

HOW TO DEVELOP A

Community Biodiversity Action Plan



National
Biodiversity
Data Centre
Documenting Ireland's Wildlife



www.ActionforBiodiversity.ie

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has developed an online portal to showcase national, local authority and community biodiversity action plans. This website, funded by Community Foundation Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, also offers resources to help communities become more biodiversity-friendly.

A map or county list provides easy access to published action plans, which can be downloaded directly from the site. By compiling the best guidelines from national conservation organisations, it offers a concise online library of resources which explain evidence-based actions for everything from bees to butterflies, and birds to bats, as well as guidelines on hedgerow maintenance, native tree planting and pond creation.

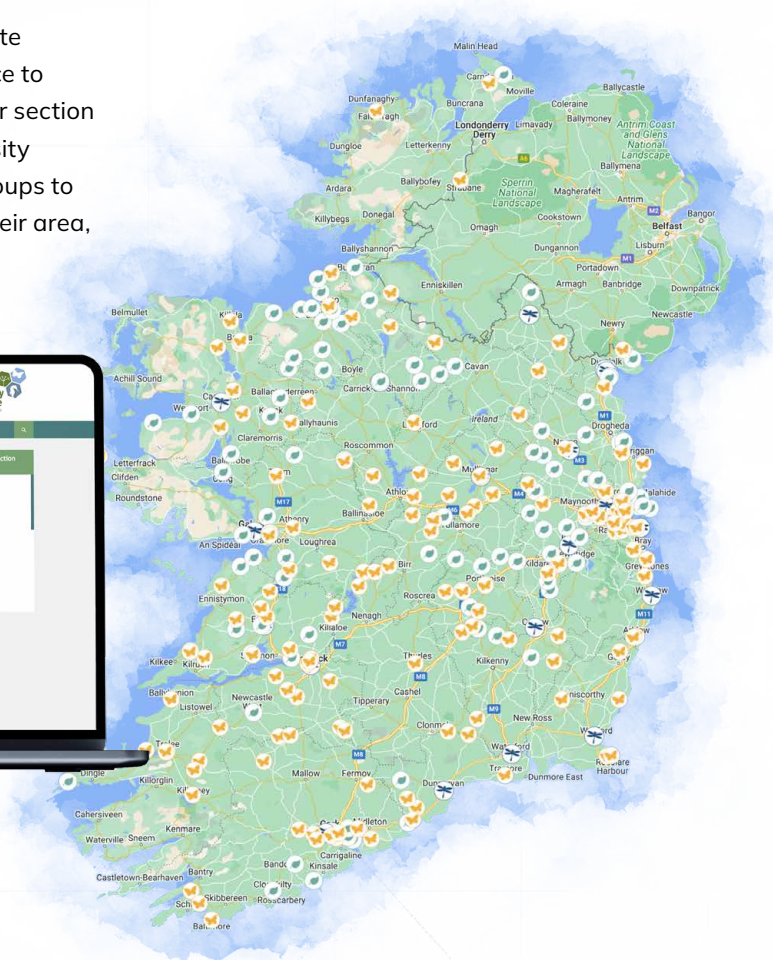
The website also offers direct links to state bodies and NGOs, who can provide advice to local communities on the ground. Another section introduces local communities to biodiversity recording, including a tool that allows groups to generate a local biodiversity report for their area,

which shows all records submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre for their region. This can help provide a framework for local groups to develop their knowledge of what species are found in their area.

Most importantly, this website offers community groups the ability to learn from each other – they can see other action plans from neighbouring areas or similar areas anywhere in the country. This allows them to learn new approaches, and to be inspired by the actions of other groups.

See www.actionforbiodiversity.ie

To add a Biodiversity Action plan to the site, email biodiversityactionplans@gmail.com



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www.actionforbiodiversity.ie



Community
Foundation
Ireland

 An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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

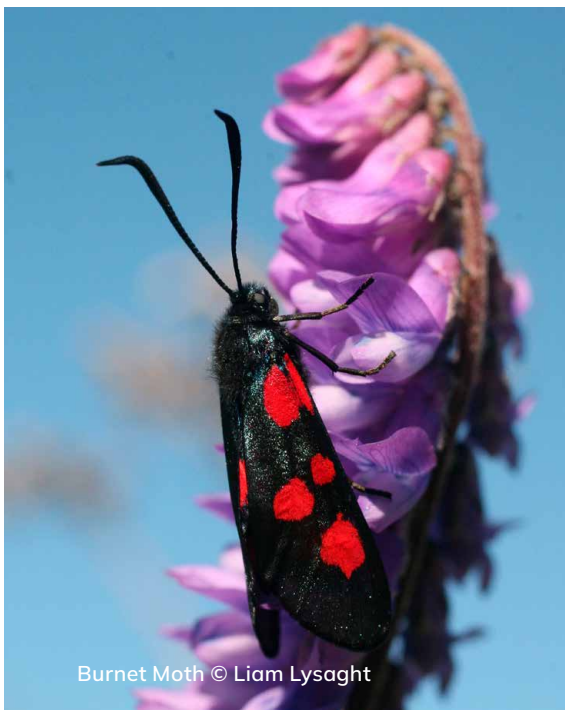
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Introduction

What is a Community Biodiversity Action Plan?

A Community Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP) sets out actions that can be taken by a community to help biodiversity in their local area. In the face of increasing environmental challenges, the significance of Community Biodiversity Action Plans cannot be overstated. These plans play a pivotal role in conserving and enhancing biodiversity at the community level. A Community Biodiversity Action Plan is a comprehensive strategy designed by the community to safeguard the biodiversity unique to a specific region. A CBAP organises and gives direction to local action for biodiversity and can have profound implications for both the environment and for local residents. Working on a CBAP helps a community to feel empowered to make a difference in the face of the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis.



Burnet Moth © Liam Lysaght

The importance of biodiversity and the need for community action

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity, a term coined from 'biological diversity', covers the intricate web of life on Earth. It encompasses the variety of life forms, from the tiniest microorganisms to majestic trees, and from the depths of the oceans to the highest mountains, from a mouse to a human being. Biodiversity is not just about the sheer number of species, but also the genetic differences within each species, the ecosystems they form, and the ecological processes to which they contribute. In essence, biodiversity is the very foundation of life on Earth and the result of billions of years of evolution.

The importance of biodiversity

Biodiversity is essential for the wellbeing of the Earth's ecosystems and the survival of all living organisms, including humans. Firstly, biodiversity ensures the stability of ecosystems. Different species have unique roles within an ecosystem; some plants, for instance, help prevent soil erosion, while predators maintain the balance in animal populations. When one species disappears, it can disrupt the entire ecosystem, leading to a domino effect of extinction.

Secondly, biodiversity is crucial for human survival. Many of our essential resources, such as clean air, food, medicine, and clean water, come from diverse natural environments. Thousands of plant and animal species serve as sources of medicine. Furthermore, biodiversity contributes significantly to physical and mental health, cultural and recreational value, shaping traditions, art, and spirituality.

Threats to biodiversity

Despite its immense importance, biodiversity is under severe threat due to human activities. Habitat destruction, primarily through activities like deforestation, urbanisation, and agriculture, is a leading cause of biodiversity loss. Climate change is altering habitats and making it difficult for many species to survive. Pollution, overexploitation of natural resources, and invasive species further exacerbate threats.

Conservation efforts

Efforts to conserve biodiversity are underway globally. Conservation organisations, governments, local authorities and communities are working to establish protected areas, create sustainable management plans, and implement legislation to protect biodiversity. Additionally, awareness campaigns educate people about the importance of biodiversity and their role in its conservation.

Protecting biodiversity is not just an environmental obligation; it is a necessity for our own survival. As stewards of this planet, it is our responsibility to preserve and sustain biodiversity. By understanding, appreciating, and conserving biodiversity, we can ensure a harmonious coexistence with the natural world and secure a vibrant and diverse future for generations to come.



Fox © Shutterstock

Creating a CBAP

The purpose and benefits

1. Protecting the local environment:

A CBAP is tailored to protect and enhance the local environment. Every locality has distinct habitats, flora and fauna. By focusing on the local level, these plans ensure the protection of small patches of habitat or rare species that might not receive adequate attention in broader conservation efforts.

2. Enhancing resilience to Climate Change:

Local biodiversity is crucial for building resilience against climate change. Diverse ecosystems are better equipped to adapt to changing climatic conditions. Plants and animals within these ecosystems have evolved specific traits that enable them to survive in their native environments. Preserving local biodiversity through action plans provides a natural buffer against the adverse effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events and shifting weather patterns.

3. Supporting Ecosystem Services:

Ecosystems provide a wide array of services essential for human wellbeing, including food, clean air and water, pollination of crops, pest control, and disease regulation. Community biodiversity action plans ensure the continuity of these services locally by conserving the plants, animals, and microorganisms that contribute to these vital ecosystem functions.

4. Promoting sustainable development:

Balancing conservation efforts with sustainable development is a core objective of CBAPs. These plans encourage the responsible use of natural resources, ensuring that economic progress does not come at the cost of biodiversity loss. By integrating conservation into local development strategies, CBAPs create a harmonious relationship between human activities and the environment, fostering long-term sustainability.

5. Raising environmental awareness:

Community Biodiversity Action Plans serve as educational tools, raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity among local communities. Through public outreach programmes, workshops, and educational campaigns, these plans empower individuals to actively participate in conservation efforts. Increased awareness fosters a sense of environmental stewardship, encouraging people to make environmentally conscious choices in their daily lives.

6. Biodiversity is good for human health:

It is now well understood that access to green spaces is beneficial to both physical and mental health. Time spent in nature lowers blood pressure, and reduces depression, stress and anxiety. It also encourages exercise and activity. Research shows that access to biodiversity-rich areas has more health benefits than spending time in low biodiversity areas, such as very manicured landscapes with tightly mown lawns. The process of working with a team to develop a CBAP can help empower communities and help build a strong sense of identity.

Community Biodiversity Action Plans represent a fundamental step towards a sustainable future. By preserving the unique natural heritage of specific regions, these plans not only protect ecosystems and their inhabitants but also contribute significantly to safeguarding the biodiversity that sustains us all.

Developing a Community Biodiversity Action Plan

STEPS

STEP

1

Set up a local CBAP Team

Gather your team and investigate project funding and support.

STEP

2

The Ecologist

Engage an Ecologist who will act as your guide through the process.

STEP

3

Outreach

Identify key stakeholders to involve in both the planning and implementation stage of your CBAP.

STEP

4

Assess your local Biodiversity

The ecologist will carry out a baseline biodiversity audit, with the help of the local community.

STEP

5

Set Goals and Objectives

Define clear and measurable goals and actions for your Community Biodiversity Action Plan. Ensure goals are obtainable and deliverable within the timescale of your plan.

STEP

6

Publish your Biodiversity Action Plan

Launch your Community Biodiversity Action Plan, again inviting the local community to share in the event.

STEP

7

Monitoring and Evaluation

Throughout the 3-5-year lifespan of your CBAP, it is useful to monitor and evaluate your actions and adapt where necessary. Celebrate each success on your journey.



Bullfinch © Shutterstock

STEP

1

Set up a local CBAP Team

Gather your team. You will need at least five or more core members dedicated to enthuse, support and oversee the development of your Community Biodiversity Action Plan. Your team might be formed as a subcommittee of another organisation, such as Tidy Towns.

Consider the skillset you may want to have on your team. It could be beneficial to have:

- A good Project Manager to arrange meetings and keep everyone updated.
- Someone with Social Media skills who is able to spread the word.
- A Stakeholder liaison with great interpersonal skills.
- Volunteers with a keen interest in local biodiversity
- Someone able to help with grant applications or share details of local training events.

If you don't have obvious volunteers to join your team, you could reach out to your Local Authority's Heritage or Biodiversity Officer: <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/our-work-with-others/biodiversity-officer-programme> They may be able to recommend some good contacts through their Advisory Forums.

You could also outreach to local college lecturers in Botany or Ecology, outlining your hopes to establish a CBAP, and asking for a volunteer to join your team or to help in wider aspects of developing the plan.

It is also worth checking out the list of local community Not-For-Profits registered with your local Public Participation Network (PPN). Some of these community groups have a clear 'environmental' focus. You will find them listed under what is known as the 'Environmental College' for the PPN for your Local Authority. To find your local PPN, see:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/ea07c-find-your-local-public-participation-network/>

Decide on some basics:

- Are you forming a community group specifically to advance biodiversity in your community?
- What will you call yourselves?
- Where will you meet? (a kitchen table may be fine for a small group)
- How will you communicate? Are the team members happy to share their contact details with each other? A 'WhatsApp' group means everyone can see each other's phone numbers. Therefore, it is not ideal for larger groups where GDPR regulations have to be followed.
- Do you need a new dedicated email address?

Funding supports

The members of the CBAP Team may already be knowledgeable about supports in their area and where to get information. If not, it is recommended they ask to join the mailing lists of their local Heritage Officer and/or Biodiversity Officer. They should also research any live funding opportunities as outlined in **Appendix 2**.

The Ecologist

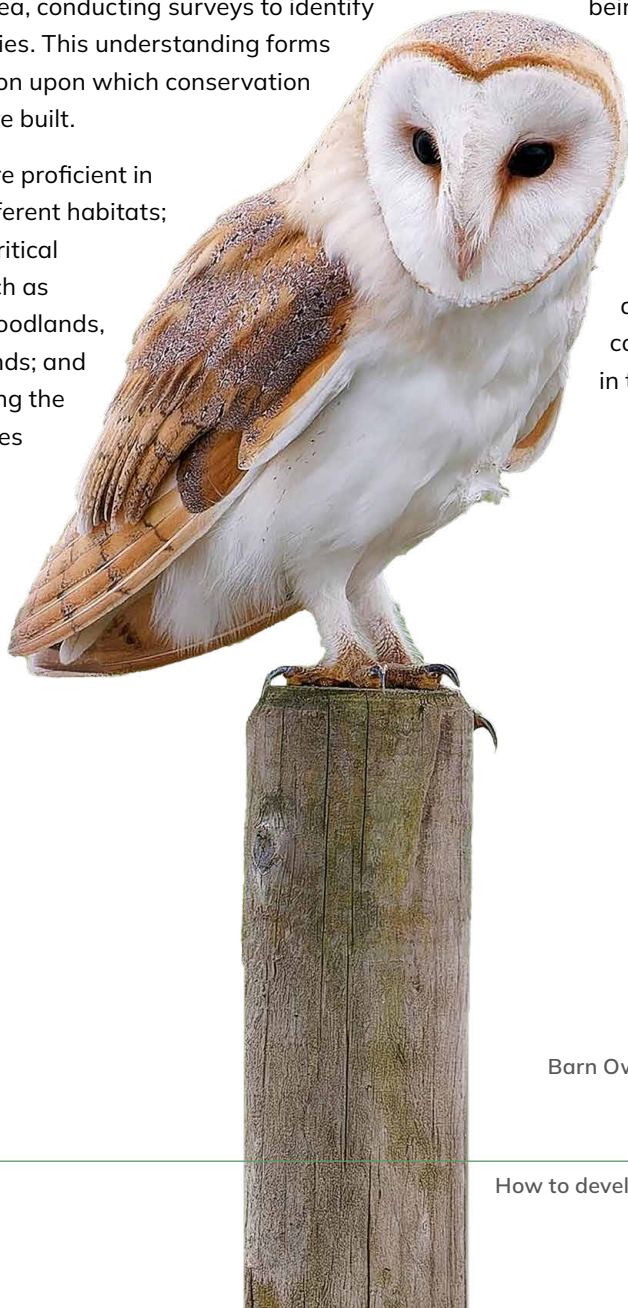
Ideally, you should engage a professional Ecologist, who will act as your guide through this process. This role is vital in understanding local ecosystems, doing a local biodiversity inventory or audit, mapping the area, and writing the actions and final report. In some communities, you may have natural history experts who are willing to fulfil this role.

The skills and knowledge of the ecologist or local biodiversity expert play a central role in understanding, preserving, and restoring local biodiversity. One of their primary roles is to comprehend the existing biodiversity within a particular area, conducting surveys to identify various species. This understanding forms the foundation upon which conservation strategies are built.

Ecologists are proficient in mapping different habitats; identifying critical habitats, such as wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands; and understanding the unique species that inhabit these areas. By engaging with local

communities, the ecologist gathers valuable local knowledge and incorporates it into the CBAP. Having local knowledge can help devise realistic/pragmatic actions that match the timelines of the CBAP. Community participation and education are vital components of successful biodiversity conservation, and ecologists can help to facilitate this crucial aspect. In essence, the ecologist is the linchpin in the development of a Community Biodiversity Action Plan.

Ecologists can also play a role in advising on how your local Community Biodiversity Action Plan could be integrated into any wider plans being prepared, such as City or County Biodiversity Plans. The ecologist should also consider how your plan links with those of neighbouring communities with whom you may share natural features (eg rivers, streams, woodlands). This will reduce duplication and ensure a holistic approach is taken to conservation of species and habitats in the wider countryside.



Barn Owl © Shutterstock

Before the ecologist starts to survey your community, there are key steps recommended to complete first.

Identify key stakeholders, such as:

- Local Authority Biodiversity Officer or Heritage Officer;
- Local Non-Profits with biodiversity expertise, e.g. your local BirdWatch Ireland group.
- Targeted individuals in a community.
- Each community group will have its own stakeholders specific to their area, e.g. Tidy Towns, Men's/Women's Sheds; Green Schools; local businesses, landowners (e.g. Coillte, Bord na Móna), fishing clubs, church grounds, local history groups, etc.

It is recommended that the ecologist makes time for meetings or walkabouts with a number of these key stakeholders, to understand local issues. If some of your ideas for action are planned for public parks/land, including roadside hedges and verges, it is vital you consult with your Local Authority in advance of agreeing the actions to be taken, as some of the actions you may plan will be affected by the policies and priorities of your Local Authority. If suggestions are advanced for landholdings of State Agencies, ensure that the language of proposed actions is positive and open.

Progress reviews and updates

- At the early stages of planning your project, schedule a Community Biodiversity Action Plan Review/Planning Meeting with your Biodiversity Officer in your local County/City Council. Ask them to help you to identify and contact other important people in your Local Authority, such as those responsible for roads, parks, and recreation.
- Hold regular Action Review Meetings, including with the Local Authority and other key stakeholders, throughout the lifetime of the plan.

Outreach

Conducting outreach with the local community is vital to a successful biodiversity action plan. Try to involve the wider community in both the planning and implementation stage of your BAP – the more people engaged at the planning stage, the more successful the actions will be. You might want to organise public meetings, workshops, and awareness campaigns. Be prepared to manage expectations and suggestions given at meetings. Remember the benefits of biodiversity – the introduction section of this guide outlines the benefits of creating a BAP. Have this to hand during discussion and remind consultees.

You also need to consider when is the best time to consult the wider community. This could be after initial meetings within the group and with stakeholders to agree broad actions. This may be more efficient than holding a large public meeting with just a blank slate. Instead, present your list of proposed actions and allow for feedback.

Sharing and updating your community about your plans

Information events around the plan are useful throughout the development stage as well as on publication of your plan. Site visits/walks through the local area may also be a useful way to engage the wider community with planned actions on the ground. Social media can also help with outreach. For example, if you have a community Facebook page, you may like to provide regular updates on the development of the biodiversity action plan or progress on actions. Land ownership is very sensitive in Ireland, so do ensure any actions on private lands are generic and do not mention on social media specific areas for these proposed actions.

Assess your local Biodiversity

While the ecologist/local expert will carry out a local biodiversity audit, it may be possible for the community group to contribute to assessments. The community's knowledge will also be vital in helping your Ecologist to identify existing refuges and biodiversity-friendly areas, and working together, you can also identify new potential project areas. Your local knowledge of how the area used to look in the past will also be vital – for example, if older members of your group remember old field boundaries, patches of woodland or wetland, it may be possible to target these areas for habitat restoration. Old maps will be useful here also. Likewise, local knowledge can help identify where topsoil is very poor or where utility pipelines have been buried.

A similar audit may already have been done for the county as part of the County Biodiversity Action Plan process, and if this is available, your ecologist should reference it in your community plan.

How to carry out a baseline survey

The baseline survey looks at the current status of habitats and species. It should answer these questions:

- Is there an existing biodiversity Inventory/ record summary for the area?
Print a biodiversity records summary for your community from Biodiversity Maps (<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>) This system allows anyone to generate a report for all species recorded for their area in Biodiversity Maps, the database of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Where are the important biodiverse areas, including designated sites, and what is their current state?
- What are the results of new surveys of species and habitats of biodiversity importance?
- What are the main threats and opportunities for local biodiversity?

Members of the community who are interested in biodiversity can help by submitting data through the [National Biodiversity Data Centre's Citizen Science Portal](#). This standardised data is validated, and then made accessible through [Biodiversity Maps](#), helping build knowledge about your local area.

Mapping

The ecologist should provide habitat maps of your local area.

- Create a map of existing green infrastructure in the community
- Focus on the easier wins that benefit biodiversity with the least input. For example, identify how to connect existing isolated biodiversity-rich areas that could be better connected by planting a short native hedgerow.
- Map public areas in the community that can become more biodiversity-friendly, in consultation with the local authority and/or landowners.

If you have a third level botanical course in your area, the students may be interested in helping with the initial habitat mapping. That's why it can also be useful (as mentioned in STEP 1) to reach out to local college lecturers of Ecology or Botany.

These maps should then be supplemented by maps showing where each action will focus. This also helps people outside of your community learn more about how and where actions are taking place.

Habitat maps should follow the Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping (Heritage Council, 2011).

Sample Habitat Maps

Cow Park Habitat Map, Athboy, Co Meath.

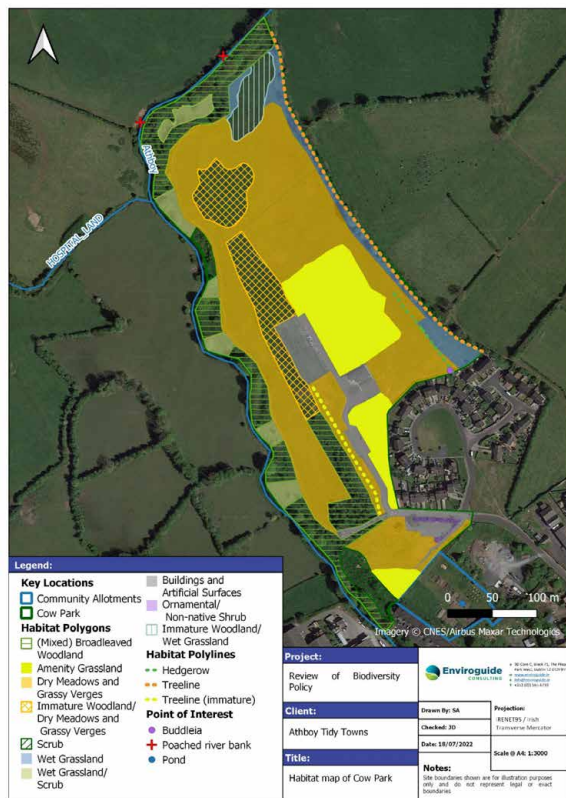


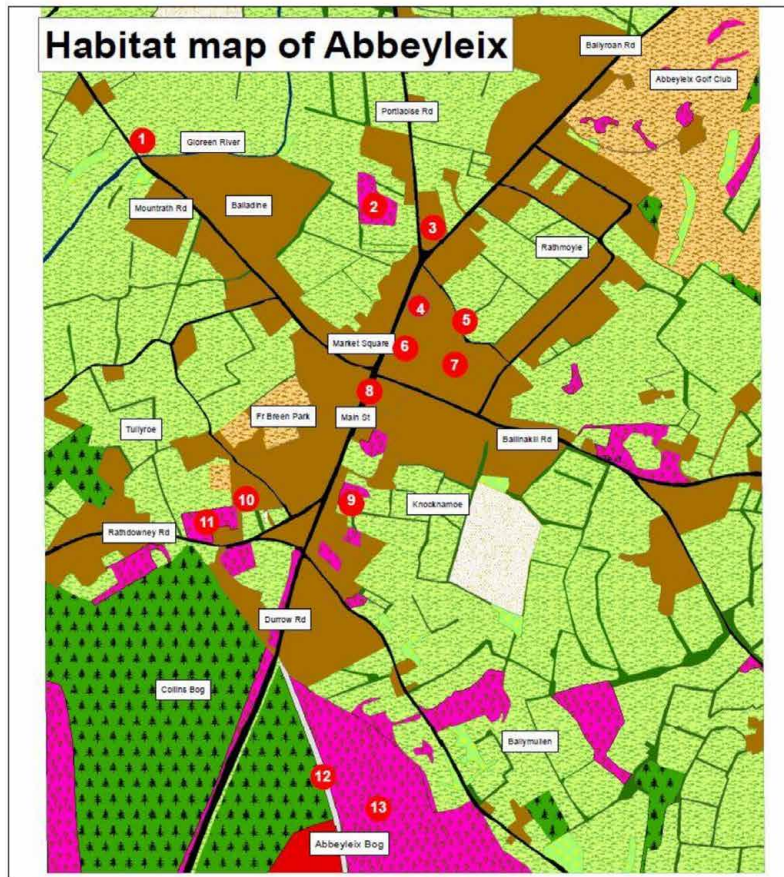
Figure 5: Cow Park Habitat Map.

Meadowbrook Estate, Corbally, Co Limerick: Habitat Map



Figure 19: Habitat map of the Meadowbrook Estate and the surrounding area. Classified and coded using the Heritage Council's 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000).

Habitat Map of Abbeyleix



Biodiversity highlights of Abbeyleix

- (1) Ballydine Bridge (look for Dippers)
- (2) The Grove (Large Beech & Ash trees featuring a Rookery)
- (3) Heritage House (nesting Swifts)
- (4) Dove House Gardens (a feast for all the senses!)
- (5) Sandy Lane (old limestone wall with many plants)
- (6) Community Garden (rest a while and listen to the garden songbirds)
- (7) Church of the Most Holy Rosary (mature, old Lime trees)
- (8) Main St (listen and look for Swifts & Housemartins in summer)
- (9) Wildlife Garden (summer flowers)
- (10) St Michael and All Angels graveyard (spring wildflowers)
- (11) The Lords Walk (deciduous woodland - catch the sight & smell of wild garlic in spring)
- (12) Abbeyleix Bog track (watch for butterflies on sunny days and bats on summer evenings)
- (13) Abbeyleix Bog (loads of wildlife!)



Set Goals and Objectives

It is vital to define clear and measurable goals for your CBAP. They should be achievable and low maintenance. Be careful not to have too many goals that could overwhelm or go beyond the capacity of your community volunteers to deliver. Discuss conservation strategies carefully and prioritise actions. Priorities can be chosen depending on conditions such as conservation status/threat, local interest, funding available, community capacity, or whether they are achievable in the timelines of the plan.

As mentioned in STEP 3/4, it is very useful for the community group to lead a walk-through of the local area for the Ecologist. The local group will already be aware of existing hotspots for biodiversity. They will also be able to identify possible new areas for action, giving feedback on what may be possible in each area.

Appendix 1 contains many examples of actions that could be included in any CBAP

Tracking change

By defining clear and measurable goals for your CBAP, this will allow later assessment or evaluation of the ecological impacts of your actions. Your Action Table should include the 'what, when, where and who' associated with each action, i.e. the action, timelines, where the action will be focused, and who is responsible for each action.

It may be worthwhile to research actions taken by other community groups, particularly in areas of similar size or location. See other action plans at www.actionforbiodiversity.ie

Protect what you have

This is a very important action to remember. It is easy to take for granted existing sites that are biodiversity-friendly, such as an area of semi-natural woodland or wildflower-rich grassland. These areas should be noted for priority protection as part of your CBAP.



Ladybird © Liam Lysaght

Negative and positive action

A CBAP has different ways of contributing to biodiversity conservation. It can reduce or stop **negative** impacts as well as generating **positive** impacts. A CBAP should include actions that take both approaches:

- Reducing negative impacts - Negative impacts include all drivers of biodiversity loss (e.g. the degradation, fragmentation or destruction of habitats; overexploitation or contamination of natural resources, e.g. local river pollution or disturbance through inappropriate recreational development). Reducing negative impacts includes all actions that can counteract drivers of biodiversity loss, e.g. removal of invasive
- Promoting positive impacts - Positive impacts include all drivers of biodiversity restoration, maintenance and promotion (e.g. regeneration and maintenance of habitats). Raising awareness of important biodiversity by organising an annual wildlife walk is an example of a simple, achievable task that may suit the abilities or capacity of your community.

Keep actions **SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely**. It is also advisable to keep actions relatively low in number or spread over the duration of the plan – three to five years. Seek to embed long-term thinking to ensure actions can easily be managed beyond the lifespan of the CBAP (e.g. long-flowering meadow management).

Remember, if your proposed actions will take place on public land – including roadsides or public areas in towns or parks – it is very important to liaise with your Local Authority in advance. This might involve a few departments, but start by talking to your local Biodiversity/Heritage Officer to ensure actions are suitable and achievable before they are included in your plan.

Sample action table

No.	Action		Responsibility	Method	Timeframe	Location(s)
1	Identify 'Biodiversity Hotspots' on simple annotated maps everyone can access.		Ecologist, CBAP Team	Ecologist first produces habitat map followed by map showing planned action locations	Prior to publication of CBAP	Throughout area
2	Reduce mowing to create short or long-flowering meadows.		CBAP team, Tidy Towns group	See www.pollinators.ie/ resources	Ongoing for lifetime of CBAP	Throughout area
3	Carry out a bat survey and erect additional bat boxes in suitable locations.	Use bat survey results to inform best placement of new bat boxes.	Bat Expert or local Bat group.	Involve local experts if possible.	Short-term (with long-term maintenance plan)	Town park
4	Erect bird boxes at appropriate sites.		Tidy Towns, Men's Shed	Involve local experts if possible.	Short-term (with long-term maintenance plan)	In public spaces where there are trees; community green spaces; riverside walk.

'Trees have leaves'

It is important to listen to members of a community and understand their concerns. For example: During a community discussion about enhancing the wildlife around a community centre, a CBAP ecologist suggested planting native trees in the car park. They explained that the trees would enhance the entrance to the area, help define a safe pedestrian passage between parked cars, slow down traffic, and break up a large expanse of tarmac, as well as enhance local biodiversity. The response to this recommendation was "trees have leaves". The ecologist was stumped. It turned out that this community member had genuine concerns about large amounts of leaves blocking drains and the extra time pressure on workers to tidy up leaves. A solution was advanced to plant trees with low leaf-fall. The Tree Council of Ireland can provide recommendations on this.



A plan to create a looped lakeside walk would consist of the following stages:

- Identify land ownership and have informal discrete discussions with landowners;
- Commission a feasibility study considering costs and environmental implications;
- Create a short linear walk;
- Install trail head amenities;
- and then, if funding permitted, extend the complete looped walk.



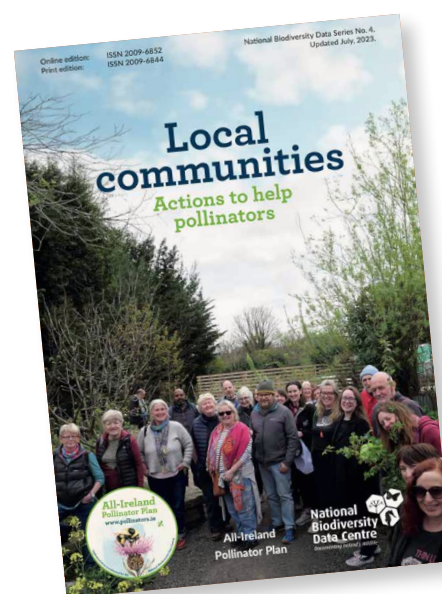
Choose your actions

In choosing your actions, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a great place to start. Remember, whatever actions you take to help pollinators, you will also be helping all types of biodiversity. The 'Local Communities: Actions for Pollinators' guide includes 24 actions:

- Identify and protect existing sources of food and shelter.
- Reduce mowing to create a long-flowering meadow.
- Reduce mowing to create a short-flowering meadow.
- Let Dandelions bloom.
- Maintain or plant a native flowering hedgerow.
- Plant native pollinator-friendly trees.
- Plant an orchard of flowering fruit trees.
- Add pollinator-friendly bedding plants to containers and hanging baskets.
- Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs.
- Plant pollinator-friendly ornamental trees and shrubs.
- Plant pollinator-friendly perennials.
- Provide nesting habitat for bumblebees.
- Provide nesting habitat for mining solitary bees.
- Provide nesting habitat for cavity-nesting solitary bees.
- Eliminate pesticide use.

- Alternatively, aim to reduce pesticide use by 50%.
- Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan resources in your community.
- Run at least one pollinator event or project every year in your community.
- Work with your local authority and other groups to create wildlife corridors.
- Put up signage.
- Log your 'Actions for Pollinators' on the online mapping system. see <https://pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- Submit annual Flower-Insect-Timed (FIT) Counts.
- Take part in the Bumblebee or Butterfly Monitoring Scheme.
- Enter the Tidy Towns Pollinator Award.

For more detail, see pollinators.ie/resources



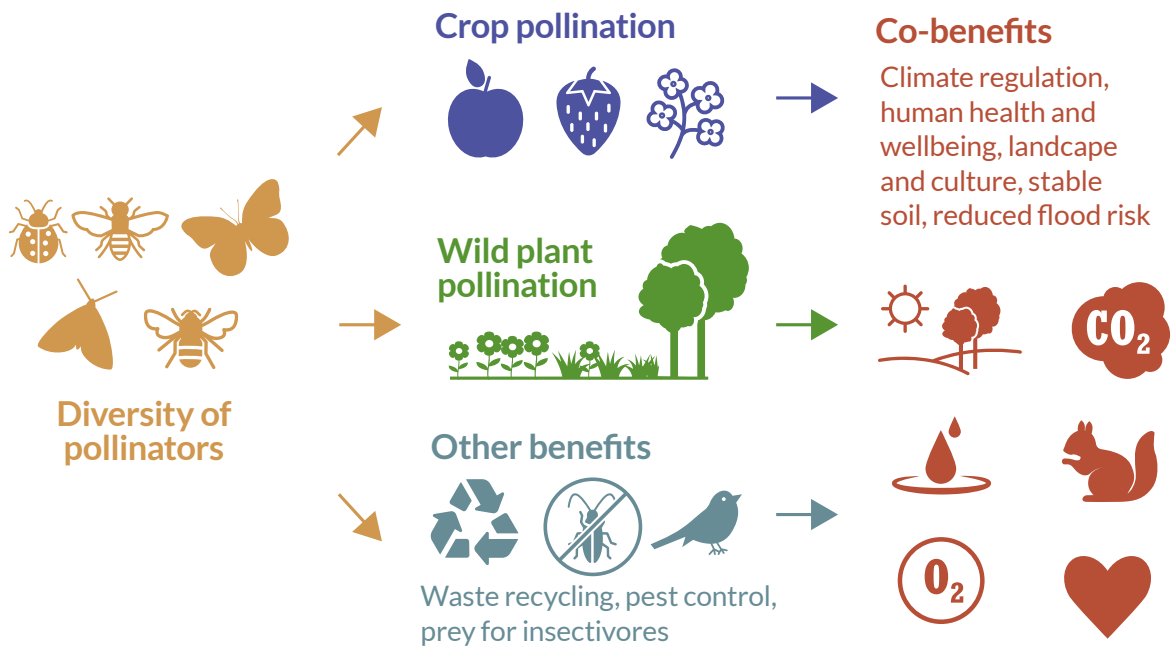
"Local Community Groups have been the backbone of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. They have embraced it in their droves and inspired countless others to follow their lead in taking actions. We can never underestimate their importance in normalising a new way of managing the landscape to better support our biodiversity."

- Dr Una FitzPatrick, co-founder, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan



Moss Carder Bee
© Liam Lysaght

Protecting pollinators brings many benefits



To see lots of ideas for actions to include in your CBAP, please see Appendix 1



STEP

6

Publish your Biodiversity Action Plan

Finalise your list of actions, agreeing what is achievable, where, who is responsible for various tasks, and when actions will be carried out. Before your CBAP is published, now is a good time to meet with the wider community to explain your plans and allow feedback.

Organise a local launch event

Invite the local community and other stakeholders to come along to the launch of your action plan. Having an action to coincide with the launch should help create publicity – e.g. Organise and display entries to a local schools' wildlife art competition. This may help to generate more interest and volunteers willing to transform the plan into action on the ground. You might also like to invite local press to cover the event to help spread the word about your biodiversity plan. Invite key stakeholders and public representatives to increase inclusion.



Put your CBAP on the map!

Add your plan to the dedicated website for Biodiversity Action Plans:

www.actionforbiodiversity.ie

Email a PDF to

biodiversityactionplans@gmail.com



Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of your plan

Throughout the life of the action plan, it is useful to track progress and adapt the plan as needed. This can be done through data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Consistent evaluation of your actions will ensure that your CBAP is not merely a document on paper but a dynamic roadmap towards a more biodiverse and sustainable future for your area. It is also worthwhile to continuously encourage ongoing community engagement and commitment to the actions in your plan, through outreach and workshops.

As the end of your CBAP approaches – usually after three to five years – it is worthwhile to start planning for your new action plan. You will be able to take what you have learned through your initial actions and monitoring results and build on this in your second CBAP and so on.



It would be worthwhile to have an ecologist complete another survey at the end of your CBAP lifespan to compare to the original baseline survey. This could be assessed under the following headings:

- % semi-natural habitats
- Area of land managed for biodiversity
- Number of species recorded for the area

* Make sure that this data is collected in the right format in your initial survey, to allow for comparison and measurement of change.

Monitoring biodiversity in your local area

There are a range of national surveys in which the community can participate in order to track biodiversity, for example:

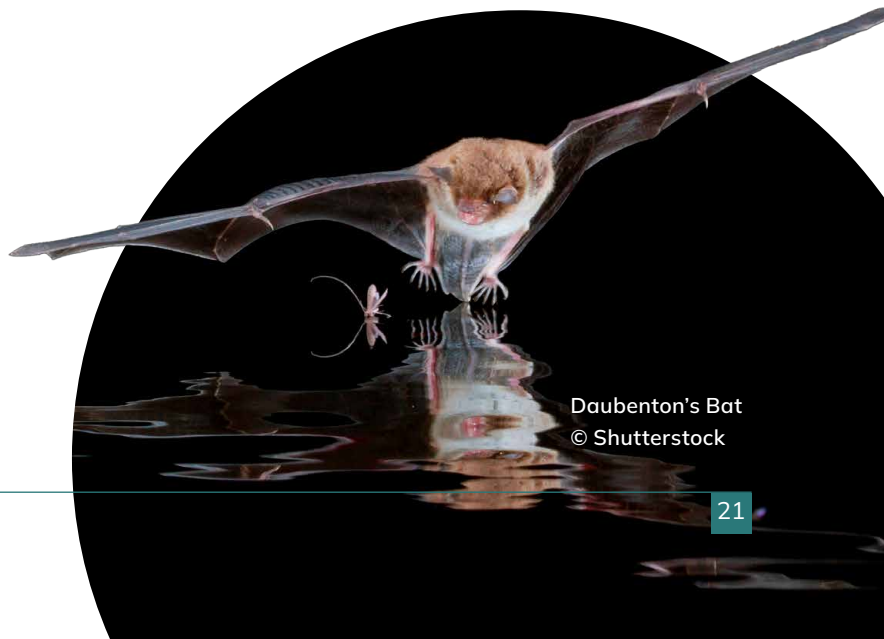
- Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme
- Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme
- Garden Butterfly Monitoring Scheme
- Rare Plant Monitoring
- Spring Flowers Project
- Explore your Shore!
- Dragonfly Ireland
- Flower-Insect-Timed Count

To find out more about these national surveys, see www.biodiversityireland.ie

Explore other surveys, such as the Countryside Bird Survey, the Irish Wetland Bird Survey, and the Garden Bird Survey.

See www.BirdWatchIreland.ie

- All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey – Bat Conservation Ireland www.batconservationireland.org



Daubenton's Bat
© Shutterstock

1

Actions you could include in your CBAP

Below is a comprehensive list of possible actions that might spark interest.

Be careful not to have too many goals that could overwhelm or go beyond the capacity of your community volunteers to deliver.

HABITATS

Important habitats:

Your local area may contain patches of semi-natural habitat, such as old woodland or hay meadows, ponds or streams. Producing a CBAP helps to identify these sites, map them and helps to protect them. It also allows you to create new habitats, such as a pocket forest or a community pond, or to identify locations where you could plant a stretch of native hedgerow.

Trees & Woodlands:

- Plan some events for Tree Week, e.g. native tree planting or a tree giveaway. Make sure the area where you plan to plant trees is suitable – e.g. peatlands, wetlands or other important biodiversity sites may not be good places for trees. It is also important to consider management of trees in the early years, such as watering and clearing grasses from the base of trees for the first five years.
- Create a community native tree nursery. Gather seed from local native trees in autumn to use as a source for the nursery scheme.
- Run a community workshop to teach easy tree propagation methods, both from seed and cuttings. These are skills that would be very worthwhile to encourage and sustain.

- In a Community Garden, allotments or local schools, build up native tree stock by growing on seeds collected locally.
- Encourage native tree planting in your local park.
- Create a community mini-woodland.
 - Develop a management plan to include:
 - Keep deadwood in woodlands in which they fall.
 - Where old trees fall and a space in the canopy results, control non-native saplings and seedlings and plant native trees there.
- Develop a map/inventory of all your native mature trees including street trees – request that these be added to your local City or County Development Plan.
- Seek the protection of specific mature trees by local authority Tree Protection Orders (TPOs).

Native hedgerows:

- Develop and implement a management strategy for this linear woodland feature to fill gaps and prevent/remove Invasive Alien Species, in consultation with landowner representatives and the local authority.
- Work with the local authority and relevant landowners and other stakeholders to agree a Hedgerow and Tree Management Strategy for the area.
- Work with key stakeholders and landowners to develop an implementation plan for the strategy to include planting and care of native hedges in suitable areas in schools, sports fields, and amenity areas; and when they are lost, replacing mature trees in historic hedgerows with native trees species.

- Implement a native hedgerow planting programme on arterial routes, in consultation with the local authority roads department.
- In parks/schools/sports grounds, consider signage to highlight the importance of hedgerows and to describe the native plant species found in the hedge.
- Organise an event to create awareness of the importance of native hedgerows and biodiversity-friendly management of hedgerows. Hold event in Biodiversity Week (May) or Hedgerow Week (September).
- Carry out a hedgerow resilience programme by augmenting existing hedgerows in the surrounding landscape with new trees such as Oak, Wild Cherry, etc. This will future-proof hedgerows against the potential impacts of Ash Dieback Disease.

pollinators.ie/resources

- Plant an Edible Hedge in an Open Green Space. An edible hedge is composed of native species which are edible for pollinators, birds, and humans. However, care must be taken with children as some of the fruits can contain large stones (such as sloes) and some are not palatable when raw (such as hawthorn). Suitable native species for this hedge include: blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), hazel, hawthorn, wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), and bird cherry (*Prunus padus*).

Stone walls:

- Create awareness of biodiversity on old stone walls in order to prevent spraying of chemicals, removal of fern species, flowers, etc.
- Identify walls potentially suitable for native climbing plants, e.g. on walls of derelict buildings or dead spaces.

- Consult with your local authority heritage officer to ensure that there is no conflict between old walls of heritage importance (e.g. on Medieval churches) and the biodiversity value of vegetation such as ivy.

Protecting our waters:

- Contact your local Community Water Officer at the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) to identify and protect all of your community water courses.
- Where appropriate, liaise with Inland Fisheries Ireland to discuss how to increase/encourage wildlife in the area, e.g. by installing a fish pass/ fish corridors.
- Work with LAWPRO or your Biodiversity Officer to design a Citizen Science programme to monitor water quality in local rivers and streams.
- Develop a community-based management plan for the protection and enhancement of a water body.
- Riparian management work: where possible, zone a 10m 'riparian edge' – e.g. in parks, allowing natural regeneration along buffer zone.
- Where no invasive species are present, banksides should be kept in a 'wild' state.
- Where necessary and appropriate, plant native riparian trees and shrubs.
- Employ techniques to manage rainwater or soiled water ingress to rivers (e.g., carpark runoff, silt trapping, etc.).
- Map invasive species along watercourses.
- Plan invasive species control (long-term planning and/or one-off control), in consultation with neighbouring communities, the local authority and landowners.

- Plan and advocate for Community Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) - e.g., Natural Flood Retention Measures (NFRM), bioswales, water butts, raingardens, (for advice on pollinator-friendly rain gardens, see pollinators.ie/resources)
- Create Constructed wetlands – novel nutrient treatment systems – consult your local authority.
- Organise a community river/coastal clean-up event.
- Create an action group to regularly pick up litter along rivers, streams/seashore.
- Where possible, avoid the use of chemicals near watercourses.
- Conduct tree pruning where necessary along water courses.
- Organise a coastal or lake nature safari and stewardship project by local fishermen and recreational users.
- Work with the Community Water Officer to implement the programme to include activities with local schools.
- Work with the local authority, NPWS, BirdWatch Ireland and relevant landowners to explore the installation of appropriate signage for educational purposes.
- Plan an event to raise awareness of protecting your local waters, e.g. pollution, reducing/safe pesticide use.

(<https://lawaters.ie/>)

(<https://lawaters.ie/app/uploads/2021/06/LEADER-A-guide-for-community-groups-working-with-Water-Biodiversity-and-Climate.pdf>)

Ponds:

- Protect existing local ponds.
- Create a new community wildlife pond on a suitable site in consultation with all relevant parties.

(<https://www.antaisce.org/ponds-for-biodiversity-resources>)

Peatlands:

- Only buy peat-free compost for community planting schemes.
- Create a community composting area.
- Source training for your community on compost making and management of your community compost area.
- Create public awareness of the importance of using peat-free compost.
- Create public awareness of the importance of composting.
- Make leaf mould to enhance compost and contribute to the sustainable use of local resources.
- If you have a local peatland, organise events, surveys and other ways to create awareness in the community of its biodiversity and benefits.

<https://www.antaisce.org/compost>
<https://www.ipcc.ie/>

Habitats:

For more information on habitat types, see the Heritage Council's *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000)

Wildlife in buildings:

- If old community buildings are being restored, conduct a wildlife survey to check if the building is being used by birds or bats. Employ an ecologist to survey the building for wildlife and take mitigation measures during works.
- Publicise guidance available on the protection of wildlife in buildings.

(<https://actionforbiodiversity.ie/app/uploads/2023/07/Wildlife-in-Buildings-linking-our-built-and-natural-heritage.pdf>)

Managing local long-flowering meadows

- Source meadow maintenance equipment for community use. Options available are to 1) purchase equipment, potentially in partnership with other neighbouring towns and villages; and 2) work with the private sector to build up their capacity for managing meadows (hire companies and/or local landscape contractors). If working with other neighbouring groups, an annual schedule for use, maintenance /servicing plans, insurance and other costs should be agreed in advance. 3) Work with your Local Authority. It may be possible for a Local Authority to coordinate and run the meadow mowing regime for community groups. Laois County Council have helped Tidy Towns groups in Abbeyleix and Portlaoise do this.

Native wildflower seed conservation:

- Promote local seed collection - by the community or by qualified professionals, including for new developments, in order to keep seed sources local, and encourage communities to collect and share local seed
- Hold a workshop on local seed collection and sowing.
- Set up a community nursery to grow on plugs to enhance local meadow areas.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Reducing the negative impacts of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is an important action. Ensure you research best practice in IAS removal. Not every species will be eradicated in the same way, and sometimes strong pesticides are required. It can also cause more problems if you try to cut/trim certain species, e.g. Japanese knotweed, as this can cause proliferation of the plant.

- Map invasive species (choose to focus on one or two species initially).
- Plan invasive species control (planning and/or one-off control).
- Work with your local authority to develop an Invasive Species Management Strategy
- Develop a community-based invasive species education, mapping, and reporting scheme using resources available from [Invasives.ie](https://www.invasives.ie).
- Identify and map the location of further species (to be agreed) for future action.
- Implement a strict policy of not using potentially invasive plant species in new planting schemes.
- Create awareness amongst local householders on planting on their own properties, for instance, cherry laurel, a plant often used for hedging, is both poisonous and invasive.

(www.invasives.ie)

PESTICIDES

'Pesticides' include insecticides and herbicides. Insecticides harm biodiversity directly by targeting insects, but herbicides can also harm insects by removing their food supply. Even tiny amounts of pesticide can pollute our streams and rivers. By reducing pesticide use in gardens and parks, you reduce these negative impacts on the environment.

- Review sources of information and ideas for reduction of pesticide use, for example: 'Alternatives to pesticides' – Pesticide Action Network; and 'Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Greener Gardening, Your Guide to Chemical-Free Affordable Gardening'.
- Work with your local authority to develop a Use of Pesticide Policy for your community, with reference to the Sustainable Use Directive (Directive 2009/128/EC) and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- Work with your local authority and other relevant groups to eliminate the inappropriate use of pesticides and reduce pesticide use to the absolute minimum.
- Provide information to the local community to help eliminate the inappropriate use of pesticides and reduce pesticide use to the absolute minimum.
- Organise a 'hand-weeding' event, which also helps to raise awareness of reducing pesticide use.
- Use natural methods of pest and weed control - Identify areas where weed control is not necessary.
- Replace slug pellets with wildlife-friendly pellets, or use natural repellents such as crushed eggshells, coffee grounds or copper tape.
- Source plants and shrubs for planting that have not been sprayed with pesticides.

Assessment of pesticide alternatives - <https://pollinators.ie/pesticide-free-places/>

(Greener Gardening - <https://actionforbiodiversity.ie/app/uploads/2023/12/Greener-Gardening-Chemical-Free-guide-by-EPA.pdf>)

(Alternatives to Pesticides - <https://actionforbiodiversity.ie/app/uploads/2023/12/Alternatives-to-herbicides-a-guide-for-the-amenity-sector.pdf>)

INSECTS

All communities can take action for insects. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan sets out a range of straightforward actions to choose from – from planting pollinator-friendly bulbs to trees, to creating a long-flowering meadow.

Actions for pollinators:

- Identify and protect existing sources of food and shelter.
- Reduce mowing to create a long-flowering meadow.
- Reduce mowing to create a short-flowering meadow.
- Let Dandelions bloom.
- Maintain or plant a native flowering hedgerow.
- Plant native pollinator-friendly trees.
- Plant an orchard of flowering fruit trees.
- Add pollinator-friendly bedding plants to containers and hanging baskets.
- Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs.
- Plant pollinator-friendly ornamental trees and shrubs.
- Plant pollinator-friendly perennials.
- Provide nesting habitat for bumblebees.
- Provide nesting habitat for mining solitary bees.

- Provide nesting habitat for cavity-nesting solitary bees.
- Eliminate pesticide use.
- Alternatively, reduce pesticide use by 50%.
- Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan resources in your community.
- Run at least one pollinator event or project every year in your community.
- Work with your local authority and other groups to create wildlife corridors.
- Put up signage.
- Log your 'Actions for Pollinators' on the online mapping system.
- Submit annual Flower-Insect-Timed (FIT) Counts.
- Take part in the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme.
- Enter the Tidy Towns Pollinator Award

(All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. pollinators.ie/resources)

[Gardening for Butterflies](#)

Moths, other nocturnal pollinators, and other species

- Close blinds or curtains at night.
- Minimise outdoor light use.
- Choose lights that are least harmful to biodiversity.
- Try to avoid using ornamental lighting.
- Avoid pointing lights into the sky at night.
- Increase native plants that provide nectar for nocturnal pollinators.
- Increase native plants that provide food for moth caterpillars.
- Don't tidy up dead plant matter.
- Create a 'moon garden' through ornamental planting.

- Consider getting involved in moth recording.
- Organise an event to raise awareness of the importance of nocturnal pollinators, actions and monitoring.

pollinators.ie/resources

Gardening for Nocturnal Pollinators and Bats:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-attract-moths-and-bats-your-garden>

<https://www.batconservationireland.org/get-involved/gardening-for-bats>

BIRDS

Actions for different species will depend on your local environment and what actions are suitable in your area. For instance, barn owl boxes would not be suitable for very urban areas, as it would be very unlikely they would become occupied as they need large open areas in which to hunt. Your ecologist/local expert will help to advise you on which actions you can take for birds.

Garden Birds:

- Provide feeding stations within your local area for birds in winter.
- Erect birdboxes in trees in local woodland/parks.
- Plant bird-friendly shrubs and trees in community areas, which will provide food for birds, e.g. holly, hawthorn, crab apple, rowan or pyracantha.
- Create a flower bed and select plant species to provide forage for birds. During the autumn and winter months, birds will feed on nutrient-rich high-calorie seed heads. Some examples of species which produce attractive seed-heads for birds include: Teasel, (*Dipsacus fullonum*), Sea holly (*Eryngium* spp.), Globe thistle (*Echinops* spp.), Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*), Rudbeckia (*Rudbeckia* spp.), Turkish sage (*Phlomis russeliana*), and Hyssop (*Agastache* spp.).

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/garden-birds/nestboxes/>

Swifts:

- Commission a swift survey to identify all known nesting sites and protect them from inappropriate development, which would result in the loss of nesting sites.
- Organise a swift awareness event to observe swifts and educate locals on this fascinating species and the threats they face.
- Build swift towers or install nest boxes on suitable buildings to provide new nesting sites for swifts (acoustic lures will also need to be installed).
- Install cameras in new swift towers or nest boxes and stream online to encourage public interest.
- Lobby for Swift bricks to be included in future developments.
- Monitor the Swift population numbers annually and the uptake of newly installed Swift boxes.

(<https://birdwatchireland.ie/publications/saving-swifts-guide/>)

Barn Owls:

- Put up a barn owl box in local park woodland or school grounds.
- Explore the possibility of a Barn Owl project with local farmers.

(<https://actionforbiodiversity.ie/app/uploads/2023/07/Wildlife-in-Buildings-linking-our-built-and-natural-heritage.pdf>)

Dippers:

- Erect dipper boxes under suitable bridges.
- Monitor Dipper boxes for occupancy annually and submit records to BirdWatch Ireland.

(Sample project: http://www.birdwatchkildare.com/?page_id=298)

Swans and Ducks:

- Create awareness about best practice in feeding birds at public areas around lakes and canals, for instance not to feed bread to swans and ducks. Perhaps erect a feeder for public use (see the Feed the Ducks Initiative (www.feedducks.com)).

BATS

A bat survey by an ecologist or your local bat group will help to identify the most common bat species in your community and the best ways to help them. The best way to help may be through an awareness campaign about bats, reducing artificial lighting in gardens or through responsible cat ownership.

- Conduct a bat survey to assess local bat roosts.
- Reduce or remove artificial lighting.
- Put up bat boxes on trees in local woodland, or on suitable buildings or bridges.
- Plant night-scented flowers in parks or encourage gardeners to plant at home.
- Hold a bat awareness event with your local bat group. e.g. an educational evening/bat walk.
- Host and take part in a Daubenton's Bat survey event to set up an annual survey.
- Create community awareness of keeping cats indoors at night to protect bats as they leave and return to roost sites.
- Encourage cat-owners to place bells on cat collars to mitigate bird/bat predation.
- Engage community groups to make their own bat boxes e.g. Men's sheds.

<https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Gardening-For-Bats.pdf>

<https://www.batconservationireland.org/irish-bats/bat-roosts/775-2>)

For Dark Sky guidelines for outdoor lighting, see <https://www.darksky.ie/>

ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS

Identifying ecological corridors through your community will help you to see where and how they can be improved and new links created, for instance, by making schools, businesses, gardens and car parks more biodiversity friendly.

Identify opportunities to preserve, extend and enhance habitat corridors within the community and to connect with corridors in adjacent areas.

- Create a Biodiversity Loop Walk - A loop walk could be created through the community to showcase local biodiversity features and the actions being taken to improve biodiversity.
- Engage with local sports clubs, businesses, schools or faith communities to develop local biodiversity projects.
- Help to ensure that recreational developments don't adversely impact biodiversity by taking part in the public consultation process.
- Explore ways in which local car parks can be made more biodiversity-friendly (e.g. reduce lighting, increase pollinator-friendly planting).
- Liaise with your local authority/local businesses/churches and other organisations to explore the possibility of making their car parks pollinator-friendly.

pollinators.ie/resources

CREATING AWARENESS

Creating awareness of the importance of biodiversity and how to help biodiversity is a very worthwhile action. This can be on a small scale, for instance, presenting a talk at a local school, or more widely through a public workshop. A newsletter for local residents might include tips on helping pollinators, or a residents' Facebook page could feature a post on your Biodiversity Action Plan. A local newspaper/radio show might be interested in covering your planned actions.

- Plan an active Biodiversity Awareness campaign throughout the year, including events for Biodiversity Week in May or Heritage Week in August.
- Organise outreach to local schools.
- Any organisations, staff or contractors involved in the hands-on management of green spaces could be trained in how to manage these areas in a biodiversity-friendly way.
- Install signage informing people of the biodiversity features in different areas.
- Install signage informing people of the actions that have been taken in particular areas, for example, where mowing has been reduced on a grassy verge.
- Use signage to help the community learn about the importance of ecological corridors.
- Commission sculptures inspired by local biodiversity, e.g. living willow.
- Commission local artists or school children to create murals to raise biodiversity awareness, e.g. for walls or electrical boxes.
- Organise activities and events to promote biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services and to raise awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of biodiversity.
- Organise a 'Pollinator-friendly Plant Swap' event to enhance pollinator-friendly planting in the community.

- Create an email list or WhatsApp group for local volunteers who can be called upon for practical conservation volunteering events throughout the year, such as management of wildflower meadows, invasive species removal, tree planting, etc.
- For Heritage Week, organise an event to demonstrate traditional hand scything for maintenance of long flowering meadow areas.
- Engage with local businesses to develop local biodiversity projects.

See <https://pollinators.ie/businesses/>

MONITORING

- Encourage local residents to get involved in monitoring and citizen science programmes.
- Build up a stock of biodiversity educational resources. Liaise with the local library.
- Build up a stock of biodiversity recording equipment, such as bat detectors, moth traps (a licence is needed for moth trapping), etc. It may be possible to apply for a National Parks and Wildlife Service Small Recorders Grant to help towards purchasing equipment.

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS:

- Identify a number of potential 'Flagship Projects' which incorporate a range of actions. These projects would raise awareness of local biodiversity and hopefully spark interest within the local community. For instance, the community in Skerries, Co Dublin, took on an exciting flagship project to protect and enhance habitats for the rare Large Carder Bee. This included creating an ecological corridor – a series of stepping stones offering food and shelter - through the town, (See <https://sustainableskerries.com/pollinator-action-plan/>)
- Work with local schools and NGOs to carry out a conservation project around a species of particular interest.

GARDENS

Gardens represent a large land area in any community. Encouraging gardeners to take action for biodiversity at home is a great way to create lots of pitstops offering food and shelter for wildlife around the locality. Many of the actions above can be taken in your own garden, for instance, erecting bee hotels, birdhouses, making logpiles, reducing mowing, and so on.

- Create awareness in the community of actions that can be taken for biodiversity in domestic gardens.
- Share resources for gardeners, for instance: the '[Gardening for Butterflies](#)' booklet produced by the National Biodiversity Data Centre; '[Gardening for Bats](#)' – produced by Bat Conservation Ireland; and '[Wildlife in Buildings](#)' by BirdWatch Ireland.
- Distribute information on which plants provide food for birds and pollinators.
- Distribute free native fruit trees for home gardens and get Eircodes for all so you can map where the trees will be planted to provide coverage throughout the community.
- Distribute information on native trees suitable for small gardens. Organise a tree giveaway to coincide with National Tree Week in March. This event is organised by the Tree Council of Ireland who supply trees to community groups. See <https://www.treecouncil.ie/national-tree-week>

(For booklet and videos on gardening for Biodiversity, see: <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Garden-Wildlife-Booklet-WEB-17MB.pdf>)

Sources of Funding or Training

Financial support to produce CBAPs is available via a number of routes as detailed below. These funding sources may also allow you to apply for funding for specific elements within your CBAP (e.g. a street wildlife mural), or provide specific relevant training, e.g. seed harvesting; social media training.

The Heritage Council

Interested groups can apply for a grant through the annual Community Heritage Grants Scheme, administered by the Heritage Council. See <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/community-heritage-grant-scheme-2>

Community Foundation Ireland

Community Foundation Ireland offers funding through the Biodiversity Fund. Grants are provided through a partnership between Community Foundation Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. These organisations have been matching private and public money to protect biodiversity since 2019. See <https://www.communityfoundation.ie/newsroom/biodiversity-grants-open-for-applications/> There is also funding available to complete actions contained in your action plan. Keep an eye on their website and social media for updates on open funding rounds.

Local Biodiversity Action Fund

The Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF) provides grant funding to Local Authorities to support actions in the NBAP at local and community level. Between 2018 and 2023, over €6m was awarded to support hundreds of small-scale projects such as an Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Galway City, predator-proof fences for breeding waders in Co. Donegal, otter habitat survey in Dublin City, county tree map survey in Co. Roscommon, hedgerow survey in Co. Kilkenny, habitat mapping in Co. Cork, bat surveys in Co. Clare, swift and barn owl surveys in Co. Carlow, rhododendron clearance on Howth Head in Fingal, dune protection plan in Co. Louth, wetland restoration in Co. Waterford, japanese

knotweed treatment in Co. Kerry, citizen science and engagement in Co. Offaly, pond restoration in Co. Wicklow, and so much more.

To propose a project for funding, contact your local Biodiversity Officer or Heritage Officer.

Local Authority funding via Biodiversity or Heritage Officers

To seek funding from a Local Authority, contact your local Biodiversity/Heritage Officer to enquire if any suitable funding is available and also ask to be added to their mailing lists. Contact details for Biodiversity Officers are available here: <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/our-work-with-others/biodiversity-officer-programme>

Local Authority Funding

There are also other Local Authority grants that may fund elements of a CBAP. For example, an arts grant could fund a mural to highlight some local biodiversity. Your Local Authority normally has a page on their website with details of all grants. They generally must be spent within a calendar year: <https://www.localgov.ie/grants-and-funding>

Local LEADER organisations

The LEADER Programme supports rural communities in Ireland through Local Action Groups (LAG). Your community may fall within the jurisdiction of an LAG. To seek funding from LEADER, make contact to see if there are any appropriate funding streams. Such applications are best suited to larger funding applications (e.g. €20k minimum) which require up-front payments before receipt of funding, triggering the community to acquire a bridging loan. Therefore, LEADER may be better suited to a funding request for a significant or flagship project, e.g. the purchase of a 'Cut and Lift' Mowing Machine for use across the county, or a collaborative training submission. Details of LEADER can be found here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/8ac2b-leader-programme-ireland/>

Public Participation Network (PPN)

All 'not for profit' groups and organisations operating in a local area can join their Local Authority's PPN. Once you join, you will receive relevant information on grants, funding, insurance offerings and training on offer locally. Training can be anything from Leadership in Community Groups to Enhancing Biodiversity.

To join a PPN, groups should:

- have a committee, a set of rules and/or a constitution
- be open to new members
- be structured. For instance, hold an annual general meeting (AGM), have a bank/credit union account

Tidy Towns Special Awards

The national Tidy Towns competition runs annually, with applications opening in March. In conjunction with the national competition, there are about 12 Special Awards which any community group can enter. Themes vary from a Tree Project Award to a Water and Communities Award and a Pollinator Award. More often the awards are given in recognition of work achieved, such as extensive tree-planting schemes and their maintenance. They could be ideal to help celebrate your achievements in your CBAP. 2024 saw an award from Bat Conservation Ireland for a sculpture and a mural for the winning group. See <https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/>

Corporate sponsorship

It may also be possible to seek funding for individual actions, through corporate sponsorship from businesses in your area.

Funding requirements

Be sure to understand and deliver on any funding requirements under your scheme. For example, under Community Foundation Ireland's Biodiversity Fund, the community group is responsible for ensuring all requirements are met, including engaging and facilitating the knowledge transfer to the local community. It is also advised that ecologists should engage in community outreach, including:

- Delivering a minimum of one public talk/workshop/event as part of the project, with promotional support provided by the community group.
- Initial walkover meeting and final walkover meeting (post-data collection to bring the CBAP to life). These can be planned with other events, e.g. Biodiversity Week, Heritage Week, Tree Week, etc.

Likewise, training events funded may require proof of attendance with all asked to sign attendance sheets for all training sessions. You should assign one volunteer to manage this specifically. Other supporting evidence useful for this includes photos (it is advised to ask permission on attendance forms), or screen grabs of online training sessions.

National Biodiversity Data Centre

www.biodiversityireland.ie

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

www.Pollinators.ie

Library of Biodiversity Action Plans

www.actionforbiodiversity.ie

Biodiversity Maps

<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>

Recording biodiversity on Ireland's
citizen science portal:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/>

BirdWatch Ireland

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/>

Field Names –

Logainm.ie or placenames.ie

Invasive Alien Species in Ireland

Invasives.ie

National Parks and Wildlife Service

<https://www.npws.ie/>

Heritage Council

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/>

Community Foundation Ireland

<https://www.communityfoundation.ie/>

Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO)

<https://lawaters.ie/>

Inland Fisheries Ireland

<https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/>

Irish Peatland Conservation Council

<https://www.ipcc.ie/>

Ponds for Biodiversity – An Taisce

antaisce.org/ponds-for-biodiversity-resources

Clean Coasts

<https://cleancoasts.org/>

Irish Wildlife Trust

<https://iwt.ie/>

Bat Conservation Ireland

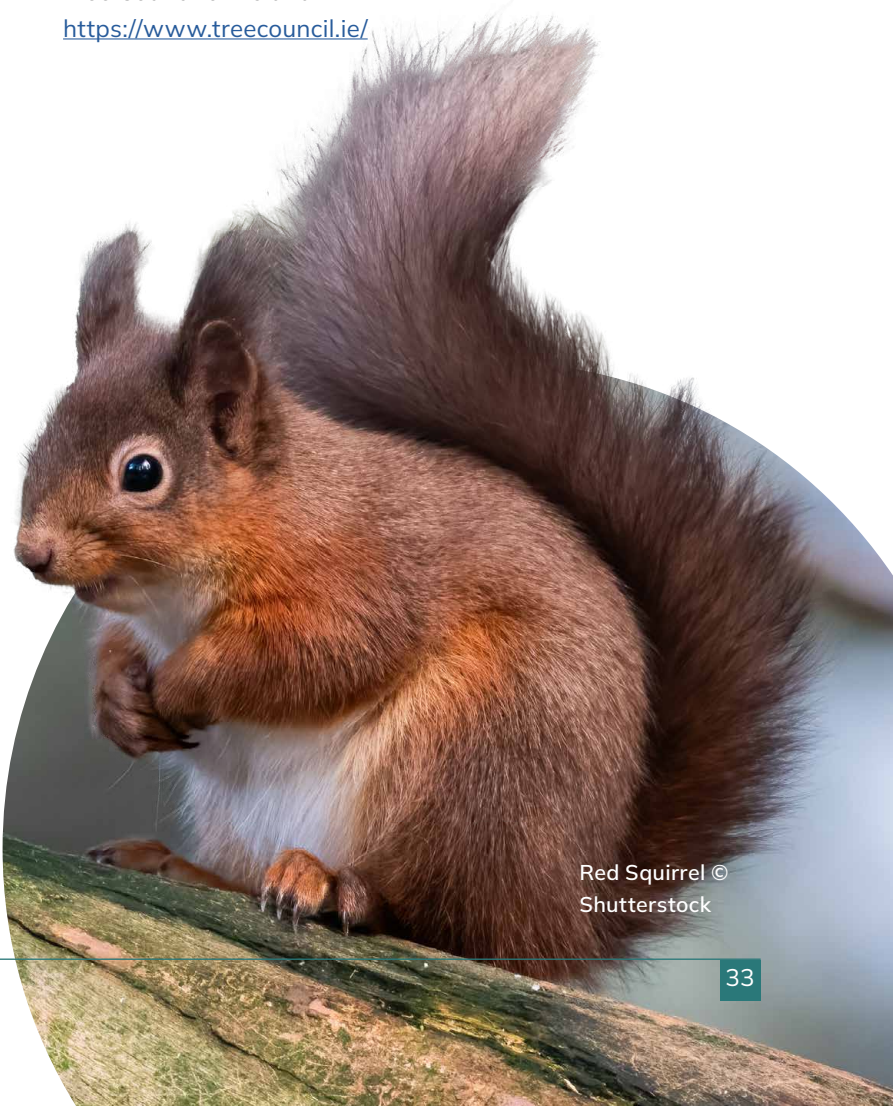
<https://www.batconservationireland.org/>

Swift Conservation Ireland:

www.swiftconservation.ie/nest-box-advice/

Tree Council of Ireland

<https://www.treecouncil.ie/>



Red Squirrel ©
Shutterstock



Long-flowering meadow
© Úna FitzPatrick



Common carder bee, *Bombus pascuorum*
© Steven Falk


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**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council**



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service