May	KCLR (20 spot advertising)	Biodiversity Discussion Paper, Consultation Open
18 th	KCLR (5 days)	Biodiversity Week, Action for Biodiversity

Table 3 Newspaper Advertising

Date	Newspaper	Topic
6 th May	Munster Express	Biodiversity Discussion Paper
1 st May	Kilkenny People	Biodiversity Discussion Paper
17 th May	Kilkenny Observer	Biodiversity Discussion Paper
17 th May	Kilkenny Observer	Biodiversity Week Events
15 th May	Kilkenny People	Biodiversity Week Events

Advert Sample



Social Media Advertising

Social media adverts were posted across Kilkenny County Councils social media accounts including www.facebook.com/@kilkenny.heritage.

Events and Talks

The Biodiversity Officer was present at all events organized by Kilkenny County Council for National Biodiversity Week and information leaflets detailing the public consultation and a copy of the Biodiversity Discussion Paper was available at all events. The Biodiversity Officer presented at the PPN Plenary on the 29th of May 2024.

Municipal District Meetings

Prior to the local elections, the Biodiversity Officer presented at three Municipal District Meetings to introduce the role of the Biodiversity Officer and also the Biodiversity Discussion Paper.

Enhanced Community Engagement

Workhouse Union worked as engagement consultants and delivered two consultation processes with a youth group and with older people, living in residential care. Workhouse Union also worked with the PPN and facilitated a public consultation session in Mayfair library on the 22nd of June and included a nature connection specialist who explored the views, concerns and hopes for Kilkenny's biodiversity of the participants in an outdoor setting, using the urban garden of Rothe House.



The Development of the Biodiversity Working Group

A Biodiversity Working Group was established, representing a wide range of stakeholders, two workshops were undertaken during 2024 to allow the group to the formulation of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan. Members Include

Conservation State Agencies Inland Fisheries Ireland National Parks and Wildlife Service Rangers OPW Biodiversity Officer	Community Representation BirdWatch Ireland One Future Carlow/Kilkenny An Taisce, Kilkenny Association Tidy Towns Forum Representation
Local Development Company Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	
Education/Conservation Specialists Kildalton College The National Reptile Zoo The Acorn Project (Non Profit CLG)	Council Officials Parks Heritage Office Planning
River Basin Catchment Specialists Local Authorities Water Programme Office Nore Vision	Forestry Coillte
Agricultural Sector IFA ICMSA Teagasc (ASSAP)	

Public Consultation of the Draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030

The public consultation of the draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 involved radio and newspaper adverts. Radio spot advertising ran from the 9th - 15th of December. Newspaper advertising ran locally from 22nd of November to the 6th of December.

Members of the public who submitted an observation as part of the Discussion Paper were contacted by email to alert them of the opportunity to review the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan.

Advert Sample:



Kilkenny's Biodiversity ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

Public Consultation Open!

A draft Biodiversity Action Plan for Kilkenny is now on public consultation. It has been prepared after community engagement during the summer. The public are invited to review the draft plan and submit their comments.

The draft Biodiversity Action Plan is available to view on <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/> or a paper copy can be requested via biodiversity@kilkennycoco.ie by ringing 056-7794920.

Submissions are welcome until the 18th of December via:

1. The online consult portal, <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>
Scan this code for access.
2. Email biodiversity@kilkennycoco.ie
3. Send a written submission to:
Biodiversity Officer, Community Section,
Kilkenny County Council, St Patricks Court,
Patricks Str., Kilkenny City, R95 N28F.

The development of Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 has been supported by The Heritage Council.

 An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council

 Comhairle Contae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

Kilkenny's Draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030

Submission Period; November-December 2024

Number of Submissions Received: Nine

Portal Reference No.	Representing Body	Observations/Comment	Reply
KK-C294-1	Business for Biodiversity Ireland	<p>The Biodiversity Definition excluded "genetic". Biodiversity is understood across three levels, habitat diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity.</p> <p>Why is biodiversity important? In the ecosystem services description, "supporting" services like nutrient cycling, photosynthesis and soil formation have been omitted. There are four categories of ecosystem services, you have only named three; provisioning, regulating and cultural.</p> <p>Policy Context of Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan- International Policy The Global Biodiversity Framework as agreed in UN CBD COP 15 in Montreal in 2022, to which Ireland is a signatory, has been omitted from this section. https://www.cbd.int/gbf</p> <p>The Role of Kilkenny Businesses in the Biodiversity Crisis Target 15 of the Global Biodiversity Framework requires that business assess and disclose their impacts and dependencies on nature and mobilise resources into nature restoration. In the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2030, six business-related objectives exist and two of them are relevant to this plan: 1D7 & 1D8. Kilkenny businesses both impact and depend on nature and their engagement in the county-wide biodiversity plan is critical.</p>	<p>Biodiversity definition has been expanded to acknowledge genetic diversity, wording is revised in the final plan.</p> <p>Ecosystem services description has been expanded to acknowledge supporting services and wording is revised in the final plan.</p> <p>The Global Biodiversity Framework as agreed in UN CBD COP 15 in Montreal in 2022 has been included in the list of International Policy listed in the final plan.</p>

		<p>Suggested Objectives and Metrics</p> <p>According to Infobel.com, Kilkenny has 4,578 registered businesses, turning over €11.594bn per year and employing 33,099 people.</p> <p>Objective 1: 700 Kilkenny businesses of any size signed up to the Business for Biodiversity (BFBI) Ireland Platform by 2030. (140 businesses per year, the platform is free to join)</p> <p>Objective 2: 200 Kilkenny businesses have created a nature strategy by 2030 (40 businesses per year)</p> <p>Objective 3: €50m invested in high-impact county-based nature projects by Kilkenny businesses by 2030. (0.5% of total business revenue in Kilkenny)</p>	<p>The suggested objectives and metrics for Kilkenny businesses is acknowledged. They are deemed too ambitious to achieve in the first cycle of the County Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030, given the staffing resources that are currently allocated.</p> <p>In this Plan, Objective 1 is to provide leadership at local level. In the actions completed in this plan cycle, Kilkenny County Council hopes to inspire others to act for biodiversity. The Biodiversity Officer alone could not achieve the suggested targets but hopes to build capacity over the current plan cycle through the working of the Biodiversity Working Group and these types of targets may be able to be considered in the next plan cycle.</p>
KK-C294-2	House Martin Conservation UK & Ireland	<p>Swift bricks, & artificial nest cups for house martins.</p> <p>Request the following editions to the Plan:</p> <p>Swift bricks are a universal nest brick for small bird species and should be installed in new developments including extensions in accordance with best-practice guidance.</p> <p>Artificial nest cups for house martins may be installed instead of swift bricks where recommended by an ecologist.</p> <p>References Provided</p>	<p>The Swift County Survey was completed in 2021 and recommendations are being undertaken. In 2025 in collaboration with BirdWatch Ireland, policy is being drafted for inclusion into the County Development Plan to make swift bricks a requirement into suitable planning developments and to safeguard known nesting sites.</p> <p>Action 2.4 links Local Authority policy creation informed by scientific research to drive biodiversity protection in a sustainable and informed manner.</p>
KK-C294-3	OPW	<p>Re: Action 1.5: What type of complaints are being captured? Non-compliance by KKCoCo with the 4th NBAP?</p> <p>Re: Action 1.7: Should this read "Showcase demonstration of Council NBS projects"?</p>	<p>Re: Action 1.5 has been reworded to define the action</p> <p>Target - Transparent reporting of biodiversity complaints captured by Kilkenny County Council.</p> <p>Actions - Devise and activate a system to capture data on biodiversity-based complaints and report published annually.</p> <p>Re: Action 1.7: Now renumbered as Action 1.6</p> <p>Two amendments registered.</p> <p>Target; NBS best practice integrated into all Council design</p>

		<p>Re: Action 1.11: There is likely opportunity to partner with the OPW FRM section regarding biodiversity enhancements around the River Nore FR scheme</p> <p>Re: Action 2.2: Should this information not be open and accessible to the public? Suggest to engage with other stat bodies and NGO to share GIS data related to AIS</p> <p>Re: Action 2.5: Consider bridge that are barriers to fish passage and methods of remediation. IFI National Barrier Programme data (reference provided)</p> <p>Re: Action 3.4: This should be widened to include properties that are co-funded by Kilkenny County Council such as the Castlecomer Discovery Park.</p> <p>Re: Action 3.5: What type of audit is envisaged, Biodiversity?</p> <p>Re: Action 4.1: All pNHA should be considered, at a minimum and as well as proposed GHA.</p>	<p>projects. Actions – Showcase Council's NBS projects as best practice.</p> <p>Re: Action 1.11: Now renumbered as Action 1.10 Noted and Agreed. No amended made.</p> <p>Re: Action 2.2: Objective 2, Only refers to Internal Operations, therefore this information will not be publicly accessible. The National Biodiversity data Centre maps IAS and is publicly accessible.</p> <p>Re: Action 2.5: Kilkenny County Council works with the IFI on all bridge works but biodiversity enhancements are largely undocumented as a biodiversity measure. System to be implemented to capture data. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Re: Action 3.4: Due to capacity issues, the first plan cycle will focus on Council owned properties. Determining on how this advances, co-funded properties may be included in the next plan cycle. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Re: Action 3.5: Text amended to provide clarity, that it will be a biodiversity audit of parks and amenity trails.</p> <p>Re: Action 4.1: pNHA have protection under the County Development Plan, this action looks at sites of local biodiversity importance that has no protection. Proposed GHA sites lie outside the remit of the Biodiversity Action Plan. No text amendment required.</p>
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		<p>Re: Action 4.2: These should follow the agreed format of the NBDC and CFI methodology as listed on the NBDC webpage.</p> <p>Re: Action 4.6: Allow for expansion, as well as collect representation genetic stock</p> <p>Re: Action 5.4: Is this being done by NPWS already for Art 17 reporting?</p>	<p>Re: Action 4.2: Noted and Agreed. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Re: Action 4.6: Expansion of sites and collection of genetic stock is noted however due to capacity issue, the mapping of sites onto the GIS internal layer and their inclusion into policy is the priority for this plan cycle. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Re: Action 5.4: Yes, text amended to provide clarity on Kilkenny County Council's future role.</p>
KK-C294-4	Una Gibbons	<p>A submission concerning the effects of 5G radiation on every living being on this planet. This form of radiation was first identified as being a type 2B carcinogen. Symptoms of chronic exposure will be non-specific – severe headaches, fibromyalgia, nosebleeds, insomnia, fatigue which for some people can lead to electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS) now classed a disability in several European countries. Over time, this known carcinogen will give rise to ever increasing inflammation, increased oxidative stress, damage to blood brain barrier, DNA damage to cells leading to cancer causing genetic mutations. Unfortunately, to date this form of man-made environmental pollution and its impacts are overlooked by many. We cannot continue to ignore the health and environmental effects of wireless technology. The bottom line is there is NOT one single study indicating that 5G man-made radiation is safe but there are many indicating the harmful effects.</p> <p>6 reference documents provided.</p>	<p>Kilkenny County Council acknowledges the submission and the references provided. The Biodiversity Action Plan will not address the impact of 5G in this plan cycle. The extent of the potential impacts of 5G requires further scientific research to fully understand the potential risks of 5G on biodiversity.</p>
KK-C294-5	Martin Rochford	<p>Comments on Specific Actions</p> <p>Action: 1.5 Information on biodiversity-based complaints must be made available to the</p>	<p>Action: 1.5 Text amended to provide clarity.</p>

		<p>public through the Council website.</p> <p>Action: 2.1 The use of glyphosate-based chemicals by the Council should be reduced. Homeowners and farmers should be discouraged from using them on roadsides and around houses.</p> <p>Action: 2.3 Guidance should also be given to owners of hedge cutting equipment along the lines of Teagasc's advice, championed by Catherine Keena and also provided to landowners.</p> <p>Action: 3.2 In practice every grassed area within the city should have a percentage of wild meadow. This would include all green areas in estates.</p> <p>Action: 3.3 The proposal to develop an urban tree strategy is a welcome one. It is hoped that it will be accompanied by a firm policy on cutting back or removing trees as indicated in the Kilkenny Climate Action Plan. The inherent value of mature trees must be recognised, and their replacement with newly planted trees never used as a justification for removal.</p> <p>Action: 4.3 (or a separate action) Should include a comprehensive survey of designated sites for nature to determine their current biodiversity status, the restoration needs, the pressures they experience from invasive species, pollution and other factors. It should also indicate what conservation measures are currently in place at each habitat. There is currently no comprehensive database providing this information, data must be sourced from varied sources. Active conservation</p>	<p>Action: 2.1 Noted. Objective 2 only covers internal Council operations, biodiversity best practice for the public is dealt under objective 6. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Action: 2.3 Noted. Objective 2 only covers internal Council operations, biodiversity best practice for the public is dealt under objective 6. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Action: 3.2 Noted. Areas are proposed to be mapped and then a determination can be made on relation to % cover for meadow areas, as dealing with cut grass in September may be a limiting factor. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Action: 3.3 Noted. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Action: 4.3 Natura 2000 sites are under the remit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Their management is outside the remit of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Signposting of information is outlined in Action 1.10.</p>
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		<p>measures should be identified for each habitat.</p> <p>Action: 4.5 To complete an audit of Kilkenny hedgerows is an extremely worthwhile exercise as it will facilitate the monitoring of their health over time. This should include an indication of the quality (height, width and density) of each length of hedgerow so this can be monitored over time. A schedule should be put in place for this to be carried out periodically.</p> <p>Action: 4.7 and 4.8 EPA information from river water tests with historical trends for the past 15-20 years should be displayed in prominent places so it is obvious to local people. There is an EPA notice on the bridge in Kells indicating the status of the Kings River in the period 2007-2009. This gives no indication of the current status of the river. Notices such as this should show what has happened to the river over the past couple of decades.</p> <p>Action: 5.1 The KPI for this should indicate current levels of participation so that an increase can be identified.</p> <p>Action: 5.2 Engaging students in species identification is very worthwhile. This should also include learning about the importance of habitat including healthy hedgerows.</p> <p>Action: 6.4 and 6.5 Field days and demonstration events should include distribution of Farming for Nature leaflets (farmingfornature.ie) and promotion of their handbook as ways to greatly enhance biodiversity on farms. Information should also be given on Teagasc's advice on safe use of pesticides and herbicides to minimise impact on biodiversity.</p>	<p>Action: 4.5 Noted. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Action: 4.7 and 4.8 Noted. No text amendment required. Comments will be relayed to the Environment Section to determine if signage could be re-instated to replicate the EPA signage of the past.</p> <p>Action: 5.1 Noted. Action amendment to reflect participation rate.</p> <p>Action: 5.2 Noted. No text amendment required.</p> <p>Action: 5.2 Noted. No text amendment required.</p>
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KK-C294-6	An Taisce	<p>The extent of Council property is not outlined. There is no indication of the area of parkland, extend of hedgerows, river corridors, woodland, meadows or any other potential habitat that might be managed for wildlife. Consequently, no site-specific conservation objectives are set and no meaningful assessment of improved biodiversity status can be made. When the Plan is implemented it can only be considered a success if it achieves an increase in biodiversity in Kilkenny. We appreciate that the Plan has to start at a basis stage but given its duration it must include some key performance indicators that actually measure progress in terms of habitats and species. We would appreciate if you would take these concerns into account.</p> <p>The initiative to foster public and community engagement is welcomed, and proposed actions on Council property including habitat mapping projects, reduced mowing, sustainable pollinator friendly planning and reduction of pesticide use.</p> <p>The importance of connectivity in the landscape cannot be overemphasised so the seeing of site-specific objectives for these habitats and their species is desirable so that any work resulting from the Plan can be assessed for enhanced biodiversity. The Plan will go some way to compliance with the EU Nature Restoration Law 2024.</p> <p>Intensive agriculture probably accounts for a higher percentage of land use in Kilkenny. Engagement with the farming community. (Actions 4.7, 6.4) needs to put great emphasis on high nature value farming.</p> <p>Many threats facing habitats and species fall under the ambit of the planning system. The Plan should</p>	<p>There is no specific site conservation objectives for Kilkenny County Council sites as the first stage of the project would be to devise a list of suitable properties and create a priority listing for biodiversity audits. For the first cycle of the Plan, the level of information sought from An Taisce, does not exist. Once a site is selected for a biodiversity audit, then each location will be treated as an individual project.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted, but outside of the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan. The Plan may address the restoration</p>
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		address nature restoration on sites that are subject to Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Appropriate Assessments (AA) because many of these sites are degraded and assessments may be compromised.	of Council owned properties but will not be responsible for Nature 2000 sites or sites under private ownership located adjacent or within the catchment of Nature 2000 sites.
KK-C294-7	The Heritage Council	<p>Discussion are encouraged to refine how the Heritage Council can most effectively support Biodiversity Officers and, by extension, local authority biodiversity action plans. This relationship is viewed as a collaborative partnership, where both the Council and the Biodiversity Officers contribute their unique strengths to improve biodiversity management and conservation at the local level. The Heritage Council looks forward to a collaborative relationship that will benefit shared heritage for current and future generations.</p> <p>Specific Comments on the Draft Kilkenny Local Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>All-of-Authority Response to the Biodiversity Crisis Recommend that more emphasis is put on cross departmental work in 'The Biodiversity Working Group' section. One of the important opportunities of the LBAP is recognising the diverse range of local authority functions that impact biodiversity. This holistic approach is essential for fostering a culture of environmental stewardship across all departments.</p> <p>Structure of the Action Plan and Strategic Objectives Recommend that further consideration is given to the inclusion of a new action, based on the following: <i>"Work with the local authority's roads department to develop a viable approach to hedgerow and tree</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted and integrated into the amended action 2.3.</p> <p>Noted and included in the revised Plan</p>

		<p><i>maintenance regimes, in a manner that prevents no unnecessary or undue damage to biodiversity, whilst ensuring adequate road safety. This should be integral to the tendering process for such services.</i></p> <p>Structure of the Action Plan and Strategic Objectives</p> <p>Recommend including a vision statement on what biodiversity in Kilkenny will look like in 2031, and how it will be perceived and appreciated by citizens, immediately before the objectives.</p> <p>Alignment with International Policies and Legislation</p> <p>The draft LBAP has a comprehensive policy context section ranging from international to county level policy and legislative context. We would recommend however that the National Restoration Law and subsequent National Restoration Plan get commensurate mention in this section of LBAP.</p> <p>We commend the overview provided of the designated sites and the types of habitats in section 4 and 5. The key diagram (Map 4.1) is an important feature and a good addition, as are the detail provided for each type of habitat and site. We would recommend that the text (provided) be inserted just before the designated sites are introduced. The rationale for this is to clearly establish a greater understanding of what biodiversity and ecosystems constitute in land use terms for a county like Kilkenny. Also, there is merit in providing a link to the NPWS website.</p> <p>Alignment with Local Policies and Strategies - Linking with Forward Planning</p>	<p>Noted and included in the revised Plan</p> <p>Noted and action 2.4 amended to reflect the importance of contributing to the County Development Plan to ensure there is continuity between biodiversity policy and its integration into the County Development Plan.</p>
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		<p>There is an opportunity for greater linkages between the statutory planning system and biodiversity action. Many actions could be supported by providing policy provision in the county development plan. Many of the actions currently listed for Objective 4 require planning policy support as do any actions that pursue nature-based solutions. With this in mind, we recommend the following new action under "Objective 2: Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations" <i>"Ensure that actions that have physical land requirements, or require consideration in planning decisions, are included in the natural heritage chapter of the next county development plan, in line with their importance and in recognition of the need for statutory planning support."</i></p> <p>Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) and nature restoration sites</p> <p>We welcome the inclusion of Action 4.1. is welcomed however there is need to recognise that the policy mechanism, in general terms, already exists for this. Objective 9A and 9B of the current Kilkenny County Development Plan, already has a mechanism and gives statutory protection. The LBAP, as informed by guidance from the Heritage Council, will gather the data to identify the most important local biodiversity features; to help aid the implementation already existing county development plan policies. Accordingly, the action should be amended as such.</p> <p>The target should be as: <i>"Non-designated sites of local biodiversity importance will be mapped and identified to support existing policies in the county development plan, or any</i></p>	<p>Agreed and amended in the Plan and also reflected in Action 4.1</p> <p>Noted and references are included in the Plan.</p> <p>Noted and action 5.4 has been amended to address the issue raised.</p> <p>Noted, the header and accompanying text under Objective 6 is amended to emphasis education.</p>
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		<p><i>subsequent policy, for the identification and protection of locally important biodiversity sites.</i></p> <p>The action should be changed to state: <i>"Identify and map sites of Local Biodiversity Importance, in line with Heritage Council Guidance, to aid the implementation of county development plan biodiversity policies".</i></p> <p>Sustainability and Climate Change</p> <p>The policy context section is of high standard. The links between the SDGs and the Climate Action Plan, have been made. In addition, there is a good description of the threats to biodiversity in Kilkenny in Section 7. Some sources are provided here to substantiate the discussion which may be beneficial for context. <i>The EPA's Water Quality in 2023 Indicator Report & State of the Environment Report by the Environmental Protection Agency [October 2024].</i></p> <p>Data Collection and Evidence-based policies</p> <p>We would strongly recommend that the actions listed with regards to surveying and monitoring, be carefully considered to ensure that work is not duplicated. As an example, woodland surveys or Annex i/ii surveys have been carried out nationally, and the relevant authorities should be consulted before Kilkenny County Council commission further work on such surveys.</p> <p>Community Engagement and Collaboration</p> <p>Community participation and engagement are vital for the successful implementation of the LBAP. We therefore commend</p>	<p>Noted, external organisations are not listed as leads as agreement will be sought as different projects develop over the Plan period. As it is a Kilkenny County Council Plan, it is not deemed appropriate to nominate stakeholders as leads over broad actions at this stage of the Plan. Kilkenny County Council will adopt a collaborative approach when establishing new projects.</p>
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		<p>the comprehensive emphasis on awareness and engagement, under Objective 6 in the draft plan, as well as its associated actions.</p> <p>We recommend that greater recognition be given to education in this table i.e. outlining how both formal and informal educational programmes will be developed to increase public awareness and understanding of heritage.</p> <p>The importance of collaboration with other organisations is well documented in section 6. Although the working group is mentioned in the lead column, it might be worth indicating the most important organisation for each action i.e. LAWPRO/IFI in terms of water-based actions. There is also reference to agriculture and working with Teagasc, which is important for a county like Kilkenny.</p> <p>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</p> <p>The Heritage Council recognises the critical importance of integrating principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EDI) into local biodiversity action plans. In this regard, we recommend that any education and awareness endeavours are undertaken via a participatory process, which ensures that diverse community groups, including those traditionally underrepresented, are included. We would recommend that this made explicit in a short introduction paragraph to the action table.</p> <p>Funding and Resources</p> <p>We would recommend that further thought be given to funding avenues, as well as the necessary human resources to implement actions. This should consider risks to action implementation based on resource and could be inserted as</p>	<p>Noted, the text accompanying the header is amended.</p> <p>Emphasis on how the education outreach programme will be diverse to cater for diversity, equity and inclusion are now incorporated in the action.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council will collaborate with appropriate stakeholders as projects evolve. It was deemed inappropriate to nominate external organisations as leads before projects are developed. It will be a function of the Biodiversity Working Group to explore collaborations.</p> <p>Noted, and introduction amended to reflect same.</p> <p>Noted. Kilkenny County Council's Biodiversity Action Plan was formalised with the provision of existing staff assigned to the Biodiversity role and the capacity building which will develop within</p>
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		a commentary that accompanies to action table.	the organisation as the actions are completed.
KK-C294-8	Irish Ramsar Wetland Committee	<p>Increase the support and resourcing of Local Authorities, Agri-Environment schemes, Rural Development Companies and LAWPRO in the delivery of community stewardship in local wetland projects.</p> <p>Promote the protection of wetland sites of local biodiversity value in County Development Plans.</p> <p>Recognise the value of wetlands in local catchment management plans prepared under the third River Basin Management Plan 2024. Restoration should be at a catchment-scale and focus on wider riparian corridor, floodplain and peatland restoration, including a cessation of drainage.</p> <p>Promote the completion of wetland surveys by the 31 local authorities and their protection through County Development Plans. For Kilkenny County, there are currently 113 priority survey sites which have no wetland field survey to date.</p> <p>Identify and map small wetlands including ponds in the community and on farms on a sub-catchment basis. Kilkenny County Council consider including the Map of Irish Wetlands (MIW) on its planning system GIS.</p> <p>Identify funding gaps and opportunities for wetland management and protection. Treat wetlands not merely as areas that are important for nature conservation per se, but as key elements within urban water management infrastructure and essential components in providing water resources.</p>	<p>Irish Ramsar Wetland Committee made a number of observations relating to wetlands but did not connect their observations to specific elements to the Plan.</p> <p>Therefore, in response, Kilkenny County Council has a target of the Plan is to protect wetlands (Action 4.4). In order to achieve this, there is an action to upload the Kilkenny Wetland Survey onto the Biodiversity GIS Layer and prioritise projects to complete recommendations in the Plan.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council acknowledges the role wetlands can play as part of Climate Change Adaptation and Nature Base Solutions are highlighted in actions 1.6.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council will seek to collaborate with stakeholders with expertise in wetland management and restoration as projects are developed.</p>

		<p>Include wetlands as natural infrastructure (nature-based solutions) in urban planning, including all aspects of water management, such as stormwater management, water resources and water treatment.</p> <p>Recognise the importance of wetlands and their services as key elements for supporting green and blue infrastructure in the urban and rural environment. Advocate for the incorporation of wetland areas in the design of new development.</p> <p>Adopt recommendations from Wetland survey report.</p> <p>Develop wetland restoration actions and plans and restore priority wetland sites. Include invasive alien species management actions within wetland management plans.</p> <p>Annual condition status assessment of high biodiversity importance wetlands to assess quality of ecosystem.</p> <p>Develop projects that promote and demonstrate good practice in water allocation and management for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands.</p> <p>Promote the application of the Ramsar Guidelines for allocation and management of water for maintaining ecological functions of wetlands in decision-making processes.</p>	
KK-C294-9	Local Authority Waters Office	<p>Specific Comments on the Draft Kilkenny Local Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>Action: 1.7 Appreciation of 2 actions on NbS but can an action around NbS on all developments? Referencing the new national Strategy (Reference Provided).</p>	Noted and amended to reflect all developments.

		<p>Action: 2.2 Extend mapping to NGOs/Tidy Towns groups</p> <p>Action: 3.5 Amend wording to specify biodiversity friendly management plan</p> <p>Action: 4.7 Is this not ongoing? Add; Collaborate with LAWPRO on citizen science monitoring of rivers and streams</p> <p>Action: 6.1 Include Water Heritage Day</p> <p>Action: 6.2 Insert; Collaborate with LAWPRO on water awareness events and promoting citizen science.</p>	<p>Objective 2 only reflects internal operations of Kilkenny County Council. The system will be for operations only. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has a public system which is open to the groups listed and suggested.</p> <p>Noted and amended for clarity.</p> <p>Noted, LAWPRO already referenced as a collaborator.</p> <p>Noted, Water Heritage Day falls within Heritage Week annually, individual days are not listed within in the Plan, as they are too numerous.</p> <p>Noted, action 6.2 relates to artistic/creative avenues. New action inserted, action 6.7 for education and covers all aspects of education without being specific.</p>
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Biodiversity Discussion Paper

Submission Period; March – June 2024

16 Submissions Received and 1 Summary Report of the PPN/Public Consultation Session (PPNCS).

Submissions were reviewed and reoccurring themes have been grouped, each theme has a corresponding reply. Some observations were deemed outside the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan and are also summarised.

Theme	Submission Ref;		Reply
Invasive Alien Species (IAS)	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-12 KK-C257-10 KK-C257-06	KK-C257-02 KK-C257-03 PPNCS	<p>The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address IAS on public land and will prioritise treatment depending on the species, geographic location and the risk to designated sites.</p> <p>Action 2.2 Target: Alien Invasive Species on public land mapped Action: Co-ordinate an internal mapping function to identify and prioritise sites for treatment</p> <p>Action 3.5 Public parks and amenity trails managed to maximise biodiversity enhancement. Action: Audit number of parks and amenity trails</p> <p>Action 6.1 Target: Kilkenny Citizens Informed about biodiversity Action: Assist in the dissemination of Biodiversity promotional material, promoting funding streams, training opportunities, field days and workshops.</p> <p>Other Comments Site specific actions have not been addressed as part of the BAP, but will work with stakeholders to develop suitable projects over the Plan period.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop rapid response systems to prevent the introduction and spread of IAS.• IAS threats to Natura 2000 Sites• Support community actions to remove IAS• Train Council Staff for IAS removal best practice and machinery cleaning maintenance post removal works• Include IAS as a theme in the Plan• Introduce a public reporting mechanism for IAS• Liaise with HSE and advise of need to manage cherry laurel in Lacken woods• Liaise with Kilkenny College and advise of need to manage cherry laurel in Newpark Marsh wet woodland• Liaise with Lyrath Hotel and advise of need to manage skunk cabbage on local river			

Theme	Submission Ref;		Reply
Water Quality	KK-C257-04 KK-C257-16 KK-C257-11 KK-C257-05 KK-C257-03	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-06 KK-C257-05 KK-C257-04 KK-C257-03 PPNCS	<p>The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address water pollution.</p> <p>Action 4.7 Target: Water quality data easy to source and understand Action: Farm inspection team to collaborate with agricultural sector, Nore Vision, IFI, Teagasc and LAWPRO to complete water quality assessments and communicate issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality.</p> <p>Action 4.8 Target: Promote annual data from the EPA RMCEI Plan that illustrates the work completed by the Environment Section. Action: Communicate the findings of the EPA Annual Water Quality Reports to raise awareness of water quality issues.</p> <p>Action 6.10 Target: Water conservation widespread across all sectors Actions: Promote water conservation across sectors, providing the linkage to importance to biodiversity protection. Promote rain water harvesting across different sectors.</p> <p>Additional Comments The establishment of real-time notification of pollution incidences to alert amenity users to safeguard human health lies outside the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Nore Vision, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Local Authorities Waters Office IFA and ICMSA sit on the Biodiversity Working Group and it is anticipated that projects will develop during the plan period including nature base solutions, slowing the flow of water after intense rainfall.</p> <p>Waste Water public infrastructure is under Uisce Eireann and currently is addressing shortfalls in their aged infrastructure through capital investment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Water Pollution • County councils to drive standards among all stakeholders to prevent water pollution incidences • Promote how to report water pollution incidents • Set up real-time notification of pollution incidences to alert amenity users to safeguard human health • Make water quality data more accessible • Complete comprehensive assessment of river flow & water dynamics with changing water levels due to more extreme weather events due to climate change • Greater transparency around wastewater from industry, usage and discharge rates • Work with rural dwellers to reduce pollution from agricultural and septic tanks • That Nore Vision receive appropriate support to facilitate 'Slow-the-Flow' opportunities throughout the county. • That all remaining IFI 'Blue-Dot' locations are managed and conserved across all State agencies & Kilkenny CoCo business units. • Kilkenny County Council to work with landowners to slow flow down further upstream, disallowing development in flood plains, abandoning permanently the practice of piping streams • Agricultural land to be managed to prevent run off, soil loss, soil compaction • Septic tanks are relatively unregulated and require more regulation 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase housing development requires rollout of updated sewage systems to adequately manage rising water levels. The Biodiversity Action Plan will fail if inadequate waste water systems are in place. • We have been made aware that there are points along the river where sewage, (sometimes untreated) is entering the water. On enquiry we were told that this has only happened when the treatment system has been overwhelmed by rainfall. • Sewage entering the Nore within the city is unacceptable, and unsafe for bathers and has a devastating impact on biodiversity. Adequate waste water infrastructure is required to prevent incidences in times of heavy precipitation. 		
Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Funding	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-03	The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funding for biodiversity projects and research. • Use funding from recent Failte Ireland 5-year Kilkenny grant to support tourist activities and businesses which are based around the county's biodiversity and environment. • Provide more financial and logistical support to towns, villages and housing estates to increase spaces for nature on greens and other spaces. 		<p>Action 1.3 Target: Funding and opportunities for biodiversity themed projects promoted across sectors in Kilkenny Action: Create a directory for funding sources and promote opportunities locally</p> <p>Action 6.1 Target: Kilkenny Citizens Informed about biodiversity Action: Assist in the dissemination of biodiversity promotional material, promoting funding streams, training opportunities, field days and workshops.</p> <p>Additional Comments Kilkenny County Council runs a large number of grant schemes, applications on appropriate forms are being amended to reflect the opportunity of biodiversity themed projects being promoted under the different schemes.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council will be opportunistic and capitalise on funding opportunities are they arise.</p>

Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Information Sign Posting	KK-C257-12 KK-C257-05 KK-C257-13 PPNCS	<p>The following action in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address information signposting.</p> <p>Action 1.8: Target: A biodiversity online-platform signposting locations of data resources and provide a depository for county studies. Audit resources on Kilkenny Heritage.ie Action: Develop a strategy to improve access to biodiversity mapping and studies.</p> <p>Additional Comments Protected sites (Nature 2000) are the responsible under the National Parks and Wildlife Service. They provide a mapping tool with corresponding information on corresponding sites (https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites). Water Quality data is available via www.catchments.ie The EPA also provides an online mapping system with different environmental information. https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/default</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program to address the information deficit on our protected sites in Kilkenny Make information available via Kilkenny County Council on the status of protected sites in Kilkenny as information difficult to access and on multiple platforms/departments A culture of information sharing regarding water quality between statutory bodies and amenity users 		
Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Agriculture and Biodiversity	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-12 KK-C257-04 PPNCS	<p>The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address agriculture and biodiversity</p> <p>Action 2.3 Target: Protection of hedgerows Action: Implement training and build capacity in hedgerow maintenance, retention and translocation Develop a viable approach to hedgerow and tree maintenance regimes, that prevents no unnecessary or undue damage to biodiversity, whilst ensuring adequate road safety that is integrated and integral to the tendering process for such services.</p> <p>Provide guidance to staff and landowners on retention, translocation methods and cutting maintenance of hedgerows.</p> <p>Action 4.7 Target: Water quality data easy to source and understand</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kilkenny County Council might work with Teagasc to achieve increased biodiversity on farmland. Local farmers need extra support and education to maintain shrub and trees by rivers for bank stabilisation and to slow the flow. Farmers need to be acknowledged, they are the custodians of biodiversity and they are committed to best practice. 		

			<p>Action: Farm inspection team to collaborate with agricultural sector, Nore Vision, IFI, Teagasc and LAWPRO to complete water quality assessments and communicate issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality.</p> <p>Action 4.8 Promote annual data from the EPA RMCEI Plan that illustrates the work completed by the Environment Section.</p> <p>Additional Comments Nore Vision, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Local Authorities Waters Office IFA, ICMSA. Teagasc Academic and farm advisors’ representatives sit on the Biodiversity Working Group and it is anticipated that projects will develop during the plan period including nature base solutions, slowing the flow of water after intense rainfall and hedgerow maintenance training.</p>
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Art, Creativity and Biodiversity	KK-C257-12 KK-C257-11 PPNCS		<p>The following action in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address Art, Creativity and Biodiversity.</p> <p>Action 6.2 Target: Leverage creative, cultural and artistic initiatives to enhance engagement on biodiversity. Action: Encourage and support artists whose work promotes ecological awareness and biodiversity and enables individuals to connect with nature.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Work with artists and creatives to highlight biodiversity			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Habitat Protection	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-12 KK-C257-04	KK-C257-11 KK-C257-10 KK-C257-06 PPNCS	<p>The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address Habitat Protection.</p> <p>Action 3.4: Adoption of dark sky biodiversity friendly lighting policy for public spaces whilst maintaining standards for safety and security concerns.</p> <p>Action 3.5: Audit number of parks and amenity trails, prioritise and complete biodiversity management plans for each location.</p> <p>Action 4.4 Protection of wetland sites</p> <p>Action 4.5 Protection of Hedgerows</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify and safeguard critical habitatsProtection of Natura 2000 sitesCooperation with NPWS is necessary to address sustainable farming practises in protected habitats			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of protective measures for all habitats and species is necessary such as addressing cattle ingress in the River Nore catchment, burning vegetation and use of pesticides. A whole river approach to planting the riparian buffer zones to tackle run off, mitigate flooding and improve the river flora and fauna and water quality. Excessive, poorly done, and unregulated tree & shrub clearance & cutting, causes land around Kilkenny to degrade habitats and in particularly river bank stability. Conduct City wide bat survey to identify and protect existing Hibernacula. All remaining Ancient Woodland Sites are reviewed, and conservation management plans adopted to ensure their future standing and where possible expansion. Identify preserve and protect wild areas especially bramble Protect and preserve Newpark Marsh and Lough Macask from emerging developments. Continue to protect manage and maintain ancient graveyards for biodiversity at St Johns, St Patricks and St Mauls. That Kilkenny CoCo review public lighting across all SAC River & open water habitat (initially & expand later). Protect Kilkenny wetlands in Kilkenny, they should not be drained. Fens support diversity of plant & wildlife. Clearance or inappropriate planting results in flooding, they are a climate change adaption measure to slow the flow in times of intense rainfall. 			<p>Action 4.6 Protection of Ancient Woodlands</p> <p>Target 5.4 Kilkenny County Council informed on national surveys relating to Annex I, II and IV species of the Habitats Directive and Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Action 5.4 Kilkenny County Council to stay informed of national surveys, collaborate with agencies if further research or monitoring required on a local level. Kilkenny County Council promote findings to safeguard habitats and species.</p> <p>Additional Comments Nore Vision, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Local Authorities Waters Office IFA, ICMSA. Teagasc Academic and farm advisors' representatives sit on the Biodiversity Working Group and it is anticipated that projects will develop during the plan period including nature base solutions, slowing the flow of water after intense rainfall and the regeneration of riparian zones.</p>
Theme	Submission Reference		Reply
Urban Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity Net Gain	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-14 KK-C257-11	KK-C257-01 KK-C257-05 PPNCS	<p>Comment</p> <p>Urban Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved through appropriate planning and development, therefore will be actioned through the County Development Plan. Action 2.4 addresses how biodiversity policy will be developed and how it will be integrated into the County Development Plan. Biodiversity offsets/biodiversity net gains will require careful consideration and further research is required before introducing a system which will require metrics and subsequent post development monitoring.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage green infrastructure in urban planning. Encourage the use of native plants in landscaping and urban green spaces. Secure green spaces remaining in Kilkenny for the future. Ensure green spaces are maximised around new housing developments. Create biodiversity connectivity through prioritising planting in urban settings 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the implementation of green walls in new builds and retrofitting existing structures with native evergreen species. This approach will enhance urban biodiversity, contribute to air quality improvement, and support various species, aligning with the economic benefits of biodiversity mentioned. • Biodiversity Offsets: Where development impacts biodiversity, require offsets such as creating or restoring equivalent habitats elsewhere. • To use human ingenuity to find new ways of building, developing and managing what is necessary for our society, while sticking to a nature first approach. 			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Ecological Connectivity	KK-C257-12 KK-C257-11 PPNCS	KK-C257-02 KK-C257-01 KK-C257-18	<p>The following action in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address ecological connectivity.</p> <p>Action 2.3: Protection of Hedgerows</p> <p>Action 2.4: Policies, informed by ecological research to retain and restore ecological corridors in place</p> <p>Action 3.1: Enhancement of green and blue corridors connectivity including the protection of riparian vegetation, instream connectivity and habitat networks</p> <p>Ecological connectivity is referenced in Objective 5: Record and Monitor Protected Species and references how ecological connectivity benefits a wide variety of species and how recording will monitor habitat quality.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the number of habitats and their connectivity • Improve habitats such as hedgerows and create micro wild areas e.g. 'the hare's corner' and pocket forests on farms. • Attempt to connect all the green spaces in the town through planting and climbers • Map habitats on all LA owned/managed property and plan continuation of wildlife corridors throughout, filling in any gaps • Incorporate the development of under-road tunnels to create ecosystem corridors for wildlife. • Create networks of natural spaces that allow wildlife movement and genetic exchange. • Connectivity more paths for people and more natural corridors for other than humans • Attempt to connect all the green spaces in the town through planting and climbers 			

Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Business and Biodiversity	KK-C257-18		In the first cycle of Kilkenny’s Biodiversity Action Plan, it has not been prioritised to work directly with businesses to incentivize biodiversity actions however, Kilkenny County Council under the objectives of the Plan aim to promote biodiversity leadership and promote biodiversity best practice and encourage others to follow.
Public Bodies and Biodiversity	KK-C257-03		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Eco-friendly Business Practices: Incentivize businesses to adopt practices that benefit biodiversity.			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Trees	KK-C257-14 KK-C257-09 KK-C257-13 KK-C257-15 KK-C257-11	KK-C257-10 KK-C257-05 KK-C257-04 KK-C257-02 PPNCS	Tree retention, tree planting and tree protection were common comments in the submissions and a number of actions reflect the public concerns. The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address tree planting and tree protection. Action 3.3: Protection of Urban Trees in Kilkenny City by the development of a tree strategy Action 6.6: Assisting the establishment of local tree nurseries to grow local provenance native trees Action 3.5: Creation of management plans for public spaces to increase biodiversity, including the management of trees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase % cover of urban tree canopy by establishing a strategyStop felling of urban trees, apply process to ensure trees are only felled where deemed necessary by an arborist.Plant trees to mitigate against climate changePrioritise the inclusion of appropriate urban native tree plantingEnsure there is tree management care plan for urban treesStop topping urban trees inappropriatelyUse professional tree surgeons for tree maintenancePlant trees in staggered formations for pollinatorsIdentify and create neighbourhood woodlands.Conduct City tree survey to identify preserve and protect trees.Continue to develop and support community tree planting initiativesPlant 8000 trees including new hedgerow each yearRoadside tree maintenance to landowners has led to an uneven application of the principle of maintenance, depending on skills, knowledge, land usage and availability of suitable workers & equipmentConcern around ash dieback may be leading to overly enthusiastic tree cutting, where it is not always required.Trees that are over 20y old should have automatic protection nationwide and a licence to remove must be applied for, even on private land.Trees should not be removed as condition of Planning Permission			

Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Hedgerow	KK-C257-09 KK-C257-16 KK-C257-15 KK-C257-14	KK-C257-13 KK-C257-11 KK-C257-04 KK-C257-02 PPNCS	<p>Hedgerow retention and hedgerow planting were common comments in the submissions and a number of actions reflect the public concerns. The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address the maintenance and issues relating to hedgerows.</p> <p>Action 2.3: Protection of Hedgerows Implement training and build capacity in hedgerow maintenance, retention and translocation. Develop a viable approach to hedgerow and tree maintenance regimes, that prevents no unnecessary or undue damage to biodiversity, whilst ensuring adequate road safety that is integrated and integral to the tendering process for such services. Provide guidance to staff and landowners on retention, translocation methods and cutting maintenance of hedgerows.</p> <p>Action 3.1: Enhancement of green and blue corridors connectivity including the protection of riparian vegetation, instream connectivity and habitat networks.</p> <p>Action 4.5: Protection of Hedgerows Complete audit of Kilkenny hedgerows and prioritise future projects on enhancing ecological connectivity between biodiversity rich sites.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote best practice of hedgerow maintenance Work with the agricultural sector to preserve hedgerow as ecological corridors Guidance from a specialist ecologist or arborist provided to the agricultural community to reduce hedgerow removal Plant more native mixed hedgerows in sports fields, national monuments, green areas. Promote hedge laying as a means of maintenance and run courses of living hedges. There needs to be an evaluation of flail cutting and a move to alternative methods where feasible. Hedgerow removal should not be condition of Planning Permission. Planting of native species hedgerows should be condition of Planning permission 			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Governance	KK-C257-06 KK-C257-18 KK-C257-14 KK-C257-11 KK-C257-05	KK-C257-03 KK-C257-04 KK-C257-02 KK-C257-01 PPNCS	<p>Objective One of the Biodiversity Action Plan addresses the governance and leadership suggestions that were observed from the public submissions received. A Biodiversity Action Group is established and has a large number of stakeholders from different sectors including agriculture, business, biodiversity interest groups and community groups.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council will follow biodiversity best practice and act as a biodiversity champion and identify as a local leader to inspire others. The Biodiversity Officer will promote best practice, promote the principles of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.</p> <p>Actions 1.1: Establish a biodiversity working group Action 1.4: Transparent reporting of biodiversity complaints</p> <p>Objective Six outlines a number of actions to foster engagement, education and promote biodiversity best practice. Actions 6.1-6.10.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That KKNFC is a nominated member on the KK Biodiversity Action Group. Collaborate with NGOs, academia, and local businesses to leverage expertise and resources. Establish a task force with representatives from various sectors to guide the biodiversity strategy's implementation. Kilkenny County Council to take the lead and illustrate biodiversity best practice through their own work 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure Kilkenny CoCo has an appropriate Windfarm Policy that reflects the Biodiversity Crisis. • County council, other statutory bodies, state agencies and semi-state organisations to articulate, communicate and exemplify best practice in natural resource management on a nature first basis • River catchment and flood management policies to promote and prioritise ecological over engineering solutions • Observation that road sweepers were alleged to have discharged their water after road cleaning, directly into the river. Requirement to see a procedure to ensure that this no longer occurs. • Biodiversity; Please include the following themes: Waterbodies and Water Quality, Wetlands, Invasive Species, Protected Habitats, Non-Designated Habitats in the development of the Biodiversity Action Plan • Monitoring, Assessment and Active feedback loops, the efforts that will be undertaken as part of the current “Biodiversity -Vision for the future action plan” should ideally feed into an evolving online database that tracks all ongoing projects, activities and initiatives (inputs, processes and outcomes). Thus, allowing for an annual assessment and adjustment process. This will help us as a community, to actively observe and respond to the effectiveness of each intervention. • County Council should be a model of good practice outlined in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan should be communicated specially to Tidy Towns groups. 		
Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Woodlands & Coillte	KK-C257-03 KK-C257-06	Coillte strategic vision seeks to deliver multiple benefits from Ireland’s state forests, bringing more focus to climate action, setting ambitious new targets on biodiversity and recreation, while continuing to deliver for the forest and wood products industry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Coillte to convert some monoculture Sitka spruce plantations to mixed native broadleaf to expand biodiversity and amenity value • That Castlecomer Discovery Park & Woodstock Woodlands adopted ‘Close-to-Nature’ / ‘Continuous Cover’ woodland management throughout the property portfolios. • Develop Brandon Hill as a flagship biodiversity site by working with Coillte to reduce clear felling of Sitka spruce and convert some / all of existing spruce forests into mixed forests. Allow remaining fragments of native forest on Brandon Hill to expand, protecting them from deer or wild goats with fencing, if needed. 		Kilkenny County Council will collaborate with Coillte where appropriate and will continue to work in close relationship with regards the Woodstock Woodland. Kilkenny County Council owns c.50 acres of Victorian gardens within the wider Woodstock Estate which extends to c.1,000 acres and is owned and managed by Coillte. The Gardens as you would expect for a historical garden are managed to retain the Victorian layout. The pockets of woodlands are managed to promote biodiversity and over the course of the last few years, through funding obtained

			under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, efforts have been made to remove non-native invasive species in these areas and in particular Cherry Laurel.
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Spray	KK-C257-09 KK-C257-16 KK-C257-11	KK-C257-02 PPNCS	The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address the use of chemicals to manage public spaces and to raise public awareness of alternatives control measures for weeds. Action 2.1: Reduce glyphosate-based chemicals used by Kilkenny County Council. Calculate usage annually and determine reduction pathway. Action 3.5: Public parks and amenity trails managed to maximise biodiversity enhancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prohibit the use of RoundUp and other chemicals for weed controlProhibit fine spraying methods especially near rivers and areas of natural protection.Seek alternative physical removal methods in preference to chemical control of weedsNo herbicides on public landCampaign to reduce/eliminate herbicide usage along roadside/entrances			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Meadow/Grasslands	KK-C257-09 KK-C257-14 KK-C257-11	KK-C257-10 PPNCS	The following actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan will address how meadows and grasslands will be managed to improve biodiversity. Action 3.5: Public parks and amenity trails managed to maximise biodiversity enhancement Action 4.1: Sites of Local biodiversity importance mapped and protected.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">More wild flower meadowsEstablish an education programme on meadow biodiversityProtect manage and protect dry calcareous grasslands at Melville HeightsContinue to protect preserve and manage wildflower at Dukes Meadows and Bishops meadowsMaintain and manage ring road verges and banks to mitigate against the loss of natural wildflower meadow.			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Community, Engagement and Education	KK-C257-18 KK-C257-14 KK-C257-12 KK-C257-01	KK-C257-09 KK-C257-11 KK-C257-06 KK-C257-02 PPNCS	The theme of community, engagement and education was very strong from the community. Objective 6; Fosters Engagement, Education and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action. The variety of engagement and education opportunities will ensure equitable access to natural spaces and opportunities to engage will foster an inclusive approach to environmental stewardship and has 10 actions which addresses the concerns and issues raised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop programs to educate about biodiversity’s importance and how to contribute to its conservation.			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage citizens through education and volunteer programs to foster a sense of stewardship. Need for an accessible biodiversity education programme/ campaign highlighting daily actions we can all take to protect and promote biodiversity Human engagement with the river including kayaking and swimming will create nature lovers who will love and protect the beautiful resource. Provide a minimum of 5 Seomra Glas (outdoor classroom facilities) Redefining Nature: Discuss the “nature of nature” to explicitly include humans as an integral part of natural yet evolving ecosystems. Consider a new vertical (6th) under “pressure that impact biodiversity”: The emotional and experiential disconnect between people and landscapes - that makes us desensitised to shifting environmental baselines. Recommend promoting a nature-based and regenerative education to foster a deeper connection and proactive involvement in understanding, reassigning value and catalysing biodiversity conservation. Aim to create a resilient and engaged community that actively participates in protecting and enhancing our natural heritage. 		
Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Enhancement of Habitats	KK-C257-02 PPNCS	Enhancement of habitats were broad ranging however, many comments from the PPNCS focused on private land and how the community on their land parcels. A number of actions supports this movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance habitats on all land holdings in rural Kilkenny. Huge potential on large rural gardens. Work with churches, graveyards, schools, sports grounds, community lands to enhance habitats eg wetlands, hedgerows, properly managed meadows. 		<p>Action 1.3: Create a funding directory for biodiversity projects to encourage greater public participation.</p> <p>Action 1.9: Public organisations with properties increasing actions for biodiversity. Identifying and supporting project and providing advice.</p> <p>Action 6.1: Kilkenny Citizens be informed about biodiversity best practice by information dissemination and providing talks and workshops during Heritage and Biodiversity Week.</p>

Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
Community Gardens Community Orchards Community Nurseries	KK-C257-10 KK-C257-09	KK-C257-06 KK-C257-11 PPNCS	<p>The development of school gardens is outside the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan however, the Heritage in Schools Programme will be supported and other educational outreach initiatives will be rolled out to support biodiversity actions in schools.</p> <p>The development of community orchards, community gardens and allotments are not prioritised under this plan cycle, but biodiversity advice will be provided to the public involved in their set up and funding avenues for biodiversity actions will be promoted.</p> <p>Community tree nurseries are referenced in Action 6.6, while it is not envisaged that Kilkenny County Council will establish them, community supports will be provided where possible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Designate and develop community orchards.Promote school gardensHelp to identify and develop community gardens and allotmentsIncentivize the planting of native fruit trees in gardensThat Kilkenny CoCo establish & support a small number of native tree seed collection and propagation tree nurseries, where province is known.			
Theme	Submission Ref		Reply
All Ireland Pollinator Plan	KK-C257-10 KK-C257-09 KK-C257-12 KK-C257-13	KK-C257-05 PPNCS	<p>Kilkenny County Council signed up to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in 2019 and remains committed to the actions within it. There were numerous suggestions on different actions. There are a number of actions that reflect the All Ireland Pollinator Plan including:</p> <p>Action 2.1 Reduce glyphosate-based chemicals used on public ground.</p> <p>Action 6.3 Pollinator Actions Widespread throughout the communities. Support local initiatives that engage the public using themed resources from the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Renew and maintain pollinator habitats on Johns Quay.More pollinator friendly planting in public schemesFocus in the first instance on restoring insect populations, as this will support other fauna such as birds, fish and small animalsKilkenny County Council to promote “No Mow May”Select one local authority housing estate each year for biodiversity make overKilkenny County Council should support the NBDC programmes and support individual pollinator projects and implement pollinator projects on public landFacilitate and encourage growth of wildflowers and native trees on county and public owned land, e.g schools, hospitals, roadsides			

Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Research and Monitoring	KK-C257-18	<p>There are a number of actions that address the concerns and suggestions under this theme.</p> <p>Action 2.4: Policies will be informed by ecological research</p> <p>Actions 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 promote recording and increasing the capacity of citizen science in the county. Objective 6 has a number of actions to increase the awareness and education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in biodiversity research to inform policy decisions. Establish monitoring programs to track changes and effectiveness of interventions. Involve the community in data collection and monitoring to increase engagement and gather valuable data. Support citizen science programmes locally 		
Theme	Submission Ref	Reply
Collaborative Offers	KK-C257-14 KK-C257-1	<p>Kilkenny County Council welcomes the offers of collaborations. The Kilkenny Biodiversity Working Group has over 20 stakeholders and opportunities will be taken to widen collaborations beyond the working group over the course of the plan to achieve the actions listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Reptile Zoo currently supports and average of 20 interns per year. We see great value in extending this program to get interns involved with biodiversity action initiatives in Kilkenny. This could possibly be conducted in conjunction with NBDC. SOS Kilkenny's Bloom School of Horticulture offering to collaborate with KK Coco on future horticultural education offerings 		

Comments Received as Part of the Biodiversity Discussion Paper and Determined to be outside the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan

Ref No.	Comment	Reason to Determine Outside Scope
KK-C257-09	Bicycle lanes in urban areas to promote safe cycling	Infrastructure projects are outside the scope of the BAP
KK-C257-13	The government should reverse the decision to allow the import of non-native hawthorn to satisfy the demand by farmers under the ACRES scheme.	This is a national policy issue, outside the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan
KK-C257-11	Connecting the Abbey and the moat field to bridge street, another footbridge to connect the motte field to west str., in Callan.	Infrastructure projects are outside the scope of the BAP
KK-C257-11	River walk connection from the abbey meadow to the friary complex to clodeen lane and bridge street also mill street.	Infrastructure projects are outside the scope of the BAP
KK-C257-11	Council to buy the field next to the abbey meadow and the field next to the moat filled to extend both walks and manage them with micro forests, grass lands and riparian zones with slips to the river for anglers and swimmers, bird watching hides, bat boxes and swallow and swift boxes.	Capital projects are outside the scope of the BAP
KK-C257-10	Liaise and develop plans to optimise habitats at St Canice's South eastern health board.	Site Specific proposals are outside the scope of the Plan
KK-C257-10	Develop the River Bregagh on the Abbey Quarter	Site Specific proposals are outside the scope of the Plan
KK-C257-10	Liaise with landowners of Glendine Quarry to protect and preserve this important rewilded area	Site Specific proposals are outside the scope of the Plan
KK-C257-10	Develop the River Bregagh on the Abbey Quarter	Site Specific proposals are outside the scope of the Plan
KK-C257-06	Kilkenny's National Nature Reserves be reassessed and added to include Geological sites & a relevant other important habitats (these need not be held in State ownership).	This national re-assessment is outside the scope of the Biodiversity Action Plan.
KK-C257-03	Lobby central government for more financial assistance for farmers to transition to less intensive forms of farming, for example, financial support to reduce number of cattle, or to increase hedgerows and native trees on the land.	Lobbying for agricultural schemes is outside the remit of the BAP.
KK-C257-03	Increase the number of nature reserves. Currently, there are just four in Kilkenny under NPWS.	The designation of nature reserves is outside the remit of the BAP. Kilkenny County Council welcomes the announcement in October 2024 of a new Nature Reserve in north Kilkenny, Gales Hill.

Kilkenny's Draft Biodiversity Action Plan



Funded by

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Wildlife Animal Photography Front Cover Credit;

Danny Lahart Photography

All Photographs have been captured in Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Council extends gratitude to Mr Lahart for providing his biodiversity photography catalogue to illustrate the wide variety of species he has photographed over the years in Kilkenny.

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Foreword from Kilkenny County Council

Kilkenny County Council is proud to present the Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan, a strategic initiative to protect and restore our County's biodiversity. This plan underscores our commitment to preserving biodiversity and addressing the impacts of climate change.

Our vision is to foster a climate resilient natural environment in Kilkenny, where biodiversity flourishes, ecosystems are restored, enhanced and protected. By completing biodiversity best practise, the Council will improve ecological connectivity and empower local communities to connect with nature. Biodiversity policy will be embedded in all aspects of the Council operations and through educational and outreach initiatives, appropriate biodiversity actions will be encouraged with skills developed to contribute towards biodiversity recording and restoration.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who engaged in the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Individuals, community group representatives, youth groups and other stakeholders took time to contribute during the two consultation phases in 2024. Feedback from the Public Participation Network engagement workshop highlighted the passion for biodiversity held by the public, their concerns for its future and identified pathways to protect, enhance conserve and record biodiversity.

A special note of thanks to the Biodiversity Working Group, who have assembled to assist in working towards the actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan. Their support, expertise and collaboration have been invaluable in shaping a sustainable future for Kilkenny's biodiversity. We now invite everyone to join us in this crucial effort. Together, through collaboration and shared responsibility, we can ensure a vibrant future for Kilkenny's biodiversity.

Lar Power

Chief Executive, Kilkenny County Council

Michael McCarthy

Cathaoirleach, Kilkenny County Council

Foreword from The Heritage Council

We are pleased to introduce the **Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan (2025–2030)** — a milestone initiative that brings national biodiversity policy to life at the local level, rooted in the unique landscapes, ecological richness, and community spirit of Kilkenny.

The **Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme**, initiated by the Heritage Council in collaboration with the City and County Management Association, has been instrumental in ensuring that biodiversity becomes a central consideration in local governance. By providing resources, capacity-building, and collaborative structures, the programme empowers local authorities to respond effectively to the demands and opportunities of biodiversity conservation. In Kilkenny, this work builds on a solid foundation laid by the Heritage Office and the Heritage Forum, whose vision and commitment paved the way for the appointment of the County's first Biodiversity Officer in 2023. Kilkenny County Council's inclusive approach to heritage — recognising the interdependence of natural, built, and cultural assets — offers a compelling model. The partnership between the Heritage Forum and the Biodiversity Working Group reflects a deep understanding of how people connect with their surroundings, valuing them as vibrant expressions of identity, memory, and place.

The development and delivery of a county-level biodiversity action plan serves not only to conserve habitats and species but also to foster local engagement, pride, and climate resilience. The **Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan** captures this vision — informed by local voices, scientific insight, and strategic policy — and outlines a clear pathway for meaningful conservation over the years ahead. In the face of mounting environmental pressures, its implementation will stand as a testament to effective collaboration and shared commitment.

The Heritage Council is proud to support Kilkenny County Council, its Biodiversity Officer, and the communities of the county as they bring this vital and forward-looking plan to life.

Dr Martina Moloney
Chairperson, The Heritage Council

Virginia Teehan
Chief Executive, The Heritage Council

Vision Statement

Our vision is to foster a climate resilient natural environment in Kilkenny, where biodiversity flourishes, ecosystems are restored, enhanced and protected. By completing biodiversity best practise, the Council will improve ecological connectivity and empower local communities to connect with nature. Biodiversity policy will be embedded in all aspects of the Council operations and through educational and outreach initiatives, appropriate biodiversity actions will be encouraged with skills developed to contribute towards biodiversity recording and restoration.

1 Introduction

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of all life. Biodiversity includes all living things from microbes in the soil, small insects like ants, to large raptor birds like buzzards that circle the sky. It includes genetic diversity, that is essential for populations of different species to remain healthy and functional. Biodiversity is not restricted to rare or threatened species, it includes common plants and animals. Biodiversity also includes the range of places where plants and animals live; their habitats including old stone walls, hedgerows, amenity grass areas where we play, parks, woodlands, wetlands, rivers and streams.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Natural spaces that are rich in biodiversity provide a multitude of critically important services that enable human health and wellbeing, as well as providing the foundation for economic prosperity. These services are often referred to as ecosystem services.

Examples of ecosystem services include;

- **Provisioning Services:** timber, clean air, fresh water & medicinal compounds
- **Regulating Services:** soil fertility, pest control, flood mitigation, crop pollination, air purification, coastal defences, carbon storage & sequestration
- **Supporting Services:** Soil Creation, Nutrient Cycling, Photosynthesis, Water Cycle.
- **Cultural Services:** outdoor recreation areas

In Ireland, the value of different ecosystem services has been estimated by a number of different studies. The Pollival project¹ estimated the value of pollination to home-produced crops in Ireland was €20–59 million per year, while the ESManage project² estimated that, on average, Irish people would be willing to pay between €85 and €108 per household per year

¹ Assessing Market and Non-market Values of Pollination Services in Ireland (Pollival) EPA Research Report No.291

² ESManage Project: Irish Freshwater Resources and Assessment of Ecosystem Services Provision. EPA Research Report No. 207

to ensure our rivers were restored to a level compliant with the Water Framework Directive. Teagasc³ estimated the annual value of forest biodiversity at €68 million.

When ecosystems are degraded they stop providing these services, therefore nature restoration can be seen as an economic investment that yields a return. The EU estimates that for every €1 invested into nature restoration, it adds between €8 to €38 in benefits to society. This view is shared by the European Central Bank (ECB)⁴. Frank Elderson, member of the Executive Board of the ECB has stated that “Humanity needs nature to survive, and so do the economy and banks. The more species become extinct, the less diverse are the ecosystems on which we rely. This presents a growing financial risk that cannot be ignored”. The ECB found that nearly 75% of all bank loans in the euro area are to companies that are highly dependent on at least one ecosystem service. This means that these companies depend on ecosystem services to continue producing their goods or providing their services.

Ambition of the County Biodiversity Action Plan

Kilkenny’s County Biodiversity Action Plan is aligned to the National Biodiversity Action Plan, it aims to record, conserve and restore habitats. It has ambition to enhance ecological connectivity by the protection and where possible the restoration of ecological corridors.

Through the formulation of the Biodiversity Working Group, the Council facilitates the co-ordination between stakeholders to identify synergies, opportunities and create partnerships to achieve biodiversity enhancement projects throughout the county.

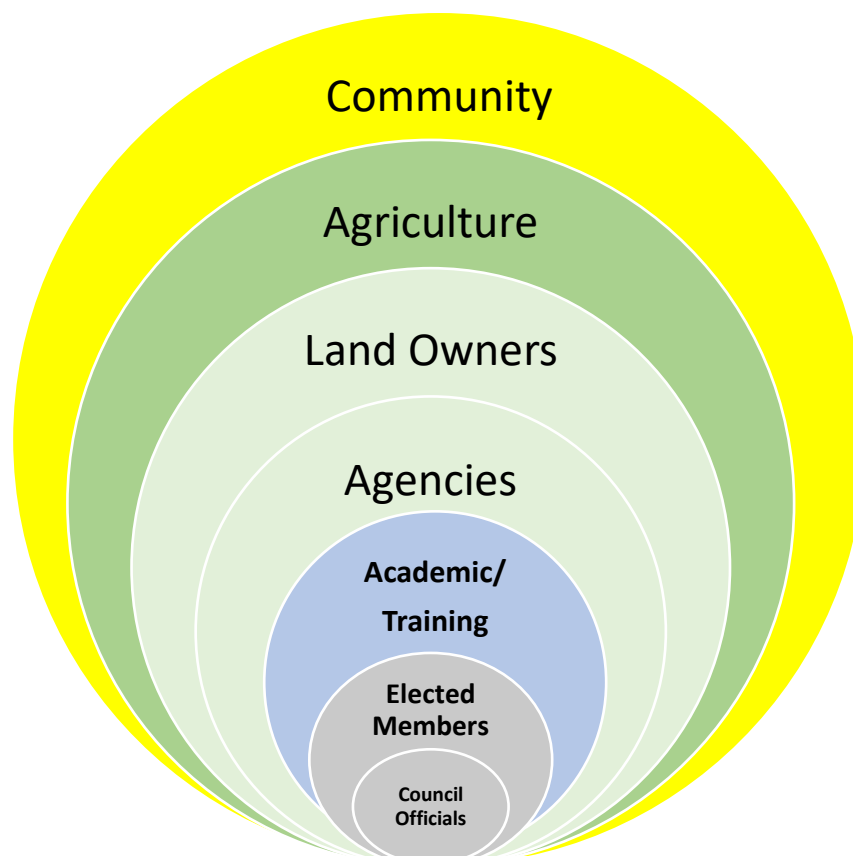
The Biodiversity Action Plan provides an opportunity for Kilkenny County Council to examine its own work practices and lead the way by developing demonstration projects on how to design nature inclusive housing estates, manage parks and open space for biodiversity, improve the water quality and improve habitat diversity on public grounds. The Biodiversity Action Plan will help us to integrate the protection of biodiversity in the Council’s day-to-day operations.

³ ECOVALUE: Valuing the Ecosystem Services of Irish Forests Teagasc Research project No. 6454

⁴ <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/blog/date/2023/html/ecb.blog230608~5cffb7c349.en.html>

The Biodiversity Working Group

Kilkenny County Council invited various interested parties to join the Kilkenny Biodiversity Working Group (BWG), and includes representatives from the farming sector, major land holders, state agencies, the academic sector and biodiversity specialists. The community sector was invited to express their interest to participate with a prerequisite that the group must have a county wide remit and an active interest in biodiversity. The Biodiversity Working Group opens up communications between the stakeholders and serves as a platform which facilitates collaboration, promotes best practice and builds awareness of biodiversity through networking and information-sharing. The group will promote the development of innovative and collaborative initiatives which restore, enhance and protect biodiversity. The group will bolster community participation through awareness raising, training and other relevant initiatives. The group will meet three times a year and share one meeting with the Heritage Forum annually.



The Biodiversity Working Group includes members from the Irish Farmers Association, the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association, an Inland Fisheries Officer, two Wildlife Rangers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, representatives from the Local Authorities

Water Office, OPW, Coillte, Nore Vision Catchment Trust, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, academic representatives from Kildalton College, The Acorn Project (Non-profit CLG) and The National Reptile Zoo. Community representation includes a representation from An Taisce (Kilkenny), One Future Carlow/Kilkenny, Birdwatch Ireland the Kilkenny Naturalist Field Club and a tidy towns forum representative. The business sector is represented as well as Council Officials.

Public Consultation Process of Developing a Biodiversity Action Plan

The general public were invited to give their views about what they considered to be biodiversity action priorities, areas of concerns and issues for the county. A discussion paper was developed to outline the threats to biodiversity locally. This pre-draft public consultation phase ran from March to June 2024. It included the following programme of events and engagements:

- Presentation at three municipal district meetings (March/April 2024)
- Public notice on the Council's website inviting online submissions on kilkennyconsult.ie (May 2024)
- Information stand at Kilkenny Bike Fest (May 2024)
- Biodiversity Discussion Paper Distribution at all National Biodiversity Week Events
- Presentation to Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN) Plenary (May 2024)
- Interviews on local radio KCLR 96FM ("Ours to Protect" 1st of May, 23rd and 6th of June 2024) and Kilkenny Live for Biodiversity Week, 23rd of May. Community Radio Kilkenny City, 22nd of April and 21st of May 2024)
- Various press releases and social media posts

The second public consultation phase is based on the draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030, the draft plan was published on kilkennyconsult.ie, public notices were issued in local papers, local radio and on social media to alert the public of the opportunity to review the draft plan. It was presented to the Council's Strategic Policy Committee 5 Community, Culture & Fire Services for feedback. The Biodiversity Action Plan forms the basis of an annual implementation programme.

Biodiversity Concerns Mapped from the Public Consultation 2023 Climate Action Plan Process

Kilkenny County Council is conscious that an extensive consultation was carried out as part of the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP) prior to the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. As many biodiversity related concerns were raised as part of this process, it was important to reconsider the biodiversity themed submissions of the CAP to capture the sentiment of the public. The image below captures a snap shot of the biodiversity concerns submitted as part of the CAP consultation process in 2023.



Biodiversity Concerns Raised as Part of the Submissions from the Biodiversity Discussion Paper (May 2024)

There were 16 submissions received from the Biodiversity Discussion Paper consultation, information was also collected from the PPN consultation workshop and from youth and elder's consultation outreach events. Concerns voiced as part of this public consultation process included the impact of water pollution on biodiversity, urban tree planting and aftercare and hedgerow management, these and other topics are captured as a snapshot.

of farming practices has reduced similar opportunities and experiences for the current generation.

A Chief Executive Report (Appendix 1) summaries all the submissions received as part of the public consultation processes and summaries of discussion items from outreach events.

2 Policy Context of Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan

International Policy

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also known as the Earth Summit, developed a new blueprint for international action on the environment. It recognized that human activity was changing and destroying the natural environment and that action was needed to halt the loss of biodiversity. The outcome of the summit was the UN convention of Biological Diversity, which is now been signed by over 170 countries, including Ireland. Subsequent to the Earth Summit, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration was launched in June 2021 with an aim to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean by 2030.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) to which Ireland is a signatory aims to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, addressing the dangerous decline in biodiversity. The framework also focuses on equitable sharing of benefits and closing the biodiversity finance gap to ensure effective implementation.

At an EU level, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 was launched in May 2020 to provide targets for all member states within the European Union to address the biodiversity crisis. This led to the development of the Land Restoration Law which was passed in European parliament in June 2024.

This law combines an overarching restoration objective for the long-term recovery of nature in the EU's land and sea areas with binding restoration targets for specific habitats and species. These measures should cover at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and ultimately all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

For Ireland to comply with the Law's ambitions, between 5,493 – 6,297km² of Irish land will be affected. This equates to between 7.8% – 8.9% of our land area. An important factor to consider is that Ireland is already trying to conserve 11,396 km² of land (13.5% of land area) designated as Natura 2000 sites under the Birds and Habitats Directives, though the conservation status of many of these sites is unfavourable. Therefore, proper rehabilitation, conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites offers a substantial opportunity to contribute to the goals of the Land Restoration Law by 2030. There are a total of 11 Natura

2000 sites in County Kilkenny. Each European State has two years to develop a Land Restoration Plan and a national participatory stakeholder engagement process is currently underway.

Alignment with the United National Sustainable Development Goals

Biodiversity recording, conservation and restoration aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, SDG 15 (Life on Land) is directly targeted to conserve terrestrial ecosystems, halt biodiversity loss, and protect natural habitats. Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan outlines objectives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, by recording, conserving and restoring biodiversity, facilitating collaboration, promoting best practice and supporting community participation through education and training.

SDG 13 (Climate Action) is addressed through the actions outlined in Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 that works on climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that benefit biodiversity. Protecting and restoring ecosystems can enhance resilience and reduce the impact of climate change.

Aligning with SDG 14 (Life Below Water) is integral to Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan, as with the extensive river basin catchments in the county, the improvement of water quality, restoration of riparian zones and assisting with the removal of fish barriers will greatly benefit the biodiversity.

Efforts to raise public awareness on biodiversity topics through local media and the organisation of training programmes and education workshops (SDG 4: Quality Education) will ensure communities are informed and encourage engagement in biodiversity actions.

Overall, Kilkenny's County Biodiversity Action Plan supports the SDGs, fostering a sustainable and resilient environment that benefits both nature and society.

Alignment with National Biodiversity Plan

The **4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023-2030** was launched in March 2024, outlining 194 actions to be completed over a seven-year period, working together to improve biodiversity governance and stewardship, recognise and value the relationships between nature and people, enhance the scientific evidence base to inform our decisions, bolster public awareness and engagement with communities, citizen scientists and the private sector. It aims to put more effort and investment into the protection, restoration and recovery of biodiversity and ecosystems across Ireland, embedding biodiversity considerations in decision-making and governance systems to achieve transformative change. The plan is broken down into 5 objectives;

Objective 1 Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity

Objective 2 Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs

Objective 3 Secure Nature's Contribution to People

Objective 4 Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity

Objective 5 Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 introduced a new public sector duty on biodiversity. The legislation provides that every public body, including Local Authorities are obliged to have regard to the objectives and targets in the National Biodiversity Action Plan with a statutory annual reporting requirement. Appendix 2 illustrates the National Biodiversity Action Plan actions relevant for Local Authorities.

Alignment with the National Water Action Plan for Ireland

The Water Action Plan 2024 launched in September, is Ireland's third River Basin Management Plan and it outlines the measures the Government and other sectors are taking to improve water quality in Ireland's groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters, and provide sustainable management of our water resources.

The Water Action Plan enhances and builds upon the work of the first and second cycle plans and builds on strengthening the incorporation of the integrated catchment management approach, improving the environmental ambition, along with improving the evidence base for targeting the right measures in the right place and securing dedicated resources.

Each local authority supported by LAWPRO will conduct assessments of other water bodies where the pressures are unknown (which are not within priority areas for action) to identify the specific issues and actions that are required to protect or restore water quality as necessary. The Water Action Plan specifically acknowledges the importance of the Local Authorities Biodiversity Officers and on the role Local Authorities can play in the mapping, control and eradication of invasive alien species.

Alignment with Regional Plans

Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Southern Regional Assembly is responsible for the preparation and implementation of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region of Ireland. The southern region covers 9 counties, including Kilkenny.

The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region. The RSES sets out a vision for the Southern Region to:

- Nurture all our places to realise their full potential
- Protect, and enhance our environment
- Successfully combat climate change

- Achieve economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all citizens
- Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations
- Make the Southern Region one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions

As part of the strategy's implementation, The Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Framework has been developed on behalf of the Southern Regional Assembly as part of the Interreg Europe Blue Green Cities Project. This Framework provides a resource for Local Authorities, decision makers and developers working in the Region to guide the implementation of BGI and NbS. It will enable the implementation of a network of nature-based interventions to solve local challenges in our settlements and the landscapes that they link. The Framework is the first of its kind at a regional level in Ireland.

Alignment with County Council Plans

The Kilkenny County Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 has been developed with consideration of the strategic vision and objectives of local authority plans and aims to deliver actions with stakeholders to record, conserve, preserve and restore habitats in County Kilkenny.

The County and City Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out Kilkenny County Council's policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County. It is prepared with regard to relevant national plans, policies and strategies which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development.

The strategic aim under Heritage and Culture in the current County Development Plan is to seek the protection and sustainable management of Kilkenny's heritage for the benefit of current and future generations; to encourage the collection of knowledge to inform its protection; and to promote access to, awareness of and enjoyment of heritage.

Objective 9A is to continue to identify and map habitats and green infrastructure of county importance, and raise awareness and understanding of the county's natural heritage and biodiversity. Objective 9B is to identify and map green infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan. The Biodiversity Action Plan provides actions to support these objectives.

Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028 is a framework to support sustainable growth of our local economy and communities. It acknowledges the urgency to implement positive climate and biodiversity actions, so that the benefits of success will be felt by all of our communities. It supports the growth of our local economy and our population but in tandem aims to ensure that this is achieved whilst protecting and improving our natural heritage and biodiversity.

Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029 sets out how the local authority can promote a range of mitigation, adaptation and other climate action measures, to help deliver the Government's National Climate Objective, to achieve, by no later than the end of

2050, a transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

Alignment with Other Plans

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 is a five-year road map that aims to help bees, other pollinating insects and our wider biodiversity. It encourages a better way of managing our whole landscape to permanently support our struggling biodiversity.

It lists 186 actions spread across six objectives, these objectives are;

1. Make farmland pollinator friendly
2. Make public land pollinator friendly
3. Make private land pollinator friendly
4. Develop an All-Ireland Honeybee Strategy
5. Conserve rare pollinators
6. Strategic coordination of the Plan

While the All Ireland Pollinator Plan is coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) the responsibility of action delivery is shared out between the main partner organisations.

Kilkenny County Council was the first Local Authority to sign a framework agreement with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in 2019, to formalise the Council's long-term commitment to support pollinators in County Kilkenny and subsequently reports annually to the National Biodiversity Data Centre on the Council's actions to protect pollinators. The Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed to incorporate actions to assist fulfil the objectives of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

The Heritage Council Strategic Plan advocates for conservation of our natural heritage while also encouraging vital new approaches as the impacts of climate change emerge. It stands on the front line of fighting the effects of climate change and the protection of biodiversity. The

Heritage Council was instrumental in establishing a Biodiversity Officer Network, with Biodiversity Officers employed by Local Authorities in partnership with the Heritage Council under the auspices of the Biodiversity Officer Programme, which was initiated in 2023.

The Biodiversity Action Plan reflects the 6 strategic pillars of the Heritage Council Strategic
These 6 pillars are;

1. Leadership and Stewardship
2. Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss
3. Research
4. Partnership
5. Communities
6. Education and Engagement

The Heritage Council supports the work of the Biodiversity Officer by providing professional training, provision of network supports and funding.

3 Kilkenny County Council's Legal Responsibilities for the Protection of Biodiversity

EU Habitat Directive

The EU Habitats Directive is the most important nature conservation legislation in Europe. This Directive aims to maintain and restore the favourable conservation status for habitats and species which are rare and threatened throughout Europe. The Directive requires member states to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for habitat types and species that require conservation as part of a Europe-wide 'coherent ecological network' called Natura 2000.

EU Birds Directive

The Birds Directive requires member states to designate Special Protection Areas (SPA) to protect the most important bird areas in the country.

EU Water Framework Directive

This Directive provides a framework for the protection and improvement of all our waterbodies - groundwater, rivers, estuaries and coastal waters with the aim of achieving 'good' status (both ecologically and chemically) by 2027.

Wildlife Acts

The Wildlife Acts (1976 to 2018) and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2020 are Ireland's primary national legislation for the protection of wild flora and fauna in Ireland. Under the Wildlife Act, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and Refuge for Fauna (RFF) conserve species and habitats of national importance.

Flora Protection Order, 2022

The current list of plant species protected in Ireland is set out in the Flora Protection Order, 2022. Under the Flora Protection Order it is illegal to cut, uproot or damage the listed species in any way, or to offer them for sale. This prohibition extends to the taking or sale of seed. In addition, it is illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This

protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation.

Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2006

Kilkenny County Council has a central role and responsibility in protecting the natural environment. This is achieved by determining policies for its administrative area through the preparation of a Development Plan and for applying that policy, through planning control. Kilkenny County Council has a mandatory obligation to consider biodiversity when preparing plans or proposals for development.

4 Kilkenny's Designated Sites for Nature Protection

Nature 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 is a network of protected areas across the European Union, established to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The network is made up of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, respectively. Conservation efforts often include habitat management, monitoring of species, and measures to reduce impacts from human activities, their management and is the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Several areas in Kilkenny are designated for conservation. These sites not only contribute to the biodiversity of Kilkenny but also play a crucial role in the broader ecological network across Europe.

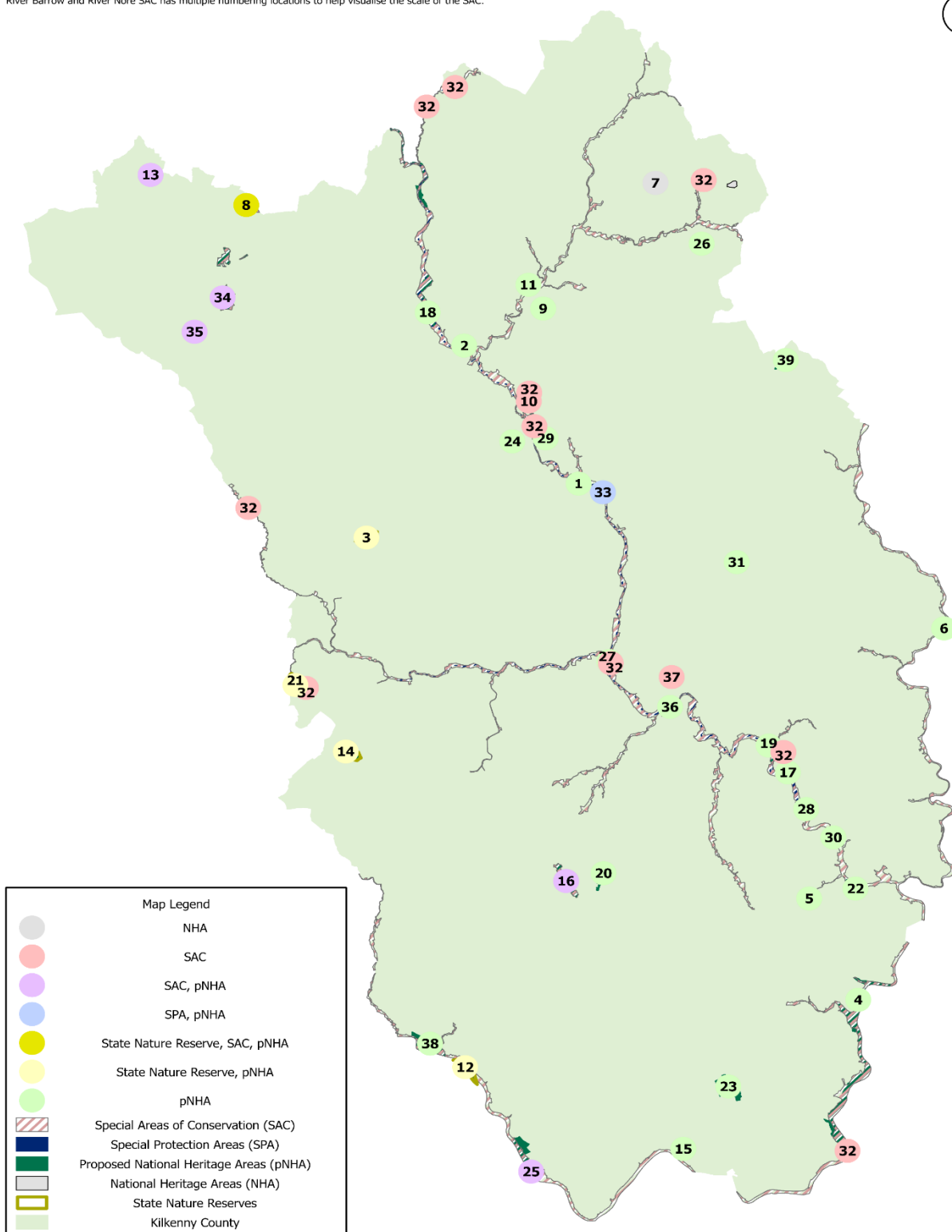
Table 4.1 List of Kilkenny SAC's, SPA's and NHA
(Source; <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>)

Map Number	Name	NPWS Site ID Number
8	Cullahill Mountain	SAC (000831)
13	Galmoy Fen	SAC (001858)
16	Hugginstown Fen	SAC (000404)
25	Lower River Suir	SAC (002137)
32	River Barrow and River Nore	SAC (002162/000698)
33	River Nore	SPA (004233)
34	Spahill and Clomantagh Hill	SAC (000849)
35	The Loughans (Turlough)	SAC (000407)
37	Thomastown Quarry	SAC (002252)
7	Coan Bog	NHA (002382)

Map 4.1 County Kilkenny's Designated Site Distribution

Please Note:

All datasets used in this map are copyright of the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS).
River Barrow and River Nore SAC has multiple numbering locations to help visualise the scale of the SAC.



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Other Designations

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995. These areas have not been statutorily proposed or designated. The sites are of significance for wildlife and habitats. All pNHA's are described in the County Development Plan and afford local protection. The table below lists sites which have pNHA status and no other protection status.

Table 4.2 List of Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Map Number	Name	NPWS Site ID Number
1	Archersgrove	002051
2	Ardaloo Fen	00821
3	Ballykeefe Woodland	000400
4	Barrow River Estuary	000698
5	Brownstown Wood	000827
6	Clohastia	000830
9	Dunmore Cave	000401
10	Dunmore Complex	001859
11	Esker Pits	000832
15	Grannyferry	000833
17	Ice House near Inistioge	002094
18	Inchbeg	000836
19	Inistioge	000837
20	Kilkeasy Bog	000839
22	Kylecorragh Wood	000842
23	Lough Cullin	000406
24	Lough Macask	001914
26	Mothel Church Coolcullen	000408
27	Mount Juliet	000843
28	Murphy's of the River	000844
29	Newpark Marsh	000845

Map Number	Name	NPWS Site ID Number
30	Rathsnagadan Wood	000409
31	Red Bog Dungarvan	000846
36	Thomastown	000410
38	Tibberaghny Marshes	000411
39	Whitehall Quarries	000855

State Nature Reserves, there are four in Kilkenny which have pNHA status but are owned and managed by the state, these are;

Map Number	Name	NPWS Site ID Number
12	Fiddown Island	000402
14	Garryrickin Nature Reserve	000833
21	Kyleadohir Wood Nature Reserve	000405
3	Ballykeefe Woodland	000400

A 5th nature reserve was announced during the preparation of this Plan, Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan announced his intention in October 2024 to purchase 165 acres of lands within and adjacent to the Cullahill Mountain Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in Kilkenny, and to designate it as Gale's Hill Nature Reserve.

Wildlife Sanctuaries are areas excluded from the 'Open Season Order' so that game birds can rest and feed undisturbed. Shooting of game birds is not allowed in these sanctuaries. There are two in the county;

- River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162/000698)
- Lough Cullin (pNHA 406)

Recreational Nature Sites

There are a number of recreational parks in the County managed by different stakeholders which encourage nature engagement.

- **Kilkenny Castle Park:** The parklands surrounding Kilkenny Castle provide habitats for various flora and fauna, offering a green space within the urban environment and is managed by the OPW.
- **Castlecomer Demesne:** Contains a mix of native and non-native woodland species, providing habitat for woodland creatures and plant species, this site is owned by Coillte and managed by the Castlecomer Discovery Park, a not for profit social enterprise.
- **Coillte Managed Forests** include Castlemorris, Jenkinstown Park and Coill an Fhailtaigh, Kilkenny's Millennium Forest. The Millennium Forest consists of about 90 hectares with 6 hectares of oak woodlands over 100 years old with the remainder replanted with sessile oak, ash, birch, cherry and spindle as part of the Millennium forest project.
- **Kilkenny County Council's** Dunmore Countryside Park opened in 2022 and is sited on a former landfill. Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum, located near Inistioge is home to a mix of formal and informal gardens and incorporates adjacent Coillte forestry.

5 Biodiversity in Kilkenny

Kilkenny is fortunate to have a wide variety of habitats, from the remnants of midland raised bogs in the northwest corner to the tidal waters of Belview and Snowhill in the southeast. Travel through the clayey uplands of the Castlecomer Plateau, the limestone lowlands of Freshford or Kells, the flagstone Slieve Ardagh hills and the Old Red Sandstone of Tory Hill and Windgap and you will meet of an abundance of different wild communities, reduced in many places by agriculture or forestry but seldom obliterated. Even in a coniferous wood or farmland there will be path edges or hedgerows where wild flora and fauna hangs on and can expand again if given the chance. However, size is important, as tiny patches of habitat will not maintain their full complement of species without connecting corridors to link with others.

River Valleys

River valleys are the primary corridors and well used by migrating birds such as sand martins and curlews. The Nore Valley shows a truly diverse mix of habitats – the permanent channel, seasonal wetlands on the floodplain, occasional springs and wet willow woods at the edges and drier forests as the valley becomes deeper south of Kilkenny City. At first these are derived from planting, with beech and hornbeam as well as oak. South of Thomastown, acid rocks dictate that oak survives the best and dominates such woods as Brownsbarn and Kylecorragh. The River Nore is one of the few Irish rivers that has not been significantly deepened so the floodplain around Threecastles shows the natural processes of water storage in action during floods, bringing in golden plovers in winter and a rich flora in summer.

The Kilkenny section of the River Barrow offers the same acid woodland but includes a new habitat in the former sand quarry at Cloghastia, a characteristic deposit of many of the south eastern river valleys in Ireland, which were brought down during glacial melt.

INSERT Photograph No. 1;

The River Nore downstream of Inistioge (Photography Credit: Vicky's Photography)

Wetlands

Rivers are of course wetlands but there are also stand-alone wetlands such as fens and bogs which feed streams rather than receive incoming water. Hugginstown fen is one such, on the watershed between the Little Arrigle and the Black Water. Here an extensive reed bed, multiple sedges and flowering plants create a swampy habitat rich in unusual plants and insects. Other, smaller fens occur in the north of the County, at Lismaine, Castlemarket and Galmoy.

The raised bogs west of Johnstown are mostly now cutover or drained so that the peatland communities are degraded. However, water levels are being let rise again, giving rise to new habitats and species, sometimes one or two in exceptional abundance.

One of the most significant of wetlands in Kilkenny is Lough Cullin the only natural occurring lake in county, also locally known as the Loughans, is a significant habitat, a large turlough which floods in winter as the water table rises but then dries out in spring. Grazed, and apparently of grass, its vegetation is actually highly diverse with carpets of mint and meadow-rue, clovers and daisies. When flooded it attracts lapwing and sometimes wild swans.

Estuarine Habitats

Kilkenny has a larger flora than many other counties of comparable size and one of the reasons for this is the saline and flooding influence of the tide which reaches upstream to Inistioge and Piltown. The muddy reedbeds, winding drainage channels and pools hold particular species adapted to daily exposure and submergence and include sea aster and scurvy grass in the saline parts. They also provide habitats for wintering shorebirds and waders.

A related habitat is the wet willow wood on Fiddown Island, regularly flooded but supporting tall willows of at least four species and rampant herb growth.

Woodlands

Over 100 woods were identified by a survey of County Kilkenny in 1996 but the majority were planted stands, less likely to conceal significant biodiversity than natural or long-standing woods where nutrient-cycling has settled down and the vigour of ivy and brambles is somewhat reduced. The woodlands above Freshford on the Slieve Ardagh escarpment are prime examples. Here, although the oaks were felled sometime in the early 1900's, they have re-sprouted to replace the former forest while maintaining the ground flora and its associated organisms. Where woodlands have existed a long time the humus accumulates deeply on the floor benefitting the fungal flora and, thereby, the growth of the trees themselves. The softness of the ground below the deciduous stands in Woodstock are remarkable and reflected in a rich fungal flora.

Small isolated woodlands also occur on poorly-drained soils in the deep valleys of the Castlecomer plateau and around springs in the Arrigle or Little Arrigle valleys. Trees such as willows and sometimes hazels and rowan are small in stature but support a broad selection of plants and animals not seen in the adjacent fields. The contrast is immediate; from a group of 10 plant species in the field one compared to 60 species within the woodlands with mosses and ferns in abundance.

Planted forests cover 10% of County Kilkenny and are major feature of the landscape. The great majority are coniferous and many old ones replaced broad-leaved stands when they were first planted. Today some are planted on farmland of low quality for agriculture but high for biodiversity. At the outset tree planting creates the equivalent of scrub – low bushy vegetation with a community of birds and animals which is rich in species. Once canopy closure occurs, especially in conifer stands, life becomes restricted to the foliage above. While there are always some organisms in abundance, they are very limited in variety for many years until felling or natural treefall creates differences in microhabitat.

Photo 3 Insert

Rural Kilkenny with Stands of Coniferous Forests. Photography Credit: Vicky's Photography

Uplands

Hilly areas, where climate and thin soils are the dominant factors, create upland communities of one sort or another. To some extent they are found on the tops of the Slieve Ardagh Hills and on Coppengagh but it is really in the south of the County that they become prominent. The granite Brandon Hill is the highest summit with dry heathery slopes. From there to the southwest the sandstone hills around Mullinavat and westwards to Corbally Hill and Windgap provide fragments of upland communities, at the edges of the widespread coniferous woods. Heather and autumn gorse make for a particular display in late summer.

Insert Photo No. 2

Tory Hill, Mullinavat Photography Credit: Vicky's Photography

The limestone hills overlooking the M7 from Spahill to Cullahill are a special case and create some of the most species-rich communities anywhere in the County. Where the flagstones have been eroded away, limestone is revealed beneath and, just as in the Burren, it supports an array of flowering plants second to none. Grasses are reduced by the low nutrient conditions and herb species flourish with knock-on benefits for butterflies and other insects. The community can be called limestone grassland and appears again in some abandoned sand quarries where a lack of 'restoration' promotes the natural development of a diverse flora with many of the same species. Dunmore and Esker, near Lisnafunshin, would be prime examples, valuable for their biodiversity alone.

Farmland & Grassland

Grassland is not a natural community as it depends on mowing or grazing to prevent the invasion of woody species – and subsequently woodland. However, grazing has been so widespread for so long that an associated community of plants and animals has developed to the benefit of many insects. The only semi-natural grassland in the County is probably on the limestone hills just described. Second best are hayfields which are cut late in the year and support a lot of clover and knapweed and sometimes the partly parasitic yellow rattle and eyebright. Wet grasslands on the uplands can also be quite rich in species but where management dictates a regime of fertilising and early cutting, as in much of the County, the diversity of plants plummets and the stand become dominated by ryegrass. It is no

exaggeration to describe such fields as green deserts as far as biodiversity is concerned. Only on the field margins or under electric fences can other species survive and it is here that roadsides and verges become the main living area for wildlife. Hedgerows provide food, shelter, corridors of movement, nest and hibernation sites for many of our native flora and fauna. Their flora provides pollen and nectar for a myriad of insects. When autumn comes, hedgerows provide a bountiful larder of fruit, nuts and berries for wild birds, mammals and a host of other small creatures. Ground flora give cover for small mammals such as wood mice and pygmy shrews and food and cover for invertebrates.

Urban Environments

All species, including humans, multiply until their resources run out so there is pressure to increase and colonise every bit of suitable habitat, whether this is a vertical wall or a suburban garden. Swallows and swifts have taken to nesting in buildings since their previous habitats of hollow trees or cliffs are in short supply. Barn owls go for castles or farmyards while jackdaws are suited to chimneys. The blackbird and woodpigeon were once shy woodland species but now are seen everywhere as gardens provide food and nest sites. Gardens in fact support a higher density of birds than most natural habitats, helped by winter feeding. Even quite rare species like blackcaps and woodpeckers take artificial food.

Insert Photo 7

Starling feeding at a Bird Feeder in Kilkenny City Photography Credit; Danny Lahart Photography

County Kilkenny's range of habitats shows there is considerable variety in its biodiversity and fully justifies keeping or improving what remains. This is the purpose of the Biodiversity Plan.

6 Biodiversity Recording in Kilkenny

Biodiversity recording is being completed by numerous organisations on a national, regional and local level. Kilkenny County Council has commissioned specific studies on habitats and protected species and acknowledges that there is a huge volume of biodiversity collected and recorded by different organisations.

Kilkenny County Council Commissioned Surveys

Kilkenny County Council has directly commissioned studies on different aspects of biodiversity under the Heritage Office programme. The following provide invaluable baselines and a review of studies complete can assist identifying where data gaps occur and can be addressed in the future.

1. Kilkenny Barn Owl Survey (2021)
2. Kilkenny Swift Survey (2021)
3. Kilkenny Night Jar Survey (2024)
4. Recording Irish Mayfly – Establishing Conservation Status (2024/25)
5. County Wetland Survey (2020)
6. Wetland Field Survey (2021)
7. Survey of Wall Flora in County Kilkenny (2009)
8. Habitat Survey and Mapping of Kilkenny City (2010)
9. Landscape Conservation for Irish Bats. Report for Co. Kilkenny (2012)
10. Habitat Survey and Green Infrastructure Mapping of Kilkenny City (2010)
11. Habitat Survey and Green Infrastructure Mapping (2010)
Gowran, Fiddown, Piltown, Johnstown, Urlingford, Ballyragget, Ballyhale, Mooncoin,
and Knocktopher
12. Geological Audit of County Kilkenny (2007 & 2012)

Other Known Audits of Kilkenny's Natural Heritage

1. Newpark Marsh pNHA Management Strategy (2005)
2. Newpark Marsh. Recommendations for its future Management. 2005
3. Survey of Woodlands in County Kilkenny (Harris, Maryann. 1996)

4. Survey of Mature Trees in Kilkenny City & Environs (Fennell, A. 2007)
5. Native Woodland Survey (NPWS, 1996)
6. Examination of bridges on the Barrow for roosting bats (2003)
7. Report on the Dirty Dozen non-native invasive species. Co. Kilkenny (2010)
8. The Tree Register of Ireland. Kilkenny (2006)

Other Sources of Biodiversity Data

National Biodiversity Data Centre

The main role of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, is to acquire, collate, manage, validate and make available, data in respect of Ireland's biodiversity in order to document wildlife resources and monitor and record changes over time. It supports national initiatives to maintain and enhance biodiversity, including recording of species and habitat information relating to the terrestrial, freshwater, marine, rivers and wetland environments. Their data portal is publicly accessible via <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>.

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

Their mission is to advance the study, understanding and enjoyment of wild plants and support their conservation. This is achieved by supporting botanists, supporting research and through their network of county recorders. The BSBI produce national Atlases and County Floras of plants.

National Parks and Wildlife

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is part of the Heritage Division of the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. The role of National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is:

- To secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems to maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland.
- To designate and advise on the protection of habitats and species identified for nature conservation

- To make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of National and EU legislation and policies for nature conservation and biodiversity
- To manage, maintain and develop State-owned National Parks and Nature Reserves.
- To promote awareness of natural heritage and biodiversity issues through education, outreach to schools and engaging with stakeholders.

NPWS has an extensive mapping system, which is publicly accessible via; <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data>.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Inland Fishers Ireland's principal function is to protect, manage and conserve Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources. Inland Fisheries Ireland has been assigned the responsibility of delivering the fish monitoring requirements for the Water Framework Directive (WFD) by the EPA. They are also responsible for the development of the National Barriers Programme as river fragmentation is the breaking up of a river's continual flow from source to the sea. It is one of the greatest global threats to freshwater ecosystems because it interrupts fish migration, blocks the movement of fish and other animals within the channel, alters the flow of sediment throughout the channel, affects habitat diversity and impacts overall biodiversity. The programme deals with issues related to barriers and works to reduce their impact, within the context of the Water Framework Directive.

Environment Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA aims to protect, improve and restore our environment through regulation, scientific knowledge and working with others. It plays a large role in the monitoring of water quality. It manages www.catchment.ie which provides public access to water quality data which is collected under the requirements of Water Framework Directive.

7 Threats to Biodiversity in Kilkenny

Despite its rich natural heritage, Kilkenny faces challenges such as habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, invasive species and the impacts of climate change. Intensive agriculture, urban development and human led disturbance pose significant threats to biodiversity.

Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

The Kilkenny Wetland Survey completed in 2020, identified a number of threats. Wetlands, historically regarded as less productive than adjacent agricultural land is frequently impacted by measures to improve the agricultural productivity by drainage or infilling. This can lead to damaged habitats and fragmentation. Habitat loss and the reduction in habitat quality was identified in the National Biodiversity Plan 2023-2030 as a serious threat to biodiversity.

The countryside has been continually modified by human activity. The development of houses to cater for an expanding population, roads and other infrastructure projects to support the movement of people have increased habitat loss and habitat fragmentation. As habitats shrink and become fragmented, they support a smaller diversity of species and it leads to a loss of connection and/or increasing distance between patches. This has negative consequences for the ability of plants and animals to move through the landscape and to sustain viable populations.

Insert Photo 4;

Construction Development on the Outskirts of Kilkenny City. Photography Credit: Vicky's Photography

Recent BirdWatch Ireland surveys focusing on the Kilkenny populations of swifts and barn owls identified the safeguard of nesting sites as critical to support populations and to reverse population declines. These surveys inform what is required to safeguard specific species and also provides insight into the types of enhancement habitat measures required to deliver significant benefits for bird populations and other wildlife. Habitat creation and species-specific safe guarding measures are required to be integrated into appropriate policies, to ensure biodiversity measures are effectively implemented throughout the county.

Climate Change

The biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis are intertwined. The Future Climate Impacts Assessment carried out as part of the Kilkenny's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 identified key climate hazards for county to be river flooding, extreme precipitation and drought. These climate hazards could greatly impact the biodiversity of Kilkenny. Extreme rainfall events can physically degrade habitats, washing nutrients into local streams and rivers, eroding river banks and introducing sediment into the water column. The Inland Fisheries Ireland's Climate Change Mitigation Research Programme Annual Report 2021 indicated climate change is one of the greatest current and future threats facing the wider aquatic environment and fish populations. It cites altered flow regimes, increases in water temperature (and resulting decrease in oxygen concentration) and loss of habitat is likely to have serious affect on freshwater fish species and other aquatic life.

Insert Photo 8 Inistioge Under Water

Inistioge Winter Flooding. Photography Credit: Harry Reid Photography

Climate change has resulted in shifts in the timing of spring phenological events, such as leaf unfolding, flowering, leaf decay, bird migration and insect activity. Many species are interdependent and a mis-match of seasonal timing may for example lead a bumblebee to emerge from hibernation before there is enough of a food source available for its survival, therefore phenology is another pressure on biodiversity. Research in UCC's PhenoClimate Impact of Climate Change on Phenology in Ireland confirmed shifts in the timing of spring phenological events. Nature can be a solution in the fight against climate change. Nature-based solutions, such as protecting wetlands, increased care and management of hedgerows and woodland restoration will be essential for emission reduction and climate adaptation. Nature Based Solutions can be integrated planning and design of infrastructure projects which will assist in adaptation of climate change, reducing the impact of severe climate events and also potentially creating new habitats.

Alien Invasive Species

Alien invasive species are plants or animals that have been introduced in Ireland outside their natural range and outcompete naturally occurring native species. In Kilkenny's Nore Catchment there is an annual effort by local communities to control of Himalayan Balsam thanks to the support of the Nore River Catchment Trust. However locations without control efforts continue to produce seed that can lead of the establishment of plants downstream, therefore an ongoing strategic removal approach is required to contain this plant species in the county.

Insert Photo 5; Volunteers by River Nore

Nore River Catchment Trust Volunteers Removing Himalayan Balsam. Photo Credit; Nore River Catchment

Japanese Knotweed is managed on public land by Kilkenny County Council, however ongoing surveying and management plans are required to eradicate fully. The movement of soil and stones associated with the construction industry has potential to spread Japanese knotweed and other invasive species if proper controls and measures are not put in place. Rhododendron Ponticum and Cherry Laurel cast a dense shade in some woodlands, preventing ground flora from establishing and new tree saplings emerging. An eradication programme is in place in Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum to increase the biodiversity of the woodlands near Inistioge. There are dense stands of Rhododendron Ponticum and Cherry Laurel throughout the county which if controlled would boost the biodiversity value of habitats. Emerging invasive species and plant pathogens are increasing their range across Europe due to climate change. It is imperative that all agencies must engage with the Shared Island Biosecurity and Invasive Species Stakeholder Forum to stay informed.

Water Pollution

The river catchments within County Kilkenny are continually monitored under the Water Framework Directive. Results from the 2010-2015 monitoring period indicated that 56% of rivers in Kilkenny achieved good water quality status, 29% of rivers were of moderate quality and 15% received a poor rating. In comparison, results from the 2016-2021 monitoring period indicated 5% of waterbodies receiving a high-water quality, 35% of rivers were good water

quality and 44% of rivers achieved moderate water quality rating. 1% of rivers in the county in the last monitoring period received a rating of bad water quality. The EPA's State of the Environment Report (2024) indicated that water quality remains an ongoing concern, summarising that some of our current land use practices such as agriculture, forestry and urbanisation are exerting pressures on water quality that show no immediate signs of abating.

Light Pollution

Light pollution from artificial light has negative impacts on biodiversity. Many animals have evolved to be nocturnal such as moths, bats, and owls. They hunt or move around under the cover of complete darkness, with only the light from the moon or stars to guide their flight. Lighting can impact on commuting routes and foraging areas and disturb bats' feeding behaviour. Artificial lighting is a pollution concern which needs to be addressed by all sectors from the use of ornamental solar garden lights to public lighting.

Insert Photo 6

Example of Downwards Lighting in a Public Space in Kilkenny City (Photo Credit; Kilkenny Coco)

Recreation Pressures

Since the Covid 19 epidemic, a renewed appreciation of nature led to a greater uptake in outdoor activities. The Central Statistics Office Pulse Survey "Our Lives Outdoors: Spending Time Outdoors, 2022⁵" highlighted that the most popular outdoor new activities included hill walking, hiking and sea swimming. Increased participation in outdoor activities can bring pressures with potential impacts on wildlife, habitats, farming and sensitive ecosystems such as wetlands and rivers. Careful management is needed to mitigate the potential damage from increased human activity on habitats, such as trampling impacts, littering, the increased threats of fires from the inappropriate use of disposable BBQs' and wildlife disturbance by dogs off leads. In some instances, a nature first policy may be more appropriate for sensitive habitats and eco-systems, acknowledging that these habitats may benefit more from conservation measures than being publicly accessible.

⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/social/pulsesurvey-ourlivesoutdoors/>

8 Biodiversity Objectives and Actions

The Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the actions required to be achieved over the next five years in order to protect, record, conserve and restore biodiversity. There are six broad objectives that present different targets that are matched with actions and key performance indicators. The targets have been informed by the feedback received from the public consultation of the Biodiversity Discussion Paper, input from the Biodiversity Working Group, discussions with council officials and their formation has been guided by scientific data available and gaps that have been identified. Some themes are broad in nature to allow for projects to develop as project partners and funding streams are identified during the lifetime of the plan.

The objectives are:

- 1. Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level**
- 2. Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations**
- 3. Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity**
- 4. Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Evidence based Data-Driven Management Decisions**
- 5. Record and Monitor Protected Species**
- 6. Foster Engagement, Education and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action**

Proposed actions are linked with the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), denoted in the table as; **NBAP Action No.** Where an action is not directly linked to the NBAP, other national policy documents have been referenced for example, the Water Action Plan 2024. In the absence of a direct policy link, the proposed action is linked back to the recommendations within the Report of the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss (March 2023).

The implementation of the Action Plan will require a collective effort to protect, record, conserve and restore biodiversity requiring stakeholder collaboration, public participation and some changes in council operations. Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan is a plan

developed by the people, to work as a collective to halt biodiversity loss, working towards a rich biodiverse county, supporting the restoration of ecological connectivity by using scientific recording to inform action.

Reporting and Monitoring of the Plan's Progress

The progress of the Biodiversity Action Plan will be reported to the Council's Chief Executive and elected members through the monthly Chief Executive Report. An annual progress report will be prepared and presented to the Biodiversity Working Group, and various Strategic Policy Committees and summarised in Kilkenny County Council's annual report.

The progress of the Biodiversity Action Plan will be included Kilkenny County Council's annual submission under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 which requires all public bodies to submit a **Biodiversity Duty Feedback Report** on its performance of its commitment under the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030.

Kilkenny County Council will be the coordinating body overseeing the implementation of Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan. The Biodiversity Officer shall be the coordinator of the Kilkenny Biodiversity Working Group, with this group meeting three times a year and share one meeting with the Heritage Forum.

The Biodiversity Working Group opens up communications between the stakeholders and serve as a platform which facilitates collaboration, promotes best practice and builds awareness of biodiversity through networking and information-sharing. The group will promote the development of innovative and collaborative initiatives which restore, enhance and protect biodiversity. The group will bolster community participation through awareness raising, training and other engagement initiatives. Regular updates promoting biodiversity actions being undertaken will be issued to local media through the Biodiversity Working Group.

Kilkenny's Draft Biodiversity Action Plan

Table of Objectives and Actions



Objective 1: Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level

The establishment of the Biodiversity Working Group provides a platform for stakeholders to share best practice and inform participants of their projects and developments within their areas of interest. It will also provide opportunities to identify collaboration projects and drive the biodiversity agenda throughout the county. They will be the county champions. Kilkenny County Council will highlight positive actions for biodiversity and advocate for the recording of species as well as conservation and restoration of habitats to support a vibrant eco-system. A leadership role must be taken by council officials and stakeholders to place biodiversity at the top of the agenda across all sectors.

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
1.1	Capacity Building	A Biodiversity Working Group established to champion biodiversity.	Meet 3 times a year and one joint meeting with the Heritage Forum. The Chief Executive and elected members invited to a special meeting to inform them of issues and opportunities present in Kilkenny	Number of Meetings Retention of Biodiversity Officer over the life time of the plan	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1B9
1.2		A better understanding of biodiversity created across the organisation.	Create biodiversity learning opportunities for staff	No. of staff trained No. of training events	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1B3
1.3		Funding and opportunities for biodiversity themed projects promoted across sectors in Kilkenny	Create a directory for funding sources and promote opportunities locally	Creation of Biodiversity Themed Funding Directory	Biodiversity Working Group	The Citizen Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss – Recommendation on Supporting Communities

NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
1.4	Capacity Building	Transparent reporting of biodiversity complaints captured by Kilkenny County Council	Devise and activate a system to capture data on biodiversity-based complaints Report published annually	System activated	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1A8
1.5	Nature Based solutions (NBS)	NBS best practice integrated into all Council design projects.	Showcase Council's NBS projects as best practice	No. of NBS integrated into Council Projects	Kilkenny Coco	NBAP Action No. 2C7
1.6		A criterion to prioritise Kilkenny County Council owned sites for biodiversity enhancement	Devise a Criteria Audit of Council properties to determine site suitability for biodiversity enhancement	No. of sites audited	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1D5
1.7	Academic Networks	Local training and education providers providing biodiversity training opportunities locally	Assess opportunities with local training and education providers to support biodiversity education and boost biodiversity recording capacity.	No. of meeting with educational stakeholders No. of new courses provided	Biodiversity Working Group	NBAP Action No. 4C4

NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
1.8	Participatory Processes	A biodiversity online-platform signposting locations of data resources and provide a depository for county studies	<p>Audit resources on Kilkenny Heritage.ie</p> <p>Develop a strategy to improve access to biodiversity mapping and studies.</p> <p>Launch New Platform</p>	Platform Launched	Kk Coco Heritage Team	NBAP Action No. 4B7
1.9	Participatory Processes	Public organisations with properties increasing actions for biodiversity enhancement	<p>Identify potential public body projects.</p> <p>Offer support and advice to ensure successful delivery.</p>	No. of projects completed	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1D5

Objective 2: Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations

Objective 2 and 3 are intertwined and must be considered collectively as Council operations directly impacts on public amenity space. Kilkenny County Council formalised their commitment to support pollinators by becoming the first formal Local Authority partner of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in 2019. Ecological connectivity and habitat enrichments is key to further safeguard biodiversity. Council lands may assist in connecting habitats and opportunities may present for habitat restoration under the Nature Restoration Law.

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
2.1	Affecting system level change	Reduce glyphosate-based chemicals used by Kilkenny County Council	Calculate usage annually Determine reduction pathway	Annual litres used No. of pilots to determine alternative management control	KKCoco Parks	NBAP Action No. 2B6/2B13
2.2	Research & Training	Alien Invasive Species on public land mapped	Co-ordinate an internal mapping function to identify and prioritise sites for treatment	Launch of staff mapping system	KKCoco Parks	NBAP Action No. 2H2
2.3		Protection of hedgerows	Implement training and build capacity in hedgerow maintenance, retention and translocation Develop a viable approach to hedgerow and tree maintenance regimes, that prevents no unnecessary or undue damage to biodiversity, whilst ensuring adequate road safety that is integrated and integral to the tendering process for such services. Provide guidance to staff and landowners on retention, translocation methods and cutting maintenance of hedgerows.	No. of training events and promotions	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1B3

2.4	Policy	Policies, informed by ecological research to retain and restore ecological corridors in place	Draft policies based on advancing ecological surveys and studies to inform future planning and development.	No. of policies brought to the SPC for consideration per annum No. of meetings with planning.	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 3C1
2.5	Bridge Maintenance	County Council bridge maintenance projects provide biodiversity enhancements	Audit bridges for sensitive species. Identify biodiversity opportunities during bridge maintenance works with appropriate stakeholders, including IFI, BCI and BWI.	No. of actions	Coco Bridge Maintenance Team	NBAP Action No. 2D21

Objective 3: Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity

Objective 2 and 3 are intertwined. Mapping of landscape features and auditing and public space is critical to determine suitability and also to prioritise action areas for biodiversity enhancement. Some actions may involve a change in council operations to make positive changes for biodiversity.

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
3.1	Procedures & Protocols	Enhancement of green and blue corridors connectivity including the protection of riparian vegetation, instream connectivity and habitat networks	Determine a procedure to prioritise the blue/green corridors for mapping the connectivity of public green and blue corridors Identify gaps and restore ecological connectivity. Map pollinator foraging network in urban areas.	No of projects completed.	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 3A3
3.2		Pollinator-friendly mowing practices formalised	Map areas of semi natural grasslands on public grounds Increase % of short flowering meadows by completing pilot trials and expand where suitable. Complete an audit of % land in public meadow.	No. of pilot areas returned to short cut meadow Map of semi natural grasslands completed	Parks Department KK Coco	NBAP Action No. 5A5
3.3	Research & Policy	Protection of Urban Trees in Kilkenny City	Develop a tree strategy to include a baseline of tree canopy cover, identify species diversity and tree health.	Strategy Launched	Parks Department KK Coco	NBAP Action No. 2B11

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
3.4	Research & Policy	Adoption of dark sky biodiversity friendly lighting policy for public spaces whilst maintaining standards for safety and security concerns	<p>Integrate dark sky protocols into Council developments.</p> <p>Audit Council properties to determine if artificial light reduction is possible</p>	<p>No. of developments with dark sky protocol integrated</p> <p>No. of properties audited</p>	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 2B13
3.5		Public parks and amenity trails managed to maximise biodiversity enhancement	<p>Audit number of parks and amenity trails</p> <p>Prioritise and complete biodiversity management plans for each location</p>	No. of management plans	Parks Department KK Coco	NBAP Action No. 5A5

Objective 4: Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Data-Driven Management Decisions

The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will be a critical component of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Mapping habitats and identifying ecological corridors will assist in deciding on prioritising projects in specific areas. The display of information by mapping will make information easier to interpret. Kilkenny County Council completes environmental monitoring annually, actions are listed to promote monitoring findings and make data more accessible to the public.

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
4.1	Research and Development	Sites of Local biodiversity importance mapped and protected.	Identify and map non-designated sites of Local Biodiversity Importance sites, in line with Heritage Council Guidance, to aid the implementation of County Development Plan biodiversity policies.	No. of meeting with forward planning	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1D5
4.2		Communities champion ecological connectivity when considering town regeneration/'village renewal proposals	Promote the development of Community Biodiversity Action Plans that include habitat mapping of urban areas that highlight the importance of ecological connectivity. This is particularly important to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, to encourage the management of features in the landscape which are a major importance for flora and fauna as required under Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.	No. of Community Biodiversity Action Plans developed	Biodiversity Officer	National Biodiversity Action Plan

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
4.3	Research and Development	A visual storyboard to present biodiversity hotspots in the county to highlight project opportunities	Create a county storyboard that identifies all the statutory protected sites, ancient woodlands and known biodiversity hotspots and include biodiversity projects to inform and track biodiversity rich sites and biodiversity projects.	Delivery of an evolving county storyboard	Biodiversity Action Group	NBAP Action No 2B7
4.4		Protection of wetland sites	Review the County Kilkenny Wetland Survey and prioritise recommended actions.	No. of actions completed	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No 2B7
4.5		Protection of Hedgerows	Complete audit of Kilkenny hedgerows and prioritise future projects on enhancing ecological connectivity between biodiversity rich sites.	Audit Completed	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No 2B7
4.6		Protection of Ancient Woodlands	Identify, map and determine a pathway to secure the conservation and restoration of Kilkenny's Ancient Woodland habitat.	Ancient Woodlands mapped and pathway identified for conservation and restoration.	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No 2B7
4.7	Affecting system level change	Water Quality Exceeds Water Framework Directive Requirements	Farm inspection team to collaborate with agricultural sector, Nore Vision, IFI, Teagasc and LAWPRO to complete water quality assessments and communicate issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality.	No. of promotions	Environment Department KK Coco	National Water Action Plan 2024 Agri Actions 1-5

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
4.8	Affecting system level change	Water quality data easy to source and understand	<p>Promote annual data from the EPA RMCEI Plan that illustrates the work completed by the Environment Section.</p> <p>Communicate the findings of the EPA Annual Water Quality Reports to raise awareness of water quality issues.</p>	No. of promotions	Environment Department KK Coco	National Water Action Plan 2024

Objective 5: Record and Monitor Protected Species or Species of Conservation Concern

By the restoration of habitats, water quality improvements and restoring ecological connectivity will bring benefits to a wide variety of species. The recording of species will provide information on habitat quality, connectivity, species abundance and distribution. Data recording is required to track changes over long periods and citizen science can contribute significantly if adequate training is provided.

Action No.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMACE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
5.1	Capacity Building	Strong synergies existing between Kilkenny County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre and other NGO's	Promote national monitoring schemes locally to encourage participation.	No of participants annually Increase rate of participation	Biodiversity Working Group	NBAP Action No 4B7
5.2	Academic Networking/ Education	Students have strong interest in biodiversity and species recording	Promote the Heritage Council's "Heritage in Schools Programme" Support biodiversity programs under Kilkenny County Council's Green School Programme. Promote/develop school supports to engage students in species identification	No. of students engaged	Biodiversity Working Group	The Citizen Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss – Recommendation Public Engagement, Education and Awareness
5.3	Outreach	Strong citizen science participation rate in Kilkenny	Support and promote local NGOs such as the Kilkenny Naturalist Field Club and Kilkenny Birdwatch Ireland Branch	No. of supports provided	Biodiversity Working Group	The Citizen Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss – Recommendation Public Engagement, Education and Awareness

Action No.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
5.4	Research and Development	Kilkenny County Council informed on national surveys relating to Annex I, II and IV species of the Habitats Directive and Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive	<p>Kilkenny County Council to stay informed of national surveys, collaborate with agencies if further research or monitoring required on a local level.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council promote findings to safeguard habitats and species.</p>	<p>No. of Promotions to raise awareness of national survey findings</p> <p>Integration of survey findings on Biodiversity internal GIS Mapping Layer and public Biodiversity Storyboard (Action 4.3).</p>	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1D5

Objective 6: Foster Engagement, Education and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action

Fostering engagement and promoting best practise for biodiversity action is critical. Lifestyle choices can impact biodiversity locally and internationally. Environmental campaigns to highlight personal responsibility is a way to show the interconnectivity of lifestyle choices and its impact on biodiversity and the wider environment. The variety of engagement and education opportunities will ensure equitable access to natural spaces and opportunities to engage will foster an inclusive approach to environmental stewardship.

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
6.1	Outreach	Kilkenny Citizens Informed about biodiversity	Assist in the dissemination of Biodiversity promotional material, promoting funding streams, training opportunities, field days and workshops. Build a portfolio of talks, workshops Promote Biodiversity Week (May) and Heritage Week (August) annually.	No. of events per annum No. of materials distributed per annum No. of events annually for Heritage and Biodiversity Week Annually.	Biodiversity Officer	The Citizen Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss – Recommendation Public Engagement, Education and Awareness
6.2		Leverage creative, cultural and artistic initiatives to enhance engagement on biodiversity	Encourage and support artists whose work promotes ecological awareness and biodiversity and enables individuals to connect with nature	Level of promotion and supports	Arts Office	Kilkenny Cultural and Creativity Strategy 2023-2028. Local Authority Creative Ireland Culture and Creativity Strategies 2023-2027.

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
6.3		Pollinator Friendly Actions Widespread throughout communities	Support local initiatives that engage the public using the sectoral themed resources from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.	No. of initiatives supported Programme per annum	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 2B13
6.4		Agricultural biodiversity enhancement projects widespread	Promote field days, demonstration walks, workshops and field days that educate farmers on biodiversity practices. Distribute biodiversity farm packs as part of the Council's Farm Survey visits. Collaborate with LAWPRO to highlight the uptake, successes and outcomes of their EIP programme	No. of promotions per annum No. of biodiversity farm packs distributed No. of collaborations with LAWPRO per annum	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 2D1
6.5	Participatory Processes	Private landholdings biodiversity enhancement projects widespread	Support and promote demonstration events that lead to a better understanding of options for landowners to increase the biodiversity value of landholdings.	No. of Events	Biodiversity Officer	NBAP Action No. 1B10
6.6		Community tree nurseries promoting local provenance widespread	Determine the methodology for set up. Identify interested parties. Identify training requirements. Identify possible funding avenues.	No. of community tree nurseries established	Biodiversity Officer	The Citizen Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss – Recommendation Public Engagement, Education and Awareness

ACTION NO.	THEME	TARGETS	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POLICY LINKAGES
6.7	Participatory Processes	Biodiversity education and engagement activities having equitable access	The education programme will be designed to be diverse to cater to a wide audience. The education programme will incorporate staff training, biodiversity courses, library talks and walk and talks. An annual educational schedule will be devised.	No. of events No. of participants	Biodiversity Officer	
6.8	Engagement	Wide appreciation of soil health, and benefits known of home compost and leaf mould	Promote soil science Promote compost free gardening, Promote leaf mould as an alternative source to compost	No. of promotions	Environmental Awareness Officer	NBAP Action No. 2D1
6.9	Engagement	A greater understanding of actions the general public can take to take to assist biodiversity	Complete awareness campaigns highlighting how households can lower nutrient loading in river catchments e.g Greener Cleaning, Septic Tank Maintenance.	No. of campaigns	Environmental Awareness Officer	NBAP Action No. 2D1
6.10		Water conservation widespread across all sectors	Promote water conservation across sectors, providing the linkage to importance to biodiversity protection. Promote rain water harvesting across different sectors.	No. of promotions	Environmental Awareness Officer	NBAP Action No. 2D1