



Summary Report on the Preparation of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan



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Community Section
Kilkenny County Council

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Background

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 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.

Purpose of the Summary Report

This report highlights the feedback received from the public when a Discussion Paper on Biodiversity was put out on public consultation last March. A long consultation period included Biodiversity Week (17th-26th May) and enabled different styles of engagement to take place to promote the consultation period and introduce the discussion paper to new audiences. The Heritage Council provided funding to Kilkenny County Council towards the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. There was wide community engagement and a comprehensive advertising schedule to ensure the public were made aware of the opportunity to have their say on biodiversity and to voice their concerns and contribute to the biodiversity action plan.

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).

A screening document accompanies the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan.

Pre-Draft Public Consultation Process

During the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Process, which ran from March to 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 county Kilkenny. 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



Kilkenny's Biodiversity ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

Public Consultation Callout!

A Biodiversity Action Plan is being prepared for Kilkenny in partnership with the Heritage Council. Its aim is to record, conserve and restore biodiversity. To start the preparation process, a Biodiversity Discussion Paper has been prepared, to give an opportunity to hear your views on nature, listen to your ideas on how we should be addressing biodiversity loss and what actions you think are needed to record, conserve and restore biodiversity in Kilkenny.

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

Submissions are welcome until the 28th of May via;

1. The online consult portal, <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>
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.

In June, after a review of submissions, collation of biodiversity data and consultation with the newly formed Biodiversity Working Group, a draft Biodiversity Action Plan will be prepared, listing specific actions to record, conserve and restore biodiversity. This draft plan will go on public consultation over the summer to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed actions.

 An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

 Comhairle Contae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

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 facilitated 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 the Mayfair library on the 22nd of June, 2024. This included a nature connection specialist who explored the views, concerns and hopes of the participants for Kilkenny's biodiversity in an outdoor setting in the urban garden of Rothe House.



Biodiversity Week Listing of Events








Celebrate Kilkenny's BIODIVERSITY



Indicates the event is weather dependent, keep up to date with event alerts via Kilkenny's Heritage Office Facebook page www.facebook.com/kilkenny.heritage.

Kilkenny County Council with support from the Heritage Council is delighted to provide a number of talks and walks to celebrate local biodiversity as part of their Bugs, Bats and Bees Citizen Science Programme. Many events coincide with National Biodiversity Week organised by the Irish Environmental Network. Come join us, find out about nature on your doorstep and actions you can take to protect and restore local biodiversity.

Date	Location	Event	Time & Meeting Point
May 16 th	Urlingford Library	Gardening for Pollinators Indoor Talk	11am
May 16 th	Ballyragget	Bat Walk & Talk	 9pm meeting at the Community Hall
BIODIVERSITY WEEK 17TH – 26TH OF MAY			
May 18 th	Kilkenny City	Bat Walk & Talk	 9pm, meeting at the Hurling Statue on Canal Square
May 19 th	Dunmore Biodiversity Park	Field Identification of Moths	 Meeting at 9.45am, in car/bike park off the Bleach Rd
May 19 th	Kilkenny City Bike Fest	Biodiversity Stand & Child Friendly Nature Walks	11am-2pm at the County Hall Car Park
May 22 nd	Piltown	Bat Walk & Talk	 Meeting at 9.20pm at the Community Centre
May 23 rd	Thomastown Library	Gardening for Biodiversity & Pollinators. Indoor Talk	11am
May 25 th	Mayfair Library, Kilkenny City	Biodiversity & Climate Action 1 Day Course. Indoor & Outdoors!	Pre-Booking Essential Email: ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie 11am – 1pm Pre-Booking Essential
May 26 th	The Loop Café, Freshford	An Introduction to Composting Workshop	11am – 1pm Pre-Booking Essential Email: biodiversity@kilkennycoco.ie
May 30 th	Ferrybank Library	Gardening for Biodiversity & Pollinators Indoor Talk	11am
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 5TH OF JUNE			
June 5 th	Graignamanagh	Bat Walk & Talk	 Meeting at 9.45pm at the Fair Green Car Park

Listed events are funded under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Tune into KCLR Live, every morning throughout Biodiversity Week to listen to a diverse range of biodiversity experts as part of the special feature "Biodiversity in Focus" a special biodiversity segment to celebrate Biodiversity Week, a collaboration between Carlow & Kilkenny County Councils in association with the Heritage Council.

Leave the Long Grass Grow, an art project funded by Creative Ireland and supported by Kilkenny County Council invited artists to engage with their local habitats to bring different species into the visual awareness of communities by celebrating them through a creative process. Spot the six different art pieces on display across Kilkenny City during Biodiversity Week, information on the wider programme can be found on www.theacornproject.ie.

Leave the Long Grass Grow Workshops

Join artist, Kasia Kaminska on Saturday, the 25th of May at 11am for a plant walk and photogram workshop to explore native wild plants through a camera-less photography process which harnesses the natural chemistry of plants to create images and representations. Wear walking shoes and dress for the weather. A free workshop, limited places, book via www.theacornproject.ie or contact Maura on 086-3104008.

Join artists from Leave the Long Grass Grow and special guests for a panel discussion on the importance and value of our wild plants for healthy ecosystems on Saturday May 25th at the Square in Freshford at 1.30pm. Experience their choir who will launch the Leave the Long Grass Grow Song.

The Kilkenny Volunteer Centre proudly presents their biodiversity art installations of knitted and crocheted pollinator friendly flowers, insects and bees. The installations will be on display in St. Canice's Credit Union Window, High Street, Kilkenny City from the 13th -27th of May and Johns Green House from the 10th - 27th of May.

Kilkenny's Library Service is hosting the Cartoon Saloon Puffin Rock Habitats Exhibit which is embarking on a nationwide tour after its inaugural exhibition at Kilkenny's newest library, the Mayfair running from May 13th - 15th of July. Come visit the Mayfair library and explore the interactive biodiversity exhibition created by Cartoon Saloon.

Who else is celebrating National Biodiversity Week?

The Butler Gallery invites you to join them for National Drawing Day on the 18th of May between 12noon and 4pm. This year's theme is Drawing from Nature. The Gallery will be hosting a variety of activities, for more information on National Drawing Day and other biodiversity themed events which are taking place throughout Biodiversity Week, check out: www.butleryallery.ie/whats-on.

The National Reptile Zoo is hosting "Stories by the River" on Sunday the 19th and 26th of May. They invite you to connect with nature, discover the importance of biodiversity and learn how to play your part in protecting it. For more information check out: www.nrz.ie.

Kilkenny Branch of Birdwatch Ireland in association with the OPW, invites you to attend a dusk chorus on May 23rd at 8pm in Kilkenny Castle Park, meeting point is at the main gate. Hear the birds before they settle down for the evening, enjoy their birdsong and learn about our native birds.

Join Etaoin Holahan on a walk around the Abbey Meadow and the Moat Field on Saturday, the 25th of May to introduce the newly planted trees as part of a community led 'Til Now' Future Town Planting project. This project was funded by a Climate Action Fund II funded by Creative Ireland in partnership with Kilkenny County Council and the Callan Town Team. Meeting at Fennelly's of Callan on Upper Bridge Street at 11.30am. Wear waterproof shoes and dress for the weather.



Submissions Received

Submissions to the Draft Plan could be made either:

- Online at the consult.kilkenny.ie portal
- Via email to biodiversity@kilkennycoco.ie
- In writing to Kilkenny County Council, Biodiversity Officer, Kilkenny County Council.

A total of 16 submissions were received in response to the publication of Biodiversity Discussion Paper. Breakdown of the types of groups and organisations which replied are outlined in table 4.

Table 4 Submission Type

Submission Type/Group Type	Number
Non-Government Organisation	2
Individual	5
Community Group/	4
National Organisation	1
Business	1
Educational Body	1
Local Government Body	1
Conservation Body	1

Table 5 below sets out the number of broad themes that were raised and the frequency of the topic raised is indicated by a scoring system 1-5. Themes scoring low indicate a low repetition, where themes scoring 4 and 5 indicate that the topic had frequent repetition.

Table 5 Submission Themes and Topics

Theme 1 Land Management and Urban Design	Frequency
Encourage green infrastructure in urban planning	5
Promote land-use practices that balance development with conservation	5
Housing Design and Landscaping	3
Nature Based Solutions	2
Appropriate Co Dev Policy (lighting and windfarms)	1
Development in urban biodiversity offsets in planning design	1

Stop land clearance	1
Connecting Ecological Corridors	5
Theme 2 Hedgerows	Frequency
Hedgerow Cutting and Management	5
Hedgerow Survey	2
Theme 3 Trees	Frequency
Tree retainment and no removal of public trees	5
Tree Planting	2
Public Tree Maintenance	1
Community Orchards	2
Support neighbourhood woodlands	2
Support local seed nurseries	2
Theme 4 Council Related Operations	Frequency
Allocate funding for biodiversity projects and research.	4
Invasive Species Management	3
Pesticide Use	3
Improve Council Accountability	2
Invest in biodiversity research to inform policy decisions	2
Procedure to report illegal activity	1
Biodiversity Enhancement of Public Spaces	1
Graveyards for Biodiversity	1
Theme 5 River/Waters	Frequency
Water Pollution Reduction	5
Sediment reduction in water	2
Vegetation Management on Rivers	3

Theme 6 Citizen Science/Community Engagement	Frequency
Engage citizens through education and volunteer programs	5
Collaborate with NGOs, academia, and local businesses	5
Citizen Science Schemes	2
Establish Biodiversity Action Hub	2
Establish a Biodiversity Task Force	2
Theme 7 Habitats	Frequency
Increase awareness of Natura Sites in Kilkenny	2
Protect Wetlands	2
Meadow Management	2
Protect Dry Calcareous Grasslands	1
Protect Ancient Woodlands	1

A number of submissions mentioned specific geographical areas and suggested specific projects like;

- Develop Brandon Hill as a flagship environmental and biodiversity site
- Develop a Kilkenny City Tree Strategy
- Appropriate Management of Callan Meadows
- River Breaghagh Enhancement

The IFA presented a detailed submission which is summarised below.

Irish farmers, as custodians of the environment and the “boots on the ground” to maintain and enhance biodiversity on their farms. They have a great affinity to their local landscapes and ecosystems, and are intrinsically linked to these landscapes, sharing knowledge, skills, and practices from one generation to the next. According to the EPA Land Use Review farmland accounts for 67% of the land area in Ireland. Farmers are critical to improving and protecting biodiversity.

Farmers recognise that biodiversity has a fundamental role in underpinning sustainable agricultural systems. There is 33% of the farmland area in Ireland under agri-environmental schemes compared with an EU average of 13%. Irish farmers have participated on a voluntary basis in these schemes since 1994 enhancing farmland biodiversity.

It is important that farmers’ investment and the positive changes they are making on their farms in recent years are fully recognised in the Kilkenny Biodiversity discussion paper.

Regulations on land use or farming practices on designated land/protected areas that impose constraints must be properly compensated. To date farmers in protected areas, have not been

sufficiently compensated for loss in production or land values due to the designation of their farmland. This has created a negative perception of conservation and biodiversity protection among farmers.

The Burren Beo Programme was highlighted as a good example of how farming and nature can work through locally adapted agri-environmental programmes.

Designated farmland and potentially other areas of farmland (protected areas) will be impacted by restoration measures. Lack of financing was highlighted as a key failure in the EU meeting its 2020 biodiversity targets. Therefore, it is essential that specific funds for Nature Restoration are allocated, restoration cannot be achieved if it is dependent on the CAP.

Preparation of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan

The submissions received and feedback from the public engagement were received. As observed in table 5, many topics were repetitive. The youth consultation indicated that biodiversity knowledge is not uniform, with some respondents not aware of what the term biodiversity meant, while others were very informed, engaged and interested in being proactive. The elders reminisced of their youth and how they considered the current generation is not as connected to the land as previous generations due to agricultural intensification.

Establishment of the Biodiversity Working Group

A number of stakeholders were invited to join the Biodiversity Working Group. Stakeholders participated in two workshops to assist in the formulation of the draft Biodiversity Action Plan. Stakeholders were invited to suggest other members to ensure there was full representation. Public advertising was issued in local press to invite community groups with a county brief and interest in biodiversity to join the Biodiversity Working Group. In 2025, the Biodiversity Working Group will hold meetings four times a year to oversee the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan, promote best practice and develop biodiversity projects.

Draft Biodiversity Action Plan

The draft Biodiversity Action Plan will go on public consultation for a 4-week period from the 20th of November to the 17th of December, 2024. Following this consultation, submissions will be reviewed and considered before the final plan will be brought to the Council for adoption early in 2025.