



# 3 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

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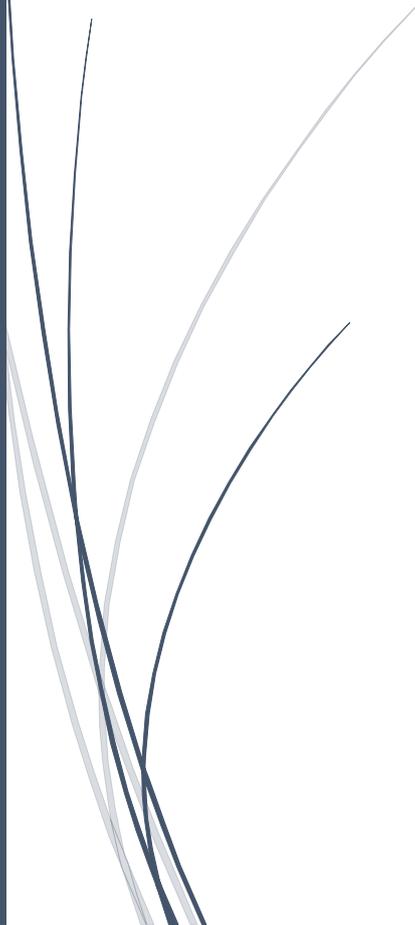


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# Volume 6

## Biodiversity Action Plan

2022-2028



September 2021  
BIODIVERSITY OFFICE, KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

# Kerry County Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan, 2022-2028.

## Setting the Scene

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) will be Kerry County Council’s (KCC) second BAP. The first formed part of the county’s *Heritage Plan* drafted by the Heritage office of KCC in 2009. It ran until 2012 and was extended upon renewal of the Kerry County Development Plan in 2015.

This BAP forms part of the Kerry County Development Plan (KCDP) and will run from 2022-2028. As part of the KCDP the BAP is subject to environmental assessments under the SEA and Habitats Directive which includes climate proofing of plans/programmes/policies. This BAP plan therefore acknowledges the key role of biodiversity in meeting the challenges faced by climate change. In particular, the dual strategies of *Mitigation* and *Adaptation* will allow for nature-based solutions in seeking to achieve the “national 2050 climate objective” as set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act of 2021. This core acknowledgment underpins this plan.

Creating a “Biodiversity Action Plan” is reflected in best practices for nature conservation policy advocated at International, European and National level. Internationally, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in its revised 2015 *Aichi Biodiversity Targets* state in *Target 17* that by 2015 signatory parties (includes Ireland), have *developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan*<sup>1</sup>. Ireland subsequently published its third *National Biodiversity Action Plan* (NBAP) in 2017 running until 2021<sup>2</sup>. This plan is under review by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for its next iteration from 2022-2028. This is being undertaken within the context of a poor interim review of the 3<sup>rd</sup> NBAP as widely reported in early 2021<sup>3</sup>.

At a European level, the EU adopted its future growth strategy in 2019. Called the European *Green Deal* this strategy will drive all economic, social and environmental policy within member states up to 2050<sup>4</sup>. It is also an integral part of the Commission’s strategy to implement the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the aforementioned Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The Green Deal is built on three core pillars: (1) no net emissions of greenhouse gas (GHG) by 2050 (i.e. climate neutrality); (2) economic growth decoupled from resource use and (3) no one is to be left behind (a just transition). The strategy acknowledges the dual and integrated challenges facing the EU from biodiversity loss and climate change and is underpinned by two core strategies published in 2020 - “EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>5</sup>” and the “From Farm to Fork<sup>6</sup>”. The latter is to be further addressed from 2023 via the *New Green Architecture* of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)<sup>7</sup>. The Green Deal is underpinned by an ambitious goal to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by transforming our food systems, forest, land, water and sea use, as well as energy, urban and industrial systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/2011-2020/Aichi-Targets-EN.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-plan>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/62c66-minister-noonan-welcomes-stakeholder-review-of-the-national-biodiversity-action-plan/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030_en)

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork_en)

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/sustainability/environmental-sustainability\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/sustainability/environmental-sustainability_en)

This European policy will have considerable implications for Ireland’s national policy on biodiversity and climate change over the coming years. In fact, it is already shaping national policy in a range of sectors including agriculture and other forms of land use. Ireland’s National Planning Framework, published in 2019, seeks to place biodiversity and climate action at the core of Ireland’s future physical development and settlement pattern. This principle of compact, connected, and sustainable development was further acknowledged in Ireland’s 2019 *Climate Action Plan, To Tackle Climate Breakdown*. This principle is to be reflected in lower level plans namely Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies, County Development Plans and Local Area Plans. They combine to provide guidance on economic development and spatial planning at national, regional and local level.

Notwithstanding the strategic National Biodiversity Action Plan review that is ongoing, more locally led biodiversity policy is a specific objective of the NBAP. The NBAP looks for more regional and local BAPs to be undertaken. It is within this framework that Kerry County Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan (KBAP) is being formulated.

## What is Biodiversity?

We have already mentioned the word “biodiversity” and it is a word many of us have heard more often the last number of years. It has replaced more familiar words such as “wildlife”, “natural heritage” or simply “nature”. The term originates from the United Nations CBD. They define “biodiversity” as the “**biological diversity** covering the variability of all life - terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems. It includes the ecological complexes of which they are part; as well as genetic diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”. Recently, Ireland’s *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021* specifically defines biodiversity in climate legislation as the “variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part, and includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems<sup>8</sup>”. In more simple terms Ireland’s third *National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2017-2021* defines biodiversity as *all life on Earth*.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> NBAP explores what is now widely acknowledged, that we rely on biodiversity for nearly all phases of our life. Biodiversity plays a key role in the functioning of entire units of nature or “ecosystems” along with providing a range of “services” from these units of nature. Such “ecosystems services” include for example, clean air, clean water, food, fuel and medicines. Biodiversity also supports pollination; soil fertility and helps regulate our climate. It underpins and supports many of our economic activities such as timber and food production and tourism.

However, biodiversity also underpins our health and well-being. COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns have shown many of us the value of green spaces for our physical health and mental wellbeing. In short, biodiversity and the associated ecosystems services it supports are crucial to our lives. It underpins and supports nearly all our activities. However, many international reports continue to report an unprecedented decline in global biodiversity. Coupled with these concerning trends in the natural world is the unprecedented challenges faced by climate change. Ireland, or indeed Kerry, is not immune to these global trends. This and reasons for this BAP are explored further in the sections below.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/39/>

## How is Biodiversity Doing in Europe, Ireland and Kerry?

The EU Green Deal and associated strategies reflect global indications of the unprecedented decline in nature<sup>9</sup>, with accelerating species extinction rates. The EU's own European Environment Agency's assessment of the state of Europe's biodiversity reported a similar outlook in 2019<sup>10</sup>.

As mentioned, Ireland's key national policy document on biodiversity is the country's 3<sup>rd</sup> NBAP published in 2017. It introduces the terminology around "biodiversity" and expands on the concept of "ecosystem services". It explains how these systems underpin economic, social, cultural and societal benefits to the country.

The plan goes on to outline and discuss the key pressures on biodiversity in Ireland today. They are identified as increased damage to habitats; loss of species; reduced abundance of wildlife and degradation of our air, water and soils and challenges posed by climate change.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> NBAP underwent an interim review in late 2020, early 2021. The results presented by the *National Biodiversity Forum* while acknowledging some achievements, overall noted the poor performance of the NBAP. The forum recommends five key areas for consideration in the next NBAP: (1) improve governance and stewardship of biodiversity; (2) finance the plan and prioritise actions; (3) protect, recover and renew biodiversity and ecosystems, (4) build connect and use the biodiversity knowledge base and (5) engage communities and the private sector<sup>11</sup>.

Crucially, the review concluded that *although public awareness of biodiversity has increased, and cross-sectoral engagement in biodiversity action has improved, the status of biodiversity in protected areas, seas and the wider countryside is in poor condition and continues to decline*. This analysis is further supported by several other Irish reports, most notably the EPA's most recently published 2020 *State of the Environment Report*<sup>12</sup>.

### **State of the Environment Report, 2020 – An Irish Overview.**

The EPA reports provides of snap shot of how Ireland's environment is doing at the end of its four reporting cycle in 2020. Some improvement but also worrying trends are reported. In relation to "nature" the EPA quote a 2019 assessment by the NPWS on the current status of Ireland's 59 protected natural habitats and 60 protected species. This 2019 report indicates most habitats assessed have an *unfavourable status* and almost half show ongoing declines, including marine, peatland, grassland and woodland habitats. Protected species show more variation with some species doing well but others, including Ireland's keystone species such as the Freshwater Pearl Mussel are in decline.

Trends in bird populations from various National surveys, show similar variation - 30 per cent of the populations of Ireland's breeding bird species report as stable or have increased, a fifth are in long-term decline and one, the corn bunting, became extinct here in the 1990s.

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<sup>9</sup> Living Planet Report published by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, 2020) & United Nations Global Environment Outlook GEO-6 report (UN Environment, 2019)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.epa.ie/media/EPA-Ireland's-Environment-2020-Chapter6.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.biodiversityimpactplan.ie/recommendations>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/indicators/irelandsenvironment2020.html>

Some of our breeding farmland songbirds are under increasing pressures from the modernisation and intensification of agricultural practices; for example, there are estimated to be fewer than 100 breeding pairs of the whinchat and twite in Ireland. Breeding waders such as the curlew, lapwing, redshank and dunlin have seen a 93 per cent decline in breeding populations over the long term<sup>13</sup>.

As regards our wild pollinators, according to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC), bee species in Ireland are threatened with extinction because we have drastically reduced the amount of food (flowers) and safe nesting sites in our landscapes. While some bumblebee species can be a regular sight, other species are endangered, including the great yellow bumblebee which is in severe decline in Ireland. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan<sup>14</sup>, now into its second iteration, has brought considerable attention to these trends. The plan also provides information and resources about what people can do to help pollinator conservation across a wide range of sectors, including local authorities.

In relation to water, the EPA's most recent reports are the *Status of Water Quality in Ireland, 2013-2018*, published in 2019<sup>15</sup> and *Water quality in 2020, An indicators Report*<sup>16</sup>. Both indicate some declining national trends on the ecological health and water quality of Ireland's rivers, lakes, estuaries, groundwater and coastal waters.

### **A Focus on Kerry**

Kerry County Council recognises the importance of biodiversity in all its forms, from strictly protected species and habitats to those we sometimes might take for granted or see as "untidy". All play a role in enriching the biodiversity in the County and are building blocks in our broader landscapes for which Kerry is renowned. Equally the Council recognises the importance that biodiversity will play in responding to the challenges of climate change.

Kerry has a number of International, European, National and local sites of ecological interest with corresponding environmental designations embedded in law. The Natura 2000 network is a European nature conservation designation that aims to protect habitats and species that are rare or threatened across Europe. They are more commonly known as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). Large areas of County Kerry are covered by these European designations or National designations known as National Heritage Areas (NHAs). They all attest to the biodiversity found in the County.

Nature conservation sites in Kerry protect high-status watercourses that support salmonid species and the annexed species of Freshwater Pearl Mussel. Kerry has extensive upland areas with associated habitats and birds of special conservation interest most notably the Hen Harrier. Toward north and eastern Kerry several remnant bogs that show a transition from raised to blanket bog are designated as either SAC's and/or NHAs. Much of the coastline and coastal waters of the county are designated as both SACs and SPAs. Wintering waders/waterfowl visit these areas in vast numbers while large populations of seabirds inhabit the county's off-shore islands, often in internationally important numbers. Sand dune habitats found for example at Inch and the Magharees are some of the most extensive in the southwest of Ireland and exhibit examples of priority annexed habitat, now rare across Europe. They also support rare plants and other species and many birds of special conservation interest (SCI) such as the Chough.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.epa.ie/media/EPA-Ireland's-Environment-2020-Chapter6.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://pollinators.ie/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/water/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/EPA\\_Water\\_Quality\\_2020\\_indicators-report.pdf](https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/EPA_Water_Quality_2020_indicators-report.pdf)

Killarney National Park is home to some of our last remaining native woodlands while also forming part of the Kerry UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The area is also associated with the re-introduced White Tailed Sea Eagle.

Many other sites of more local ecological value occur across the county. Hedgerows, wetlands, watercourses, patches of woodland or semi-natural grasslands all act as stepping-stones within the broader landscape and form an integral part of Kerry's famous landscape.

Kerry supports an interesting collection of Mediterranean species native to Kerry but absent from much of the rest of the Country. These are collectively known as Lusitanian flora and fauna and include the Strawberry tree, Kerry lily, Kerry slug and the Nattarjack toad.

Much of Kerry's biodiversity is found in farmland, be it within High Nature Value (HNV) farmland or within hedgerows and watercourses located in more intensively farmed areas. The biodiversity value of our farmland is dependent on appropriate agricultural management. Intensification of farming practices but also abandonment of naturally disadvantaged farmland (often of high nature value) are threats to some of our most valued habitats and species. Some of Kerry's most natural habitats also require active management to maintain or restore their conservation interest, for example Rhododendron management within Killarney National Park and in the MacGillycuddy Reeks. Agri-environmental schemes currently operating in the County include the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, MacGillycuddy Reeks and Hen Harrier European Innovation Partnership (EIP) projects. NPWS are also engaged in more local level farm plans and schemes including the Nattarjack Toad Scheme.

The state of Kerry's water resources is reflected to differing degrees in national data published in 2019 and 2020 by the EPA. Thankfully the county maintains several high or pristine catchments; no waterbody dropped to poor or bad status while coastal waters maintain a good status. Nonetheless, other trends are worrying notably the build-up of nutrients in our estuaries and the continued loss of high-status waterbodies. These high-status sites are important reservoirs of aquatic biodiversity and their decline is a concern. These trends are occurring within the midst of, and are no doubt being exacerbated by, climate change.

Nowhere has climate change pressures been more obvious than our coastal areas. Much of the Kerry coastline, in particular "soft" sand dune habitats such as those found at Inch; Rossbeigh, Banna/Ballyheigue and the Magharees are under threat from erosion. These areas are rich in biodiversity and preserve coastal habitats and species now rare in Europe. The areas are also places where vibrant coastal communities reside and work.

## **Functions/Responsibilities of Kerry County Council's and interactions with biodiversity.**

KCC, like all local authorities, interacts with biodiversity through its many roles, responsibilities, and functions. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Land use planning, particularly designating land use zoning and development objectives
- Development management (i.e. planning permission)
- Environment protection functions, including licensing and permitting of waste, air emissions and water discharges
- Community engagement across a range of stakeholders
- Climate Action - mitigation and adaptation
- Local Authority Works (including development, upgrade and maintenance of roads, greenways, bridges, amenity areas; public green spaces and public tree management)
- Urban renewal works and housing developments
- Tourism promotion and development
- Event licensing, and
- Bye law development

Through these activities the local authority places biodiversity and ecosystem services as a core value. It seeks to exemplify best practices in undertaking its own works and in the management and/or control of other works that fall under its remit.

## Structure of the Kerry Biodiversity Action Plan

Linked to the above functions/roles/responsibilities of KCC are six strategic objectives identified in this KBAP. The objectives are led by the strategic objectives outlined in the NBAP and the interim review report of 2021. However, as the KBAP will operate at a more local level several objectives are specifically focused on a county led approach. Flowing from objectives are several targets. Finally, actions required to achieve the objectives and targets are outlined. Actions will require collaboration with key partners and stakeholders including local communities and will be measured by key performance indicators. In so doing and based on the interim reports of the NBAP, this BAP aims to have Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely (SMART) targets.

### **Key Objectives:**

#### **Objective 1**

Mainstreaming biodiversity into decision making within the Local Authority

#### **Objective 2**

To conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services in the county

#### **Objective 3**

That biodiversity underpins KCC's responses to the challenges of climate change

#### **Objective 4**

Work with a range of stakeholders to ensure protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the county

#### **Objective 5**

Increase awareness and appreciation of biodiversity within KCC and the community

#### **Objective 6**

Support the strengthening of the knowledge base, information and data on biodiversity in the county

<b>Objective 1: Mainstreaming biodiversity into decision making within the Local Authority</b>				
<b>Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
1.1 LA decisions on own plans/projects/programmes informed by possible effects on biodiversity	1.1.1 LA plans/projects/programmes are assessed under the EIA, SEA and Habitats Directive	Planning Department, KCC	2022-2028	Environmental Assessment reports produced.
1.2 Ensure effects on biodiversity is a key consideration for proposed land use developments in the proper planning and sustainable development of the county	1.2.1 Development management decisions underpinned by the consideration of biodiversity	Planning Department, KCC	2022-2028	Number of planning applications commented by Biodiversity office
	1.2.2 Land use plans for the county underpinned and informed by biodiversity	Planning Department, KCC	2022-2028	Land use plans in compliance with SEA/Habitats Directives
	1.2.3 In reviewing and updating the County Development Plan (CDP) and other land use plans, include policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity	Planning Department, KCC	2022-2028	The new Kerry County Development Plan to be published in 2022 and other land use plans to be produced once adopted.
	1.2.4 Monitor the implementation of this KBAP Plan	Biodiversity Office, KCC	2022-2028	Number of actions completed
	1.2.5 Only where appropriate and possible, and in consultation with any relevant stakeholder, support and promote rewilding to restore and repair damaged ecosystems	Biodiversity Office, KCC, NPWS, Community groups	2022-2028	Number of projects undertaken.

<b>Objective 2: To conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services in the county</b>				
<b>2.Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
2.1 Optimise opportunities for the LA to provide best practices in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity	2.1.1 No. of LA developments that undertake/include measures to support/enhance biodiversity	Various departments in KCC including Roads; Capital infrastructure Unit; and Facilities.	2022-2028	Number of KCC projects that have incorporated biodiversity measures
	2.1.2 Implement the <i>All-Ireland Pollinator Plan</i> with each MD to undertake suitable <i>Actions</i> including the reduced use of pesticides/herbicides where possible	MD officers/areas engineers; Biodiversity Office, KCC	2022-2028	Number of actions undertaken and recorded on the <i>All Ireland Pollinator</i> tracker
	2.1.3 Develop a LA tree management strategy to include best practices guidelines in the management of hedgerows/trees on public lands by the LA	Area engineers	2022-2028	Production of Tree Management Strategies
	2.1.4 Support the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine's 2020 scheme for <i>Woodland Creation on Public Lands</i> in appropriate locations.	KCC Climate Office, EAU (KCC); MD office; NPWS and IFI	2022-2028	Number of schemes considered and planted.
	2.1.5 Bridge upgrade proposals in the county to be environmentally assessed and where possible to incorporate biodiversity measures	TII; Roads Sections, EAU (KCC) and IFI.	2022-2028	Construction Methodologies and reporting on works.
	2.1.6 The use of pesticides/herbicides should only be used in exceptional circumstances including for the treatment of invasive species where other methods have proven to be unviable by Kerry County Council over the period of the plan.	Area offices; outdoor staff and Area Engineers	2022-2028	Quantities of pesticide bought and used

2.2 Optimise opportunities for the LA to improve status of all waterbodies through its responsibilities under the Water Framework Directive (WFD)	2.2.1 Work with LAWPRO and other stakeholders in the rolling out of 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycles of the WFD particularly in Priority Ares for Action (PAA)	Environment Section; Biodiversity Office, IFI and LAWPRO, ASSAP	2022-2028	Status and Risk of waterbodies in the county and any changes to PAA
	2.2.2 Any works to be undertaken by KCC in the drainage and/or maintenance of waterbodies will be environmentally assessed	Area engineers EAU (KCC), IFI and/or NPWS	2022-2028	Construction Methodologies and reporting on works.
	2.2.3 Ensure that Flood Risk Management (FRM) planning aims to prioritise policies to promote nature-based solutions/natural water retention measures	Flooding Section of KCC and OPW	2022-2028	Flooding schemes that incorporate nature-based solutions
2.3 Optimise the opportunities for the LA to support other biodiversity initiatives being undertaken in the county	2.3.1 Support the roll out National, Regional or local strategies/plans or programmes as outlined in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and future NBAP	Various – stakeholders linked to government departments; IFI; NPWS; LAWPRO; Community groups	2022-2018	– funding; support; advice; collaboration provided.
	2.3.2 Support the Kerry UNESCO Biosphere Reserve; the McGillicuddy Reeks Mountain Access Reeks Forum; European Innovation Projects (EIPs); EU LIFE projects and other existing or proposed biodiversity programmes in the county	Various stakeholders linked to programmes/scheme, Biodiversity Office, KCC	2022-2028	Expertise provided by the LA – funding; and/or support in kind

<b>Objective 3: That biodiversity underpins KCC's responses to the challenges of climate change</b>				
<b>3. Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
3.1 LA leads by example in the use of nature-based solutions in responding to the challenges of climate change and moving towards the "national 2050 climate objective"	3.1.1 Implement biodiversity actions from Kerry's <i>Climate Change Adaptation Plan</i> and any future <i>Climate Action Plans/iterations</i>	Cross-departments in KCC	2022-2028	Cross-reference actions completed from climate plans
	3.1.2 Support the LA's Climate Change Co-ordinator and the roll out by CARO of LA training in responding to Climate Change	Climate Action Team KCC and CARO	Commenced	Numbers undertaken training.
	3.1.3 Support Green and Blue Infrastructure at appropriate locations in the county and increase connectivity of the protected areas network using appropriate buffer zones, corridors, stepping-stones and/or flyways	Planning Department, CIU, KCC	2022-2028	Green/blue Infrastructure provided.
	3.1.4 Where possible, support nature-based solutions to tackling climate change	Climate Action Team	2022-2028	Number of nature-based solutions realised.
	3.1.5. Continue and enhance measures for eradication, where feasible, control and containment of invasive species as listed in Schedule 3 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, in consultation with other partners.	Planning Department, Area Engineers; TII/Roads Department and IFI	2022-2028	Invasive species management plans undertaken; leaflets/signage produced; collaboration projects.
3.2 LA provide policy/objectives that seek to protect soils that sequester carbon.	3.2.1 Include policies and objectives in land use plans that seek to protect carbon rich soils	Planning Department, KCC; Biodiversity Office KCC	2022-2028	Polices/objectives included in CDP and LAP
	3.2.2 Support actions from the <i>Agri Climatise</i> plan	Teagasc; Department of Agriculture and Forest Service	2022-2028	Applicable development Management consents
3.3 LA supports initiatives/actions from community that focus on biodiversity as a way to mitigate/adapt to climate change	3.3.1 Support community groups with funding; advice or other initiatives	Cross-departments in KCC/Climate Action Team	2022-2028	No. of groups supported and/or projects that come to fruition

<b>Objective 4: Work with a range of stakeholders to ensure protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the county</b>				
<b>4. Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
4.1 Enhanced co-operation with other stakeholders that oversee the protection of relevant nature conservation legislation in the county	4.1.1 Collaborate with IFI; NPWS; the Forest Service and Department of Agriculture to ensure protection of habitats and species in the county.	IFI; NPWS; Forest Service and Department of Agriculture	Ongoing	Enforcement cases and their outcomes
	4.1.2 Continue to enforce the provisions of the Planning and Development Act and Regulations, as amended, as they relate to the protection of natural heritage.	EAU/Biodiversity Office, KCC	Ongoing	Various – development management reports and enforcement.
	4.1.3 Continue to collaborate with stakeholder to roll out the various cycles of the WFD	Environment Section of KCC.	Ongoing	Trends in water quality and status where pressures linked to LA functions.
4.2 Work with the community and other groups in the protection and enhancement biodiversity including the provision of locally produced food	4.2.1 Support the provision of public space for biodiversity including food production and sale	Biodiversity Office, KCC; MD officers/Area engineers/local communities	2022-2028	Public space allocated to biodiversity, food production and farmers markets
	4.2.2 Support community groups seeking to undertake biodiversity projects at appropriate locations and further to environmental assessment	Biodiversity Office, KCC; LAWPRO; IFI; NPWS	2022-2028	Projects undertaken e.g. number of actions undertaken and recorded on the <i>All Ireland Pollinator</i> tracker

<b>Objective 5: Increase awareness and appreciation of biodiversity within KCC and the community</b>				
<b>5. Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
5.1 An enhanced appreciation of the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services amongst local communities, other local stakeholders and the general public	5.1.1 that LA staff have an increased awareness of biodiversity within the roles; responsibilities and functions of the LA.	Cross- departments; CARO	2022-2028	Training/talks, events and/or content produced.
	5.1.2 Engage with local communities and stakeholders to help achieve the objectives of this plan	Biodiversity Office, KCC	2022-2028	Actions achieved in this plan
	5.1.3 Support communication campaigns that aim to promote the value of biodiversity and that emphasise or are centred around showcasing biodiversity, its importance, and current or future challenges	Various stakeholders	2022-2028	Media content published on biodiversity over media platforms
	5.1.4 Support the annual celebration of <i>Biodiversity Week</i> in May centred on World Biodiversity Day.	Biodiversity Office, KCC also national promoters such as Heritage Council	May of each calendar year	Events held for Biodiversity Week each year.

<b>Objective 6: Support the strengthening of the knowledge base; information and data on biodiversity in the county</b>				
<b>6.Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
6.1 Data and information on the county's biodiversity is increased.	6.1.1 Support and encourage the volunteer network and local community to carry out biological recording and other citizen science projects	Biodiversity Office, KCC	Ongoing	Records provided by KCC to the NBDC
	6.1.2 Ensure that funding opportunities are effectively targeted to assist implementation of the NBAP and this KBAP	Biodiversity Office, KCC	Annual funding allocated	Projects funded and completed.
	6.1.3 Annually review priority needs for biodiversity survey and/or research in the county further to provision of funding	Biodiversity Office, KCC; IFI and LAWPRO	Annual – as per availability of funding	Survey/research undertaken
	6.1.4 Ensure data collected by or on behalf of KCC meets common data standards and quality assurance procedures in line with the INSPIRE Directive and is provided to the NBDC.	Biodiversity Office, KCC	2022-2028	Records provided by KCC to the NBDC

## **Specific key areas where the KCC can lead by example in promoting biodiversity:**

### **1. Local Authority (LA) Hedgerow maintenance guidance**

- In general hedgerow maintenance in the county is undertaken by the landowner rather than the local authority.
- Where LA's require tree and hedgerow removal, this will only be undertaken where necessary and in compliance with the Wildlife Act, as amended (see also Point 2 below).
- Best practices in the management of hedgerows to promote biodiversity and carbon sequestration will be a core consideration of hedgerow management.
- Hedgerow will be assessed for presence of invasive plant species prior to works.
- Where removal is required, landscape connectivity will be maintained by way of new planting. Where possible hedgerow management will be undertaken between the 1st of September and the 1st of March (outside of the bird breeding season).

### **2. Tree felling and planting guidance**

- Within its role of managing public trees, the LA will seek to carry out works in accordance with *Tree Strategy Plans* and further to the expertise/advice from a suitably qualified arborist, as appropriate. Tree planting will be guided by the 'right tree in the right place' principle.
- Any felling will aim to avoid the bird breeding seasons and be in compliance with the Wildlife Act, as amended and the Forestry Act, 2014 as amended.
- In addition to nesting birds, where mature trees require felling, they will ideally be felled between September and early November, in order to avoid the disturbance of any roosting bats. Tree felling will be completed by Mid-November at the latest because bats roosting in trees are very vulnerable to disturbance during their hibernation period (November – April). Once felled trees will be left intact on-site for 24 hours prior to disposal to allow any bats beneath the foliage to escape overnight.

### **3. Road, bridge and underpass works**

The LA, along with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, are responsible for the maintenance and upgrade of the public road network in the County.

- The LA will seek to ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated into road project proposals. As part of this, proposed off-line routes will be particularly mindful of the need to protect designated habitats of interest and wider landscape ecological connectivity - at all stages of project delivery.
- The LA regularly maintains and upgrades bridges within the County. Many of these are of masonry construction. These may be of value to rare Hawkweed plant species, nesting birds or roosting bats. They also can be used by otters and fish within the river. Sometimes the historic construction of bridge can be an obstacle to the movement of fish and fisheries habitat improvements works will be undertaken where feasible.
- Bridge upgrade proposals will take into account any existing biodiversity features of interest and where possible incorporate biodiversity measures (e.g. provide for improved fish passage, mammal ledges, bird nesting and or bat roosting).
- Any instream works will only be undertaken between July and September and/or in agreement with IFI.

- New bridges and underpasses will also be mindful of biodiversity considerations. As part of this bat boxes, for example, will be attached, as appropriate. (See also Point 5 below re-lighting).

#### **4. Local Authority Own Developments/Urban Renewal/Housing Schemes and Public Green Spaces.**

The LA has a key role in developing housing schemes, urban renewal projects and other developments within its functional area.

The LA will incorporate and/or enhance existing biodiversity features or include biodiversity features into developments. It will apply by a “retain, enhance and create” approach to biodiversity.

- Examples include pollinator friendly landscaping proposals; adherence to best practices in the management of water (SuDs; Hydrocarbon interceptors; silts traps); following IFI guidance in relation to watercourses and promoting connectivity in the landscape; inclusion of nest sites for bats and/or birds such as swifts, barn owls; management of green spaces including mowing regimes as well as the list of other measures outlined above.
- Promote the management of green spaces in more a biodiversity/pollinator friendly manner in consultation with community and other stakeholders.
- Seek to reduce the overall use of pesticide/herbicides across the various sections of the organisation.
- Ensure that any temporary site works compounds are properly located and operated and that construction environmental management plans are prepared, as appropriate.
- Undertake best practice invasive species management and biosecurity measures as part of project works.

#### **5. Public lighting**

Bats (and other species such as swifts) are sensitive to lighting. The following guidelines taken from the *Bat Conservation Trust 2018 Guideline Note 08/18* will be taken into account as part of new and replacement lighting proposals:

- LED luminaires to be used due to the fact that they are highly directional, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- All luminaires used to lack UV/IR elements to reduce impact
- A warm white spectrum (<2700 Kelvins is achieved to reduce the blue light component of the LED spectrum).
- Luminaires will feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats.
- Column heights will be carefully considered to minimise light spill. The shortest column height allowed will be used where possible.
- Only luminaires with an upward light ratio of 0% and with good optical control will be used.
- Luminaires to be mounted on the horizontal i.e. no upward tilt
- Motion-sensors, where used, to be set with short timers.

In any swift nest box projects care will be taken to ensure that high intensity lighting will not be shining onto or from any known or proposed nest site.

#### **6. Proper Planning and Sustainable Development**

As a planning authority KCC will lead by example by continuing to fulfil its role in the implementation of European and National environmental assessment policy, particularly as it relates to proper planning and sustainable development. The planning department has three core functions – forward planning, development management and enforcement.

- In forward planning the planning authority aims to promote sustainable settlement patterns into the future. Promoting, enhancing, protecting biodiversity through for example green and blue infrastructure objectives, will continue to be supported.
- Making space for nature and incorporating policies that support nature-based solutions and a multi-beneficiary or co-benefits approach to the conservation of biodiversity will be a priority. Again, apply a “retain, enhance and create” approach to biodiversity at a strategic and local level.
- Strategic planning policy will seek to continue to protect the county’s biodiversity, augment its ability to offer positive/multi-beneficiary/co-benefit responses to climate change and do its part to try and reverse declining biodiversity trends.
- In development management, the planning authority will continue to exercise its duties ensuring that planning applications are assessed with respect to biodiversity via the EIA Directive, Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive.
- Ensure the development management standards applicable to planning applications are regularly updated to reflect best practices in the measures required to “retain, enhance and create” biodiversity.
- Finally, the PA through its statutory provisions under Part VIII of the Planning and Development Act will enforce, as a last resort, breaches of the planning code in relation to biodiversity.

#### **7. Raising Awareness/Education**

The LA has a key role in community engagement, consultation and facilitation. The Public Participation Network (PPN) for example brings together Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental Groups in an independent structure working in collaboration with the Local Authority. Through the PPN there are opportunities for networking, communication and sharing of information, which can lead to participation in local decision making and collective community action and engagement.

- The council will use existing networks to allow information to flow both ways in raising awareness around biodiversity and in particularly climate action.
- The Biodiversity Office of KCC also has a key role to play in engaging with and providing information on biodiversity. The office will continue to support the roll out of the International Day of Biodiversity as part of the annual celebration of *Biodiversity Week* in mid-May. The week seeks to build on the success of *Heritage Week* in August by providing an opportunity to promote local, regional and National events that celebrate biodiversity.

#### **8. Leading in Climate Action**

National climate action policy continues to evolve. Recently, the Department of Climate, Environment and Communications made a National Call for Ireland’s 2021 Climate Action Plan<sup>17</sup>.

The Council will continue to play a leading role in Climate Action. KCC has already adopted its *Climate Adaptation Strategy* in 2019. As the new *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* comes into effect there will be an obligation for each LA in the country to draft its own “Climate Action Plan” to include mitigation and adaptation actions. The Council is committed to ensuring biodiversity will be a core consideration in the formulation of this plan.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/5bd95-climate-conversation-climate-action-plan-2021/>

## **Appendix 1: European and National Designated Nature Conservation Sites in the County**

### **SACs**

Caha Mountains  
Akeragh, Banna And Barrow Harbour  
Ballinskelligs Bay And Inny Estuary  
Castlemaine Harbour  
Old Domestic Building, Dromore Wood  
Kilgarvan Ice House  
Killarney National Park, Macgillicuddy's Reeks And Caragh River  
Lough Yganavan And Lough Nambrackdarrig  
Mount Brandon  
Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog  
Cloonee And Inchiquin Loughs, Uragh Wood  
Mucksna Wood  
Glanmore Bog  
Maulagowna Bog  
Mullaghanish Bog  
Old Domestic Building, Curraglass Wood  
Tralee Bay And Magharees Peninsula, West To Cloghane  
Old Domestic Building, Askive Wood  
Ballyseedy Wood  
Kenmare River  
Lower River Shannon

### **SPAs**

Puffin Island SPA  
Skelligs SPA  
Blasket Islands SPA  
Tralee Bay Complex SPA  
Killarney National Park SPA  
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA  
Eirk Bog SPA  
Magharee Islands SPA  
Dingle Peninsula SPA  
Iveragh Peninsula SPA  
Stacks to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick  
Hills and Mount Eagle SPA  
Deenish Island and Scariff Island SPA  
Kerry Head SPA

### **NHAs**

Knockatarriv/Knockariddera Bogs NHA  
Mount Eagle Bogs NHA  
Anna More Bog NHA  
Knockroe Bog NHA  
Slaheny River Bog NHA  
Hungry Hill Bog NHA  
Bunnaruddee Bog NHA  
Sillahertane Bog NHA  
Doughill Bog NHA



