



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030





From the world's great rainforests to small parks and gardens, from the blue whale to microscopic fungi, biodiversity is the extraordinary variety of life on Earth. We humans are part of, and fully dependent on, this web of life: it gives us the food we eat, filters the water we drink, and supplies the air we breathe. Nature is as important for our mental and physical wellbeing as it is for our society's ability to cope with global change, health threats and disasters.

We need nature in our lives.

EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030



Lesser celandine
Ficaria verna

Photo: Ben Malone

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List of abbreviations

AA – Appropriate Assessment	EU – European Union	MHS – Meath Heritage Strategy	SAC – Special Area of Conservation
ASIs – Areas of Scientific Interest	FPO – Flora Protection Order	NBAP – National Biodiversity Action Plan	SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment
AIPP – All-Ireland Pollinator Plan	GBUE – Green Blue Urban Environment	NBDC – National Biodiversity Data Centre	SPA – Special Protection Area
BD – EU Birds Directive	GIS – Geographic Information System	NBS-CM – Nature-based Solutions for Catchment Management	SPC – Strategic Policy Committee
BSBI – Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland	GSI – Geological Survey Ireland	NBS-ICM – Nature-based Solutions for Integrated Catchment Management	SuDS – Sustainable Drainage System
CARO – Climate Action Regional Offices	HD – EU Habitats Directive	NGO – Non-governmental Organisation	TII – Transport Infrastructure Ireland
CBA – County Biodiversity Area	IBSCAP – Ireland’s Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plan	NHA – Natural Heritage Area	WAP – Water Action Plan
CSO – Central Statistics Office	IFI – Inland Fisheries Ireland	NPF – National Planning Framework	WFD – Water Framework Directive
DAFM – Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	IPBES – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	NPO – National Priority Objective	
DECC – Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	LABAP – Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan	NPWS – National Parks and Wildlife Service	
DHLGH – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	LAWPRO – Local Authority Waters Programme	NRR – Nature Restoration Regulation	
DWW – Domestic Wastewater	LBAF – Local Biodiversity Action Fund	NWRM – Natural Water Retention Measures	
EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment	LECP – Local Economic and Community Plan	OPR – Office of the Planning Regulator	
eNGO – Environmental Non-governmental Organisation	MBAP – Meath Biodiversity Action Plan	OPW – Office of Public Works	
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency	MCAP – Meath Climate Action Plan	pNHA – Proposed Natural Heritage Area	
EC – European Communities	MCC – Meath County Council	RBMP – River Basin Management Plan	
	MCDP – Meath County Development Plan	RPO – Regional Priority Objective	
		RSES – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy	

Foreword

Message from Meath County Council



Clir Wayne Harding
Cathaoirleach,
Meath County Council



Kieran Kehoe
Chief Executive,
Meath County Council

Meath is a county rich in natural heritage – from its rolling landscapes and vibrant farmlands to its rivers, woodlands, coastline and ancient sites. Our biodiversity is a vital part of what makes Meath unique, not only sustaining ecosystems but enriching the health, wellbeing and prosperity of all who live, work and visit here.

Yet, like many parts of Ireland and the world, Meath faces unprecedented challenges. The loss of natural spaces for nature, ongoing issues with the health of our rivers, the spread of invasive species, and climate change are placing immense pressure on our natural environment. The need to protect, conserve and restore biodiversity is more urgent than ever.

The *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP) 2025 – 2030* represents a renewed commitment by Meath County Council to play its part in reversing biodiversity loss.

Together with the Meath Climate Action Plan Meath County Council will spearhead the development of a climate-resilient, biodiversity

rich, environmentally sustainable, and climate-neutral economy in County Meath.

We thank the Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum, as well as all individuals, communities, statutory and non-statutory organisations who participated in the plan-making process, for their valuable role and input in the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. We are also grateful to The Heritage Council for their guidance and support during the plan’s development and look forward to continuing to collaborate in its implementation.

At its heart the plan recognises that protecting biodiversity is not a task for any one group alone – it is a shared responsibility. It requires vision, leadership, innovation and, most importantly, partnership. Through collective effort we can protect our native species and natural habitats, support sustainable land use, and ensure that the benefits of biodiversity are passed on to present and future generations.

Meath County Council is proud to lead on this work, but success will depend on the continued involvement and support of the people of Meath. Together, we can ensure that the county’s natural heritage will thrive – now and into the future.

Let this plan be a call to action and a source of hope. In valuing and restoring nature, we strengthen the very foundations of our communities and our county.

Message from The Heritage Council



Dr Martina Moloney
Chairperson,
The Heritage Council



Virginia Teehan
Chief Executive,
The Heritage Council

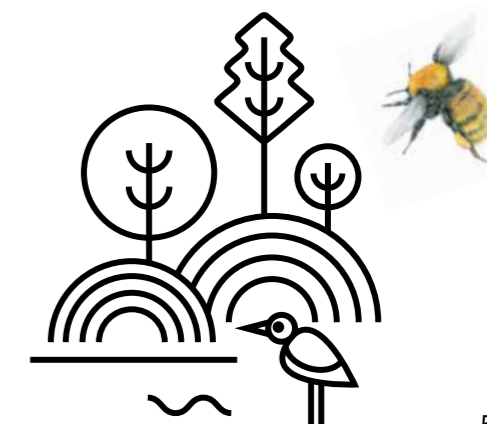
We are pleased to introduce the *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030*. This milestone initiative represents a vital step in bringing national biodiversity policy to life at the local level, reflecting Meath’s unique landscapes, rich natural heritage and engaged communities.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme, established by The Heritage Council in partnership with the City and County Management Association, has been pivotal in embedding biodiversity at the heart of local decision-making. Through funding, training and the development of networks, this programme equips local authorities with the tools to address the challenges and opportunities in biodiversity conservation. In Meath this work builds on a solid foundation laid by the Heritage Office and the Heritage Forum, whose vision and commitment paved the way for the appointment of Ben Malone, the county’s first Biodiversity Officer in 2023.

The integrated, holistic approach to heritage by Meath County Council – recognising the interdependence of natural, built and cultural assets – is inspiring. The collaboration between the Heritage Forum and the Biodiversity Working Group reflects a deep understanding of how people connect with their surroundings, valuing them as vibrant expressions of identity, memory and place.

Developing and delivering a county-level Biodiversity Action Plan serves not only to protect habitats and species, but also to foster local engagement, pride and climate resilience. The *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan* embodies this ethos, drawing on community input, expert knowledge and policy guidance to chart a course for sustainable, impactful conservation. As we face increasing environmental challenges the implementation of this plan will be a testament to the strength of partnerships and the commitment of all involved.

The Heritage Council is proud to support Meath County Council, the Biodiversity Officer, Ben Malone, and local communities as they deliver this impressive and essential plan.



Acknowledgements

Meath County Council and the Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum acknowledge the support of The Heritage Council while preparing the *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030* through its part-funding of and support for the Biodiversity Officer Programme and the provision of annual funding for developing and implementing the plan.

We also pay tribute to all those who took part in the consultation process.

Furthermore, we thank Megan O'Connor, Clerical Officer, Mary Duff, Staff Officer, and Mary McCarthy, Staff Officer, of Meath County Council, for their administrative support in developing this plan.

Members of the Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum deserve particular praise. Their willingness to contribute and offer their guidance in developing the plan was exemplary and was gratefully received.

Finally, we would like to thank the Senior Management Team of Meath County Council, the Development Management and Forward Planning Strategic Policy Committee and the Elected Members of Meath County Council for all their support.

The development of this plan and final document were funded by The Heritage Council and Meath County Council, while artistic illustrations were funded by Creative Ireland.

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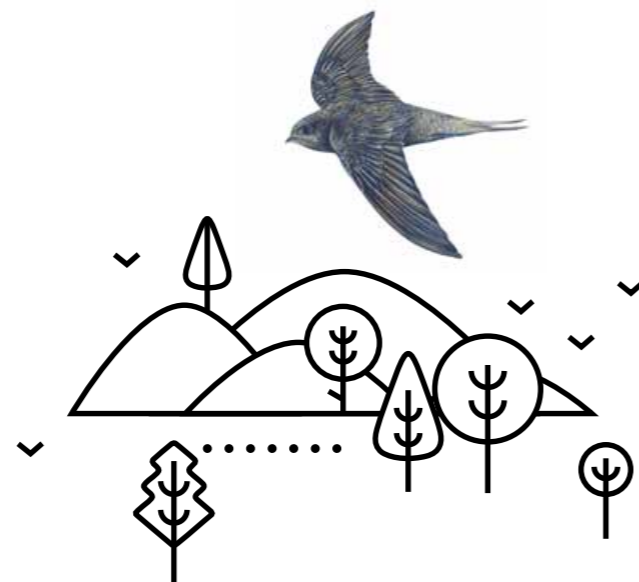
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Printer: Excel Print

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Badger
Meles meles

Photo: Caroline Legg

Executive Summary

About this Plan

The *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP) 2025 – 2030* is designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at the local authority level. It recognises and celebrates the rich diversity and importance of Meath's natural heritage including its flora and fauna and their habitats from Meath's coastal environment to its inland countryside, towns and villages. It acknowledges the essential role of nature and the outdoors in our society as:

- A cornerstone to our health and wellbeing.
- An integral element of our economy.
- A safeguard for younger generations facing significant environmental challenges into the future.

The *MBAP* has been written for the people of Meath as an informative and important steer for those interested in biodiversity conservation. This includes people who work and live in the county and those involved in local environmental organisations, heritage organisations, community groups, schools, local businesses, faith communities, sports clubs, local landowners and farmers. Not all the actions will apply to each reader, but there is a role for everyone in helping to make this plan a success.

Reasons for biodiversity loss

Despite the important role that biodiversity plays in everyday life, there is a serious concern for biodiversity in Meath, Ireland, and throughout the globe. Too often local habitats are lost or subject to degradation, leading to a silent decline of nature. Biodiversity loss is an issue in Meath, as in other counties in Ireland, for various reasons including:

Agricultural intensification (for example, the use of fertilisers and pesticides, the replacement of semi-natural grasslands by modified improved grasslands or the loss of sediment to waterbodies).

Drainage of land and land conversion resulting in the loss of habitats that support nature (for agriculture, forestry and peat cutting).

Development (for example, the construction and use of residential, commercial, industrial, transport and recreational infrastructure, including associated light pollution).

Discharges from wastewater infrastructure (that is, the release of polluted effluent into waterbodies such as local rivers, lakes and the sea).

Drainage of rivers (that is, the straightening, widening and deepening of river channels by mechanical means).

Presence of river barriers (such as dams and weirs that physically prevent migration of aquatic animals upriver).

Invasive alien species (that is, non-native plants and animals, which can negatively affect our native wildlife).

Emergent diseases, which are harmful to native biodiversity (for example, Ash Dieback and Fireblight).

Climate change is also expected to play a far more important role in the coming years.

Our challenge

The challenge for Meath is to prosper in such a way that protects biodiversity and builds ecological resilience for future generations. Thus, one of the primary purposes of this plan is to focus the efforts of Meath County Council (MCC) and other local partners to respond to the escalating ecological crisis and climate emergency while supporting sustainable development in the county.

How this Plan will respond to the challenge

The *MBAP* serves as a framework for furthering the protection, conservation, management and promotion of Meath's biodiversity over the next five years and beyond. It outlines the vision for the plan and briefly describes the collaborative process used to develop it, highlighting the partnership approach taken.

The actions of the plan, which are presented in more detail in Section 8, are organised under five broad strategic objectives:

1. Reaching a deeper spatial understanding of nature in Meath

Actions under this objective will contribute to our knowledge and evidence base to inform project development and decision-making processes in MCC by identifying, mapping and periodically monitoring important sites for nature in Meath such as local wetlands, woodlands and semi-natural grasslands.

2. Leading the way in policy, planning and practice

MCC recognises the important role it must play in the region in addressing biodiversity loss, building resilience against climate change, protecting and restoring water quality, and bringing people closer to nature again in our towns and villages. Actions under this objective, such as staff training, integrating nature-based solutions into projects, or using alternatives to chemical pesticides, represent many of the direct interventions that MCC will make to protect, conserve and support nature through new and focused projects, and during the daily work of the local authority.

3. Action for biodiversity

Actions grouped under this objective commit to continued support for pre-existing biodiversity projects such as The

Hare's Corner, as well as initiatives viewed as important for protecting and conserving certain habitats and species like the Barn Owl or the Swift. Actions for biodiversity may also include commitments to supporting projects aimed at furthering national, regional or local objectives for biodiversity, such as protecting or restoring rivers or lakes with a high ecological status.

4.

Research and monitoring

The challenge of halting biodiversity loss must be underpinned by sound science. Actions under Objective 4 aim to improve our understanding of how nature is faring and how we might better support it on specific sites within and outside the local authority land holding. Efforts will be made to support public participation in recording and documenting wildlife, including invasive alien species, as well as investigating opportunities for improved ecosystem service provision in our river catchments.

5.

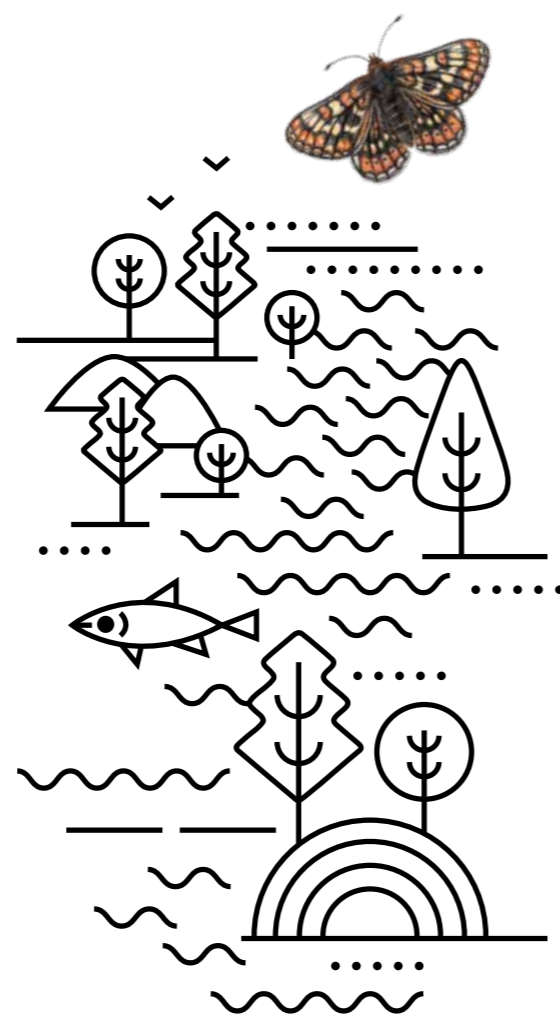
Raising awareness and appreciation of biodiversity

Educating people of all ages and demographics about biodiversity and the essential role it plays in our society and economy is fundamental to the success of the *MBAP*. The actions in this plan will ensure that MCC continues (a) to raise awareness about local biodiversity and (b) to collaborate with and support community/voluntary groups and schools, as well as interested farmers and landowners, to engage in efforts that will benefit nature on their lands and in their respective localities.

Implementing the plan and monitoring progress

The Biodiversity Working Group of the County Meath Heritage Forum will guide the implementation of the plan by providing key expertise and oversight. The *MBAP* will be delivered through a series of annual work programmes subject to available funding and resources.

The Biodiversity Officer will prepare annual progress reports relating to the implementation of the plan and monitor performance against the stated targets.



Kingfisher
Alcedo atthis

Photo: Ciaran O'Kelly on the Borora River

01

Introduction

The Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP) 2025 – 2030 is a framework document setting out the ambition and work programme of Meath County Council (MCC) for the next five years.

Implementation of the actions listed in this plan enables the Council to set a nature positive trajectory that will help the organisation to deliver on its obligations to biodiversity and the local environment in Meath.

This is the third Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for Meath, the two previous plans having been developed and launched in conjunction with the County Meath Heritage Forum in 2008 and 2015 respectively.

We are all responsible for looking after and caring for our natural environment. The *MBAP* challenges us all – planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers, politicians, developers, business owners, landowners, local communities and individuals – to get involved in protecting,

sensitively managing and restoring nature in whatever way we can.

By acting together, we can make a real difference. We will play our part in helping Ireland to achieve both national and international objectives for biodiversity, to continue to protect and connect people to our natural heritage, to position County Meath as a leader in sustainable development, and to work hard to hand over a healthy and more climate-resilient environment to the next generation.



Field Grasshopper
Chorthippus brunneus

Photo: Ben Malone

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity describes the variety of life on Earth – the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world.

People often use the phrases “biodiversity” and “nature” interchangeably. Nature is all life on Earth, together with the non-living systems of which it is a part, for example geology, water and climate. Biodiversity, meaning biological diversity, describes the variety of life forms on Earth.

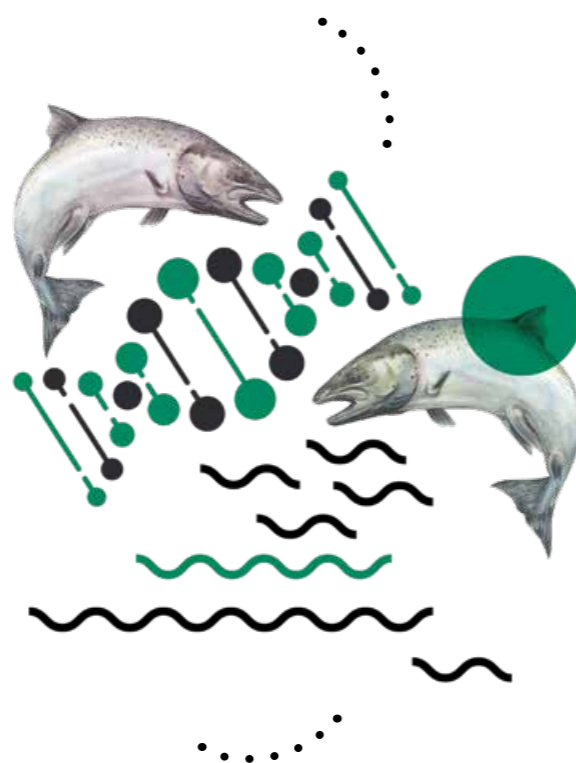
Biodiversity is not restricted to rare or threatened species but includes the whole of the natural world from the commonplace to the critically endangered. It includes the plants and animals familiar to all of us in the places where we live or work, wherever that may be.

There are three principal levels of biodiversity:

1. GENETIC DIVERSITY is diversity of individuals within a species, or what makes one Hawthorn tree from Ireland different from another Hawthorn tree somewhere in Europe, or one person different from another person. Genetics is the science of genes and how traits are passed on from one generation to the next.

2. SPECIES DIVERSITY is the variation between species, such as between a Sessile Oak tree, a Red Squirrel, a Common Blue Butterfly and a Brown Trout. A biological species is a group of organisms that can reproduce with one another in nature and produce fertile offspring. Humans are a species too, classified scientifically as *Homo sapiens*.

3. HABITATS DIVERSITY can be described as the variety of different habitats and ecosystems that species inhabit. Examples include grasslands, woodlands, raised bogs, marsh or lowland river floodplains. “Habitat” refers to the home or environment of an animal, plant or other organism.



Why is biodiversity important?

Biodiversity provides the essential building blocks of ecosystems and the habitats within which species live. Ecosystems are thus dependent on biodiversity – from the smallest microbes, insects and complex communities of plants to the largest mammals, and their interactions, which together make up the web of life.

Although it is often not appreciated, healthy functioning ecosystems are pivotal to the prosperity and resilience of our communities and society at large. Humans are part of the web of life and entirely dependent on it. The many and varied benefits that society derives from natural ecosystems are normally referred to as ecosystem services. The four main categories of ecosystem services are listed on page 16 along with a number of examples of ecosystem services.

Efforts have been made in Ireland over the last decade to quantify and measure ecosystem service provision. By assessing and valuing the known benefits of ecosystem services we can demonstrate how the loss of biodiversity affects our economy, society and future development opportunities. Research can also be used to demonstrate how the cost of conserving biodiversity and healthy ecosystems often outweighs the costs of neglect and restoring degraded habitats.

In 2016, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) completed a short pilot project mapping ecosystem services at a national scale based on available data.¹

Selected ecosystem services modelled included:

- Land temporarily storing water.
- Areas of land promoting good water quality.
- Vegetation carbon.
- Soil carbon.

More recently, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has been working to compile Ireland’s national ecosystem service accounts as part of the CSO Frontier Series. This work has focused on ecosystem services such as flood control and crop pollination. Other ecosystem accounts have also been developed, primarily ecosystem extent accounts and ecosystem condition accounts.²

Aside from the many benefits conferred on society by biodiversity, we must not forget that nature has an intrinsic value and a right to exist as well.

Concerted efforts to promote the protection, restoration and management of Meath’s biodiversity are morally correct for this reason alone.

¹ <https://www.npws.ie/research-projects/ecosystems-services-mapping-and-assessment/ecosystem-services-web-map-viewer-and>

² <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/ecosystemaccounts/>

Main ecosystem service categories



Regulating services

Regulation of the climate, regulation of water flow during drought or flood events, pollination of wild and cultivated plants, etc.

Provisioning services

Provision of food, timber, medicinal resources, etc.

Supporting services

Cycling of nutrients, formation of soil, photosynthesis, etc.

Cultural services

Recreation and tourism, spiritual and religious values, education and inspiration, aesthetic enjoyment, etc.

What is a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan and what should it aim to achieve?

A Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan is a strategic document developed by a city or county council that outlines how the local authority intends to protect, manage and restore biodiversity within its administrative area over a defined period.

The purpose of such a plan is to:

- Provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at a local authority level.
- Translate international, national, regional and local policies, priorities and public concerns into concrete action.
- Integrate biodiversity into local planning and policy.
- Promote and implement best practice approaches to better care for and restore biodiversity.

- Provide a context for the local authority to work with local communities, agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and landowners towards achieving shared goals.

While the specific vision and objectives of each LABAP are decided upon locally, all plans by and large should aim to record, conserve, restore and sensitively manage biodiversity where appropriate, as well as increasing awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.



Figure 1. Event participants join a night-time walk to learn about nocturnal biodiversity (Photo: Barry Cronin)

02

How was the
Meath Biodiversity Action Plan
(MBAP) 2025 – 2030
developed?

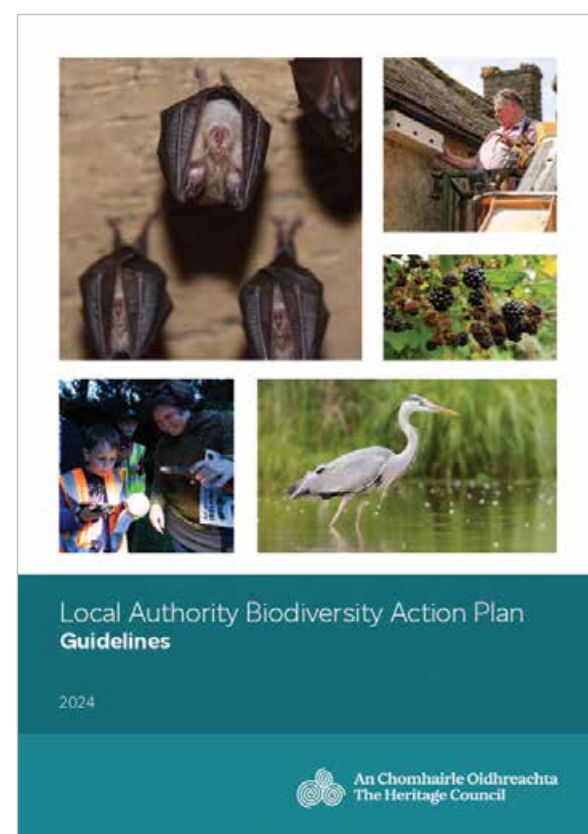


Coot
Fulica atra

Photo: Ita Boyle

Heritage Council guidelines

The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme is a Heritage Council Initiative. In addition to supporting the programme financially, The Heritage Council takes an active role in providing training and development opportunities for Biodiversity Officers and in developing guidance for important parts of the programme.



This role is recognised in Ireland’s 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023 – 2030. The Heritage Council was identified as the lead organisation with responsibility for the development of updated guidelines for producing LABAPs and their integration with City and County Development Plans.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines were published in 2024 and used to inform the development of the MBAP. These guidelines are available to download and view from the website of The Heritage Council.³

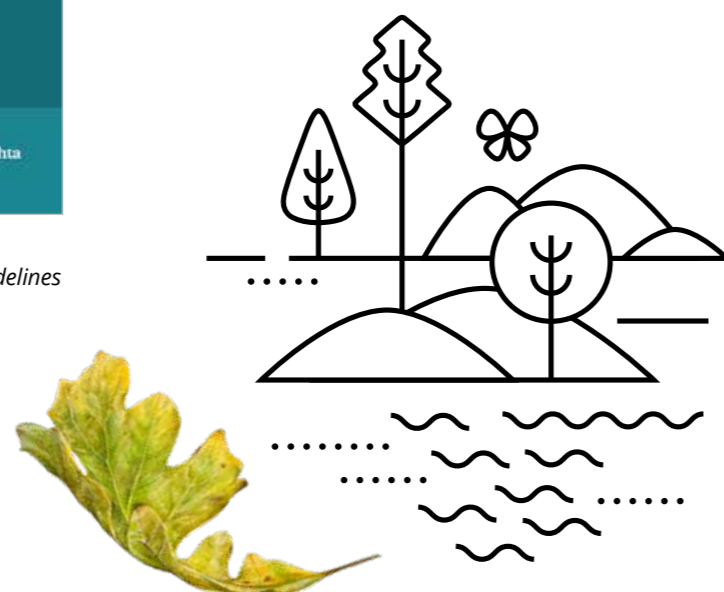


Figure 2: Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines

³ <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Local-Authority-Biodiversity-Action-Plan-Guidelines.pdf>

Development stages

Stages in the development of a LABAP are listed below as outlined in The Heritage Council’s Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines.

Preparation

Secure agreement of the Management Team and establish a Biodiversity Working Group. Gather background data and identify gaps.

Vision and Objectives

Agree the broad aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan with the Biodiversity Working Group.

Public Engagement

Pre-draft public consultation: produce a discussion paper, hold meetings, and invite submissions.

Plan Development

Identify issues and needs, agree objectives and actions, and prepare a draft plan, liaising with colleagues in the local authority and the Biodiversity Working Group. Undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening.

Plan Review

Present the draft plan to the Management Team and relevant Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for comment.

Public Review

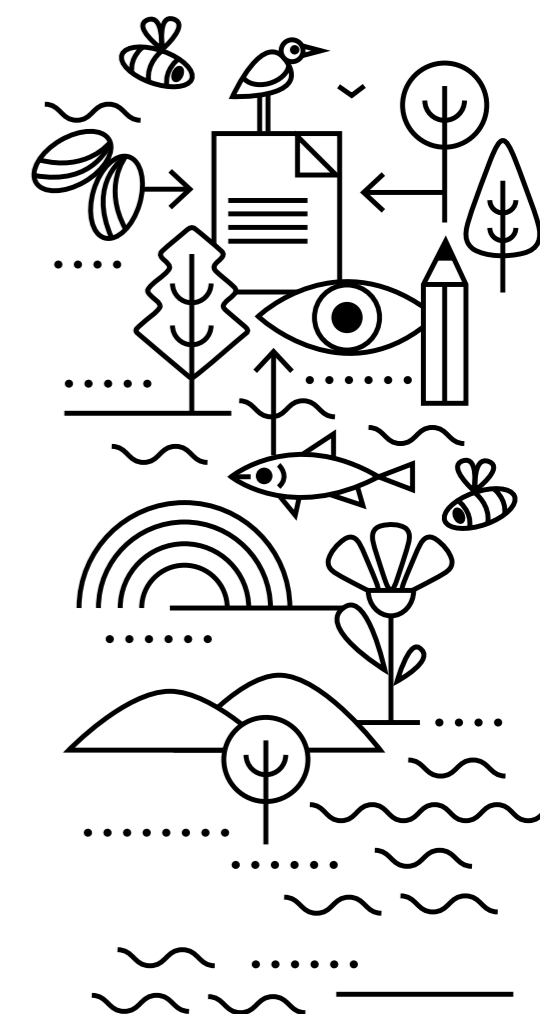
Public consultation on draft plan: make the plan available online and through libraries and hold meetings.

Plan Approval

Revise the draft plan and present it to senior management, the appropriate SPC and full Council for approval.

Publication

Publish and launch the new Biodiversity Action Plan.



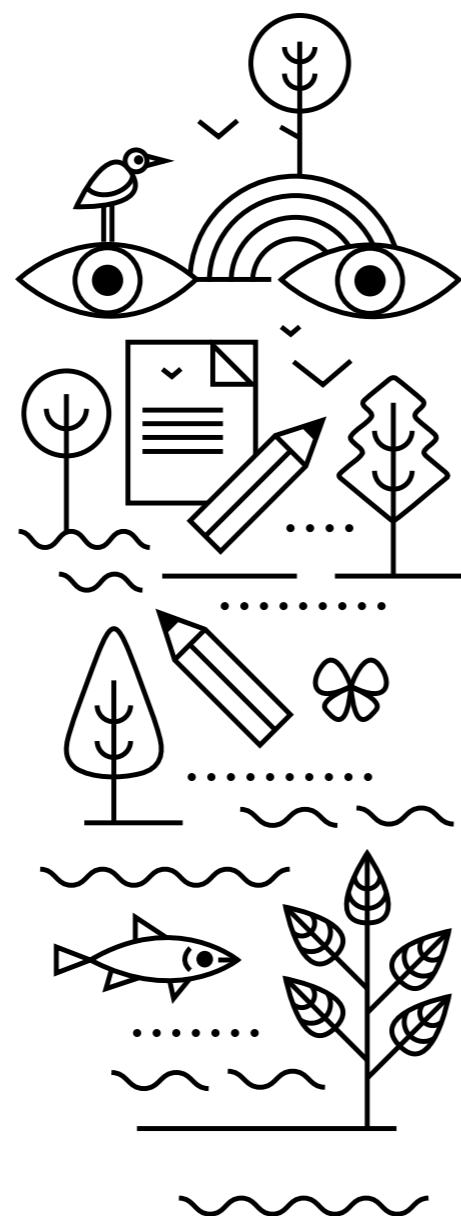
Biodiversity Working Group

The establishment of a Biodiversity Working Group is a pivotal step in the development and implementation of a LABAP. In County Meath, the Biodiversity Working Group operates under the umbrella of the Meath Heritage Forum. The primary role of the working group is to provide guidance and expertise throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring and review phases of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Responsibilities include reviewing existing biodiversity data, identifying key conservation priorities, recommending strategies and actions, and monitoring the progress of implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan. The working group also serves as a liaison between the local authority and various key stakeholders, ensuring that the plan is both comprehensive and community backed.

Efforts have been made to pull together a broad representative group, with membership drawn from the following sectors:

- Landowners and farming representatives.
- Community and voluntary groups.
- Local heritage and biodiversity organisations or groups.
- Local government officials.
- Local elected representatives.
- Local development and business.
- State agencies of relevance to biodiversity conservation.



Ben Malone	MCC
Loreto Guinan	MCC
Wendy Bagnall	MCC
Emmet Conboy	MCC
Mary D’Arcy	MCC
Bernadine Carry	MCC
Aaron Smith	MCC
Michelle Goodwin	MCC
ClIr Noel French	Elected Member
ClIr Alan Tobin	Elected Member
ClIr David Gilroy	Elected Member
ClIr Paddy Meade	Elected Member
Donnacha Ryan	Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO)
Michael Gunn	Public Participation Network
Eimear Clowry Delaney	Public Participation Network
Terry Cassidy	Birdwatch Ireland Meath Branch
Dermot Ward	Irish Farmers’ Association
Aidan Gray	An Taisce Clean Coasts
Goska Wilkowska	Boyne Rivers Trust
Niamh Roche	Bat Conservation Ireland
Kate Flood	Community Wetlands Forum
Ciara Rock	NPWS
Dónal Mitchell	NPWS
Noel McGloin	Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)
Edward Egan	Teagasc
Ciaran O’Kelly	Boyne Catchment Angling Association
Pat Moran	Ecologist
Robbie Meehan	Geologist
Margaret Norton	Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI)
Donna Mullen	Green Foundation Ireland
Arthur Preston	Boyne Valley Flavours

Table 2. Biodiversity Working Group members

In the occasional absence of primary members, the contribution of substitute nominees from various organisations are welcomed to ensure representation from as many stakeholders as possible. MCC and the Biodiversity Working Group of the County Meath Heritage Forum are particularly grateful for the contributions made by Eimear Reilly and Annina Niskanen of MCC, as well as Liane Costello of An Taisce, Clean Coasts.

Over time, Biodiversity Working Group members may change roles, move to other

organisations or drop from the Biodiversity Working Group due to professional or personal commitments. In these instances, alternative nominees are welcomed onto the Biodiversity Working Group when necessary.

MCC and the Biodiversity Working Group of the County Meath Heritage Forum thank Peter Olwell and Cathal Flood for contributing to the development of the Plan during the development process.



Figure 3. Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum (Photo: Megan O'Connor)

Pre-draft public consultation

A pre-draft public consultation process for the MBAP began on 15 April 2024 and ran until 27 May 2024, overlapping with National Biodiversity Week.

Delivering this initial phase of public participation in the development of the plan was a critical step in the process, allowing for the early identification of local issues and needs. A discussion paper was produced to help set the context for public involvement in the development of a new plan and included some background information on the biodiversity of the county.

Members of the public and stakeholders were invited to participate in the consultation and share their views by:

- Attending one of several pre-draft consultation drop-in information sessions.
- Completing an online questionnaire.
- Submitting written feedback to the Biodiversity Officer.

Radio advertisements, radio interviews, print media advertisements and print media press releases were all used to promote the consultation.

Six in-person consultation information sessions were facilitated along with an online session. A further five events/meetings were organised with local interested fora and groups. Events organised and held during National Biodiversity Week in 2024 were also used as platforms to promote the consultation and share the survey questionnaire. In total, eight events were hosted by MCC and a further six were supported by the Biodiversity Officer.

The total number of submissions received in the pre-draft public consultation was 162.

Statistics

Radio advertisements	45
Radio interviews	3
Print media advertisements	4
Press releases	2
MCC webpages	2
MCC social media posts	40
Mailing list circulars	5

Table 3. Pre-draft public consultation communications

In-person, pre-draft public consultation walk-in information sessions	6
Online, pre-draft public consultation information sessions	1
Partner-led, pre-draft public consultation events/meetings	5
National Biodiversity Week events hosted by MCC	8
National Biodiversity Week events supported by MCC	6
Estimated number of people directly engaged in-person	348

Table 4. Pre-draft public consultation events

Responses received via <i>Consult.ie</i>	140
Responses received via post and by email	22
Total number of submissions received in the pre-draft public consultation	162

Table 5. Pre-draft public consultation submissions

Pre-draft public consultation responses

The pre-draft public consultation sought views from members of the public on the priority objectives of the plan, the main challenges impacting biodiversity in Meath, and what MCC can and should be doing to resolve these challenges.

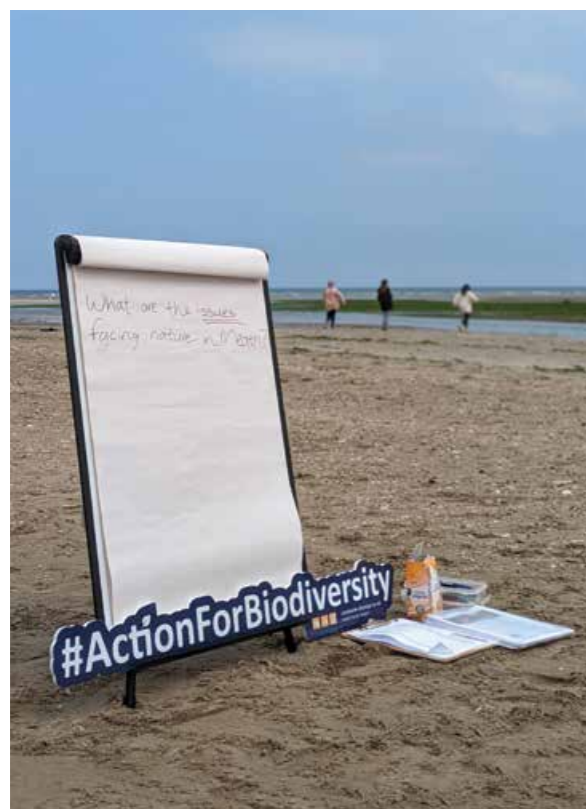


Figure 4. Pre-draft public consultation on Gormanston Beach (Photo: Ben Malone)

The consultation questionnaire was bookended by questions on what actions respondents are currently undertaking for biodiversity and what changes they have seen in nature over their lifetime.

The pre-draft public consultation was delivered with support and funding from both MCC and The Heritage Council.

What do locals want to see achieved for nature in Meath?

This was a question on which people were asked to provide feedback during the pre-draft public consultation on the MBAP.

Responses were impassioned, insightful and ambitious. Many responses presented vivid depictions of thriving healthy habitats for nature across the countryside and within our towns and villages, creating resilient wild spaces to enhance our wellbeing, adapt to climate change, and safeguard our natural heritage into the future.

To recognise these contributions, MCC commissioned artistic illustrations inspired by these responses to bring them to life. These were supported through the Biodiversity Officer and the Culture and Creativity Team in the local authority and funded by Creative Ireland.

The resulting illustrations preface each of the five broad objectives in Section 8, under which the actions of this plan have been presented.



County Meath Biodiversity Audit

In July 2024, MCC commissioned a high-level biodiversity audit for County Meath. This project was funded by The Heritage Council through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Scheme and the NPWS through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF). Both funds support the implementation of LABAPs.

The requirement for such an audit was identified by The Heritage Council's *Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines* published in 2024, which pointed to the need for an analysis of existing data when embarking on the development of a LABAP.

The aims of the study were to:

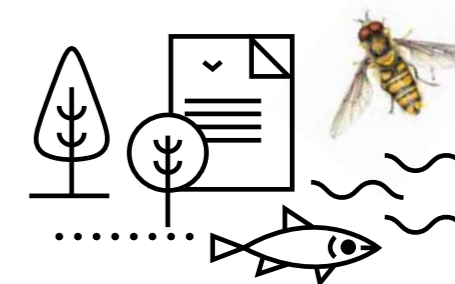
- Identify the current distribution of biodiversity in the county, focusing on rare, threatened and protected species as well as important habitats.
- Identify and discuss historical trends in biodiversity including current drivers of decline.
- Identify opportunities for conservation in the county including priority actions in the short, medium and long term.
- Highlight relevant data gaps including taxonomic and spatial knowledge gaps.

An overview of designated sites and habitats in Meath precedes a review of individual animal and plant groups in the report.

The checklists of Nelson *et al.* (2019) and the relevant existing Irish Red Lists⁴ for select taxonomic groups guided this review of select animal and plant groups.

A key output of the Biodiversity Audit was to identify priority actions for MCC to take in the short, medium and long term. The list of recommended priority actions is given in Appendix 1.

The project outputs included a summary report as well as mapping data compatible with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Results of the audit were presented to the Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum in March 2025. The *County Meath Biodiversity Audit Report 2024* report is available to download from the MCC website.⁵



⁴ <https://www.npws.ie/publications/red-lists>

⁵ <https://www.meath.ie/council/council-services/heritage-biodiversity-and-architectural-conservation/biodiversity/projects-and-reports>

03

Policies and plans guiding the development of the *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP)*

The *MBAP 2025-2030* outlines the strategic priorities of MCC, developed in collaboration with state agencies, NGOs, community representatives and the broader public, to implement a comprehensive biodiversity work programme.



Devil's-bit Scabious
Succisa pratensis

Photo: Ben Malone

This initiative builds on a series of important policy advancements, from international level down to local level, that have enabled the creation of ambitious and more effective LABAPs, allowing for meaningful progress towards our shared goals and targets for the protection and conservation of nature.

The preparation of the *MBAP 2025-2030* was guided by, and aligned with, the targets and objectives outlined in the following international, national, regional and local strategic policy documents and plans:

- *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.*
- *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*
- *Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.*
- *European Union (EU) Biodiversity Strategy 2030.*
- *Ireland’s 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023 – 2030.*
- *Water Action Plan (WAP) 2024.*
- *Ireland’s Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan.*
- *Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF) – First Revision.*
- *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the East and Midlands Region.*
- *Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021 – 2027.*
- *Meath Climate Action Plan (MCAP) 2024 – 2029.*
- *MCC Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029.*

- *Meath Heritage Strategy (MHS) 2024 – 2030.*
- *Heritage Ireland 2030.*
- *Meath County Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023 – 2029.*
- *Meath Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 – 2027.*
- *All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2021 – 2025.*
- *The Heritage Council’s Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028.*

The strategic policy and plan documents listed above are summarised in more detail on the following pages.

Preparation of the *MBAP* also aligns with several statutory instruments pertaining to the protection of biodiversity including various EU Directives and national legislation. Further details about these are found in Section 5, which describes our legal responsibilities to protect nature.



Figure 5. Girley Bog (Photo: Ben Malone)

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

The *MBAP* is a direct result of a process initiated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

At this summit, world leaders recognised that human activities were changing and destroying the natural environment at an ever-increasing rate and that action was needed to halt the loss of biodiversity. The outcome of this summit was the *UN Convention on Biological Diversity*, which has now been signed by over 170 countries, including Ireland.

The main mechanism by which Ireland implements this global agreement is through developing and implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The *2030 Agenda* was adopted by all 193 United Nations Member States in 2015. It is a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” and provides an internationally agreed framework to balance the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The Framework is composed of 17 SDGs and 169 targets with the overall objective of achieving a more sustainable, prosperous and peaceful future for all.

Ireland’s *National Implementation Plan for the SDGs 2018 – 2020* acknowledged that local government “has a crucial role to play in translating national policies into tangible practical actions that can help to concretise the SDG objectives into our individual and



Figure 6. The United Nations SDGs

communities' behaviours and goals." Ireland's subsequent National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022 – 2024 under Strategic Objective 2 focused on integration of the SDGs in "Local Authority work to better support the localisation of the SDGs".

The *MBAP* has been assessed for SDG impact, specifically addressing the targets to which the action plan will contribute during the course of its implementation. The assessment looked at each action of the Biodiversity Action Plan. It predicted that progress will be made on 14 of the 17 SDGs, contributing towards efforts to meet 41 of 169 SDG targets grouped beneath each SDG.

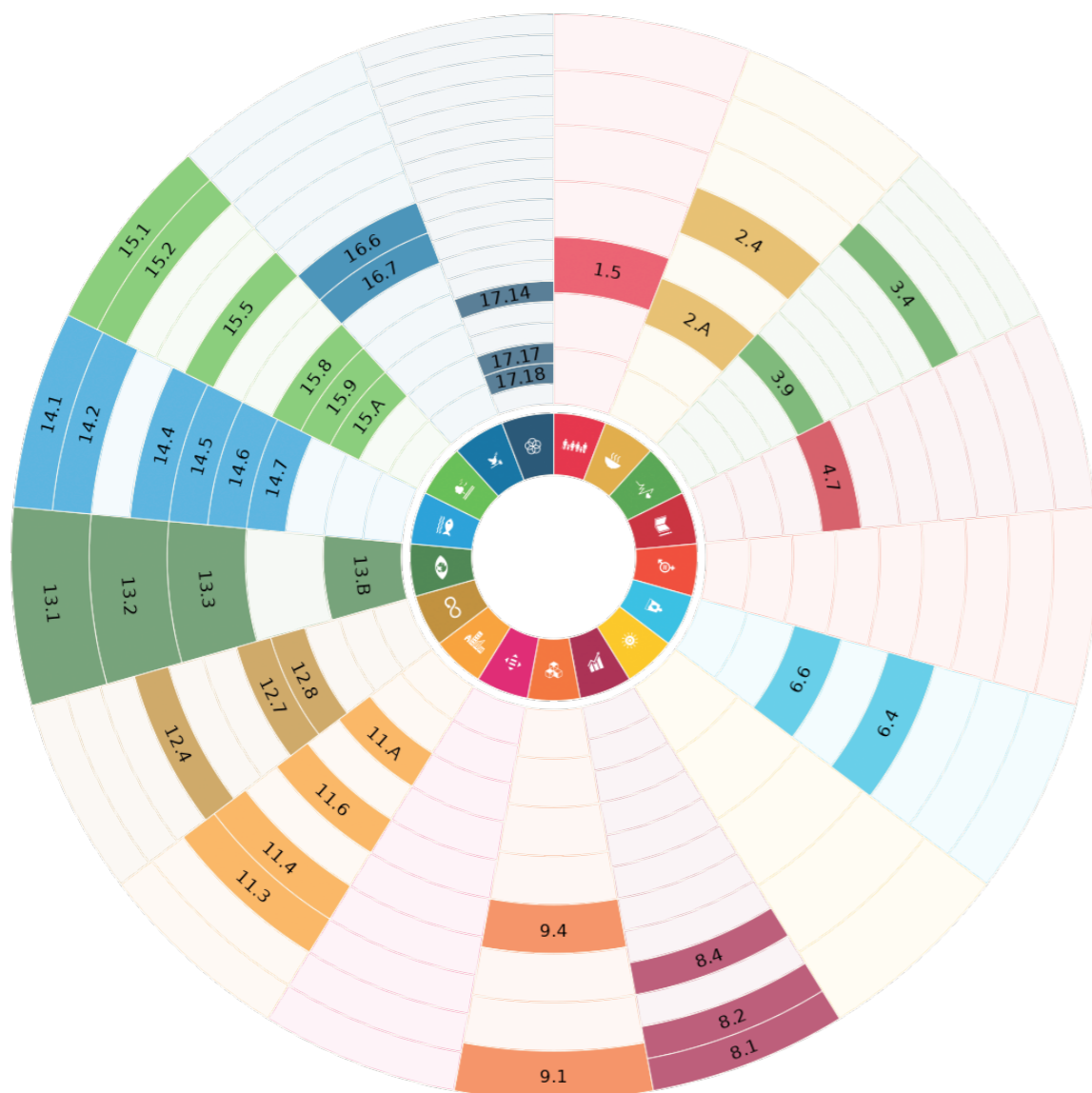


Figure 7. SDG Targets Wheel demonstrating the potential contribution *MBAP 2025 – 2030* towards targets of the United Nations SDGs.

Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

In 2022, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) adopted a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature through to 2030. The Global Biodiversity Framework aims to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems, and protect indigenous rights.

The plan includes concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, such as:

- Protecting 30% of the planet.
- Restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030.

EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030

The *EU Biodiversity Strategy* for 2030 is a core component of the *European Green Deal*, aiming to halt biodiversity loss and restore the natural environment across the EU by 2030.

The main goals of the strategy include:

- Legally protecting at least 30% of the EU's land and sea areas.
- Restoring degraded ecosystems through binding nature restoration targets.
- Addressing pressures on nature such as pollution, unsustainable land use, invasive species and overexploitation.
- Halting and reversing the decline of pollinators.
- Restoring at least 25,000km of EU rivers to a free-flowing state.
- Reducing the use and risk of pesticides by 50% by 2030.

- Planting 3 billion trees across the EU by 2030.
- Increasing organic farming and biodiversity-rich landscape features on agricultural land.

"We need nature in our lives" is a central message, recognising the crucial link between human well-being and healthy ecosystems.

The commitments proposed in this strategy pave the way for ambitious and necessary changes – changes that will ensure the wellbeing and economic prosperity of present and future generations in a healthy environment.



Figure 8. A young participant at one of MCC's National Heritage Week events celebrating our local natural heritage (Photo: Barry Cronin)

The Commission also calls on European cities of at least 20,000 inhabitants to develop ambitious Urban Nature Plans to bring nature back to cities and reward community action. These should include measures to create biodiverse and accessible urban forests, parks and gardens; urban farms; green roofs and

walls; treelined streets; urban meadows; and urban hedges.

The promotion of healthy ecosystems, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions should be systematically integrated into urban planning, including in public spaces, infrastructure and the design of buildings and their surroundings. Protecting and restoring nature will need more than compliance with regulations alone. It will require action by citizens, businesses, social partners and the research and knowledge community, as well as strong partnerships in Meath at local, regional, national and European levels.

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023 – 2030

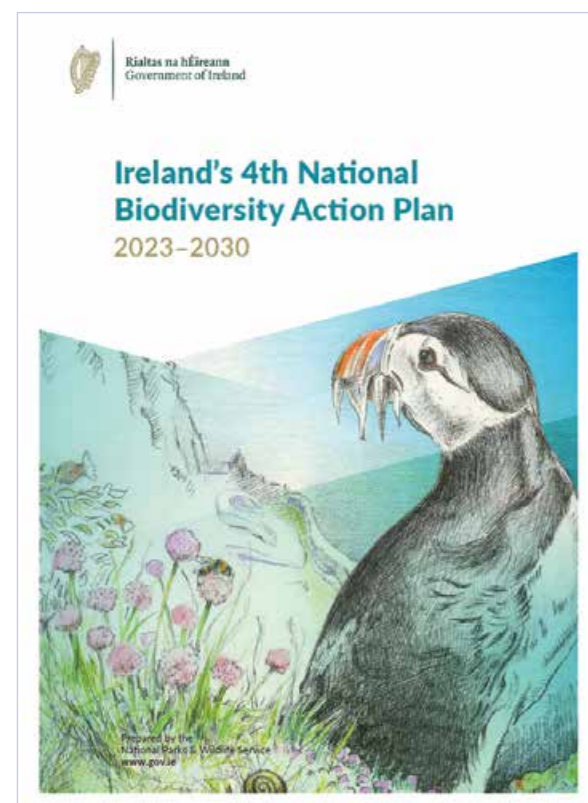


Figure 9: *Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan*

Ireland's 4th NBAP was launched in March 2024. It outlines 194 actions to be completed over a seven-year period, where we will work together to improve biodiversity governance and stewardship, recognise and value the relationships between nature and people, enhance the scientific evidence base to inform our decisions, and bolster public awareness and engagement with communities, citizen scientists and the private sector.

This plan aims to put more effort and investment into the protection, restoration and recovery of biodiversity and ecosystems across Ireland, embedding biodiversity considerations in decision-making and governance systems to achieve transformative change.

The plan is broken down into the following five objectives:

Objective 1

Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity.

Objective 2

Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs.

Objective 3

Secure Nature's Contribution to People.

Objective 4

Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity.

Objective 5

Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 places the *NBAP* on a statutory footing, meaning that for the first time in the history of the State, there is a legal requirement to have an *NBAP*. There is also an obligation for listed public bodies, including local authorities, to have regard to the objectives and targets of the *NBAP* in the performance of their functions and to report on their progress.

Action IC6 of *Ireland's 4th NBAP* states: "All Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan adopted by the end of 2026 which is subject to regular review and revision processes in line with relevant guideline standards."

See Appendix 6 for a more comprehensive list of actions relevant to local authorities in the *NBAP*.

The Water Action Plan 2024

The *WAP 2024* is Ireland's third River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). The *WAP* sets out a roadmap to restore Ireland's waterbodies to "good" status or better and protect against further deterioration from 2023 to 2027, through an integrated catchment management approach.

Key actions in the plan include having:

- Tighter controls on the use of fertilisers that impact water quality.
- A greater focus on compliance and enforcement with over 60 new staff at local level across the country and a target of 4,500 farm inspections per year.
- Continued investment in wastewater infrastructure, which will see Uisce Éireann

investing a multi-billion Euro budget over the period 2025 to 2029 to reduce impacts on water quality.

- A new national River Barriers Mitigation Programme that will ramp up efforts to remove physical blocks in our rivers (such as dams and weirs) that impact on species like Salmon and River Lamprey swimming upstream to spawn.
- A review of arterial drainage requirements and the underpinning Arterial Drainage Act, which will be undertaken in the context of land use.
- The Farming for Water EIP (European Innovation Partnership). This is a €60 million project within the broader *WAP 2024*, aimed at improving water quality in Ireland by helping farmers to implement specific measures to protect and restore water quality.



Figure 10. Brown Trout eyeing up a fly on the water's surface in the Moynalty River above a thick growth of filamentous algae (Photo: Ciaran O'Kelly)

Ireland's fourth RBMP, the *WAP 2028 – 2033*, is expected to be published in December 2027.

Ireland's Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan

By the end of the century, climate change is likely to become one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss. Increases in temperature will change the timing of life-cycle events and the distribution of species. Projected increases in the occurrence of extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, floods and storms, may have devastating consequences for Ireland's habitats. All habitats will need to adapt to climate change, but already fragmented and isolated habitats and the species that depend on them are likely to be the most vulnerable.



Figure 11. MCC and Birdwatch Ireland Meath Branch team up to facilitate a walk and talk event on Swifts in Duleek (Photo: Ben Malone)

Ireland's Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan was prepared in 2019. It aims to protect biodiversity from the impacts of

climate change and to conserve and manage ecosystems so that they deliver services that will increase the adaptive capacity of people and biodiversity while also contributing to climate change mitigation.

The plan includes 38 actions. Local authorities have been identified as the project lead on Action 4.4, which aims to: "Co-design green spaces and wildlife refuges in cities and peri-urban areas with local communities to provide habitats for species under threat from climate change and to connect people to biodiversity."

Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF) – First Revision

The *NPF* is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040.

The framework is devised to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for the people, and to protect and enhance the environment – from villages to cities, and everything around and in between.

The *NPF* recognises Ireland's key national environmental challenges, including the need to:

- Accelerate action on climate change.
- Address health risks to drinking water.
- Better treat urban wastewater.
- Move from the existing linear economy to a circular economy.
- Protect important and vulnerable habitats and species.
- Deal with air quality problems in urban areas.

- Re-integrate nature into people's everyday lives through better strategic planning.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region

The *RSES 2019 – 2031* guides regional development and the *MCDP*. The *RSES* identifies the challenges at a regional level of sustaining economic growth while transitioning to a low carbon society. It also includes the requirement to align population growth with the location of homes and jobs, while creating healthy attractive places and an enhanced quality of life.

The *RSES* contains Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) that relate to the actions of local



Figure 12. Local national school pupils take part in a grassland biodiversity workshop on the Commons of Lloyd (Photo: Mary Duff)

authorities pertaining to biodiversity, particularly in the chapters on biodiversity, green infrastructure, landscape and climate change.

Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021 – 2027

County Development Plans are strategic land-use plans prepared by local authorities in Ireland. They guide development and set out objectives for the sustainable development of an area. These plans are legally required to consider biodiversity and environmental protection, integrating policies for their conservation and enhancement within the county.

The *MCDP 2022 – 2027* sets out MCC's policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. Several chapters, to a varying degree, outline objectives and policies that help safeguard biodiversity at a local level. For example, Chapter 7 details the strategic aims of rural development, Chapter 8 details the strategic aims for open space and recreation, while Chapter 9 outlines MCC's aims to conserve and sustainably manage the county's natural heritage and biodiversity, and to promote understanding of, and sustainable access to, it.

Meath Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029

In 2021, the Government approved the final text of legislation to set Ireland on the path to net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade.

The Bill states a “national climate objective” to support biodiversity. In fulfilling their functions to achieve this objective, each minister and the Government shall “have regard to the need to promote sustainable development and restore and protect biodiversity”.

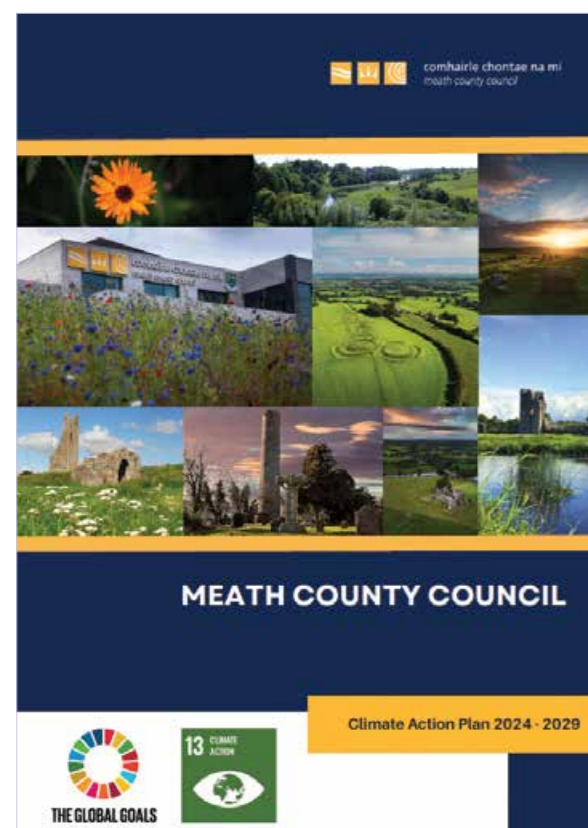


Figure 13: *Meath County Council Climate Action Plan*

This Bill requires local authorities to prepare Climate Action Plans including mitigation and adaptation measures and which should be updated every five years.

The Meath Climate Change Action Plan 2024 – 2029 addresses nature and biodiversity, stating the Council’s aims to protect and conserve the county’s natural environment. The plan recognises the importance of managing green infrastructure sustainably,

supporting and expanding it where possible so that it can continue to harbour biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services, such as managing stormwater and flood risk, optimising carbon storage, and providing opportunities for active travel and recreation that benefit the health and wellbeing of the people who live and work in Meath.

The *MBAP 2025 – 2030* aligns with the *MCCAP*, as demonstrated by several actions integrated across both plans.

Other plans and strategies that have helped to shape the *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP) 2025 – 2030*

MCC recognises the importance of biodiversity in the ***MCC Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029***, which provides the vision and strategic direction for MCC with a supporting strategy to “manage and protect our heritage and biodiversity, and promote the understanding, conservation and enjoyment of both”.

In turn, this ambition is supported by the local authority’s ***County Meath Heritage Strategy (MHS) 2024-2030***. This formally sets out the organisation’s focus for collaboration and partnership with state agencies, community and voluntary sector and the wider public to deliver a heritage work programme in Meath. The development of this strategy is informed by ***Heritage Ireland 2030*** – a national heritage plan that outlines the vision for Ireland’s heritage up to 2030. It places a strong emphasis on the conservation of natural heritage, including biodiversity, and the *MBAP* aligns with its overarching goals.

The Meath County Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023 – 2029 has a goal of ensuring that Meath is “a sustainable, eco-friendly County that is committed to climate action” and has a Sustainable Community Objective “to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment”.



Figure 14. Nature has always been, and continues to be, an invaluable source of inspiration in the world of creative arts (Photo: Barry Cronin)

Through the work of MCC’s Culture and Creativity Team it is a strategic priority of the ***Meath Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 – 2027*** “to creatively engage with communities to record and communicate our natural, built and cultural heritage”.

The ***All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP)***, of which MCC has been a supporting partner since 2019, provides a road map that aims to

help bees, other pollinating insects and our wider biodiversity. It encourages a better way of managing our whole landscape to permanently support our struggling biodiversity.



Figure 15. Early Bumblebee in flight beside Borage, a pollinator friendly culinary herb (Photo: Ita Boyle)

The ***Heritage Council Strategic Plan*** advocates for conservation of our natural heritage while also encouraging vital new approaches as the impacts of climate change emerge. It stands on the front line of fighting the effects of climate change and the protection of biodiversity. The Heritage Council and the County and City Management Association launched the Biodiversity Officer Programme, with the support of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to drive local action for biodiversity.

The *MBAP* reflects the six Strategic Pillars of The Heritage Council’s Strategic Plan, namely:

1. Leadership and Stewardship.
2. Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss.

- 3. Research.
- 4. Partnership.
- 5. Communities.
- 6. Education and Engagement.

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



Figure 16. Ireland's local authority Heritage and Biodiversity Officers at a Heritage Council-facilitated training event
(Photo: The Heritage Council)

04

Nature in County Meath

“Meath (Midhe, middle [province]) is a grand county – large, fertile, well wooded, well populated” (Robert Lloyd Praeger, *The Way That I Went*, 1937).

While Praeger, Ireland’s foremost naturalist, found a rather simple and succinct way of describing the landscape and geodiversity of Meath, it is important to acknowledge and appreciate the county’s diverse environment and habitats, as well as their links with cultural and human history.

Some of County Meath’s broad habitat categories are described on the next pages.

Peacock Butterfly and Drone Fly on Knapweed
Aglais io | *Tenax* sp. | *Centaurea nigra*

Photo: Ita Boyle



County Meath's coastal habitats

The coastline of Meath is a wonderful natural amenity resource for the people in the area. While relatively short in length compared to many coastal counties in Ireland, Meath's coast is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna distributed throughout a wide range of habitats that make up the county's border with the Irish Sea, such as its estuaries, dunes and beaches.

Estuaries

The River Boyne and River Nanny estuaries are significant features of County Meath's coastline, the former bordering with County Louth. Saltmarsh and intertidal flats flank both waterbodies as they flow towards the Irish Sea, providing critically important habitat for thousands of wintering birds of international and national significance.

Yet, these habitats remain under threat from issues such as nutrient enrichment, arising primarily from agricultural sources along with underperforming wastewater treatment

infrastructure and non-native invasive species such as Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*). See Appendix 7 for population trend data pertaining to bird species monitored in County Meath's estuaries in the Irish Wetland Bird Survey.

Sandy beaches

Sandy beaches stretch the length of County Meath's coastline from Mornington in the north to Gormanston in the south. Indeed, a notable geological "sandur" feature (a glacial outwash plain) dominates the southern end of

this coastal stretch (Clarke *et al.*, 2007). While the beaches provide an important recreational amenity, they are still valuable habitats. Birds such as Common Tern breed in Gormanston, although Sandwich and Roseate Terns have also been recorded here.

The presence of people and dogs are an unfortunate and regular pressure, but those who frequent these beaches will regularly find delight in birds like Wagtail, Dunlin and Plover running along the shore looking for insects in the washed-up rotting plant and algal material. The scattering of shells of a plethora of marine molluscs, from species of clam to various whelks and mussels is also a common sight on Meath's beaches.

Sand dunes

County Meath's sand dune habitats are some of the richest in Ireland as well as being some of the rarest at national and international level. Notable flora include the Bee Orchid, Burnet-saxifrage, Burnet Rose, Common Restharrow, Dune Fescue, Early Forget-me-not, Field Mouse-ear, Hare's-foot Clover, Heath Dog-violet, Pyramidal Orchid, Wild Thyme, and Wild Pansy, while the rare Wild Clary appears sporadically from dormant seedbanks. A significant population of the Small Blue Butterfly, whose caterpillar stage feeds on Kidney Vetch, occurs at Mornington. The dunes also support various fauna, including Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, and the Small Heath Butterfly.

Sand dunes by their nature are dynamic and fragile ecosystems susceptible to coastal erosion, which can be exacerbated by climate change, human-built infrastructure, and recreational activities. The sand dune habitats of

County Meath are unfortunately not immune to these pressures and as a result are under threat.



Figure 18. Wild Pansy (Photo: Ben Malone)



Figure 17. The River Nanny estuary looking upstream on the outskirts of Laytown, where the Nanny meets the sea. This site hosts large flocks of overwintering wading birds and wildfowl each year (Photo: Ben Malone)



Figure 19. Sand dunes at Mornington (Photo: Ben Malone)

Inshore waters

County Meath’s inshore water areas, which like its coastline are relatively short, are ecologically significant and vital for biodiversity. While specific information on the full range of fish and marine mammal species present can vary, this habitat probably supports common inshore species such as Flounder, Bass, Plaice, Dogfish and Mullet (Eastern Regional Fisheries Board, 2006). These coastal waters act as a nursery area for some fish, while the designated status of the Boyne and River Blackwater highlight the importance of this ecosystem for species like Salmon and River Lamprey, which migrate through these inshore waters. Otters are also associated with these aquatic habitats, while the seabed supports benthic communities, including shellfish and other invertebrates.

An active North Irish Sea fishery operates off County Meath’s coastline (Marine Institute & Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2025). Among many other shellfish species, Irish razor clams thrive in the mud and muddy sand habitats of shallow waters close to shore and are exploited almost exclusively by people using dredges. Studies in the past have argued such fishing activity can have an impact on the marine ecosystem resulting in:

- Changes to benthic invertebrate communities on the seafloor.
- Potential impacts on local fish species which feed on razor clam.
- Disturbance to seabirds causing them to be flushed from feedings ground (Aitken and Knott, 2018).



Figure 20. Pictured here on Bettystown beach, Starry Smooth-hound is a species of houndshark found on the continental shelves of the Northeast Atlantic and feeds on bottom-dwelling shellfish (Photo: Max Cody)

County Meath’s inland countryside

Rivers

Rivers flow through County Meath’s historic landscapes providing valuable habitat and wildlife corridors for freshwater and terrestrial species alike. They include the rivers of the Boyne catchment as well as the Nanny, Delvin, Ward, Broadmeadow and Dee Rivers, among others.



Figure 21. The Kells Blackwater downstream of Headfort Bridge (Photo: Ciaran O’Kelly)



Figure 22. A Grey Heron landing at a weir. Such structures concentrate fish, providing ideal hunting ground (Photo: Ita Boyle)

Protected species such as the Atlantic Salmon, Otter, River Lamprey and Kingfisher are synonymous with Meath’s rivers, particularly the Boyne and its major tributary the River Blackwater. These habitats also support Brown Trout, Sea Trout and coarse fish like Roach, Bream, Pike and Gudgeon.

The River Boyne, particularly downriver of Navan, supports a rich riparian vegetation, the widespread Common Club-rush, Reed Sweet-grass and Unbranched Bur-reed accompanied at intervals by Arrowhead, Great Yellow-cress, Flowering-rush, Water Dock, Water-plantain and Yellow Loosestrife. Aquatics include Yellow Water-lily and some Frogbit, while dense beds of Pondweed species provide habitat for aquatic fauna.

Alluvial floodplains, such as those at Crewbane and within the Boyne Valley (Brú na Bóinne) National Park at Dowth, provide further habitat types for flora and fauna. The Common Meadow-rue, elsewhere scattered in the ungrazed margins of the riverbank, is abundant in those floodplains. The Round-fruited Rush, scheduled in the Flora (Protection) Order 2022 and thus legally protected, occurs by the river at Slane, while Meadow Barley, similarly protected, is recorded from the winter-flooded pasture at Rosnaree.

However, physical modifications such as re-alignment, river straightening and the introduction of physical barriers such as weirs have resulted in significant and long-standing impacts on our rivers over the centuries.

Arterial drainage schemes in more recent decades have further exacerbated these hydromorphological pressures, while pollution from agriculture (for example, nutrients and sediment) and wastewater discharges compound the significant threat to the ecological health of Meath's rivers.

Wetlands

County Meath has a variety of wetland habitats that contribute significantly to its overall biodiversity. These wetlands range from bogs and fens to marshes, swamps and wet woodlands, each supporting unique communities of plants and animals. Compass Informatics, in association with Faith Wilson Ecological Consultant, completed a *Wetland and Coastal Survey of County Meath* in 2010.

This survey identified over 1,700 potential wetland sites, the majority of those assessed in the field supporting habitat types of reed and large sedge swamps, mesotrophic lakes, and rich fen and flush.

Several of the county's lakes on the Meath/Westmeath border, which include the hard-water marl lakes of Lough Bane and White Lough, are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Lough Sheelin, designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), is the largest of the lakes, its Meath shoreline bordering on Counties Cavan and Westmeath. It is home to several important populations of birds and a valuable fishery. Many of the inter-drumlin lakes in the northern part of the county are surrounded by fen peat as at Mentrin Lough and Ballyhoe Lough.



Figure 23. Looking upstream on the River Boyne from Inchamore Bridge in Lionsden, north of Longwood (Photo: Ben Malone)



Figure 24. Yellow Iris, also known as Yellow Flag, is Ireland's only native Iris species and is found widespread throughout the country in wet places such as ditches, marshes, river margins and lakes (Photo: Ben Malone)

Other wetlands including marsh and reed swamp are frequently associated with watercourses such as those found on the lower sections of the rivers Boyne and Nanny. The species-rich wetland at Duleek Commons, which lies in the floodplain of a tributary of the River Nanny, is also fed by lime-rich spring waters.

Raised bog peat is most extensive in the west of the county, though it is not exclusive to that part of Meath. Unfortunately, vast areas of the raised bogs have been partially or completely drained and subsequently harvested for peat.

In healthy bog ecosystems *Sphagnum* (Bog-moss) species thrive. Specialist flora such as Common Cottongrass, Round-leaved Sundew, Bog Asphodel and White Beak-sedge are

also associated with this habitat, with Great Sundew and Cranberry found on the least damaged areas. Drier peat on the higher raised bog supports Bog-rosemary, Common Deergrass, Cross-leaved Heath, Heather and Hare's-tail Cottongrass. These are species that provide valuable habitat for local fauna such as Snipe, Cuckoo, Skylark and the rare Large Heath Butterfly. The rare Fir Clubmoss has recently been recorded at Girley Bog.

Woodlands

Historically, like much of the country, County Meath would have been quite densely wooded. However, as woodlands in Meath are no longer plentiful, any existing pockets of woodland are even more valuable because of their scarcity.

Much of what we know about these habitats in Meath is described in a report produced by Smith *et al.* for MCC in 2010, namely the *County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey*. More recently, the *Forests and Woodlands 2012 – 2022 Frontier Series* was published in March 2024 and suggests that County Meath has the lowest coverage of "Forests and Woodland" as a percentage of the total county area at around 3.7%.⁶ This is considerably lower than the national forest cover percentage of 11.6%⁷, primarily due to the prevalence of fertile farmland, which favours agriculture.

Many woodlands in Meath are associated with old demesnes and were established by the

⁶ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/fp/fp-eafaw/ecosystemaccountsforestsandwoodlands2012-2022/keyfindings/>

⁷ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-eii/environmentalindicatorsireland2024/landuse/>

landed classes of the 18th and 19th centuries. Beech, Sycamore, Ash and oak trees are some of the more dominant canopy trees. More natural woodlands of oak trees, Ash, Hazel, Alder and willow can be found in small pockets.

Of great ecological interest are the wooded slopes of the Boyne Valley and wooded islets of that river, the latter woodland type being rare not only in Ireland, but throughout Europe. Conifer plantations are a relatively new addition to the Meath landscape and can be found in the grounds of large estates and in areas of poorer agricultural land such as cutover raised bog. Bog woodland is also found in areas of peatland and is typically dominated by birch, with a specific ground flora adapted to acidic and waterlogged

conditions, as seen at Thomastown Bog and Girley Bog.

Unfortunately, invasive shrubs like Cherry Laurel impact many of County Meath's woodland habitats by outcompeting native plants and hindering tree regeneration by blocking all sunlight to the ground layer of the woodland. While some connectivity exists along the River Boyne, most woodlands are fragmented, highlighting the importance of hedgerows as ecological corridors. Past surveys by the NPWS indicate the presence of long-established woodland sites (Perrin and Daly, 2010), though further investigation is needed for definitive "Ancient Woodland" classification.



Figure 25. Balrath Wood (also known locally as Knockcomra) is an important local amenity and woodland habitat managed and maintained by the Tree Council of Ireland and MCC (Photo: Barry Cronin)

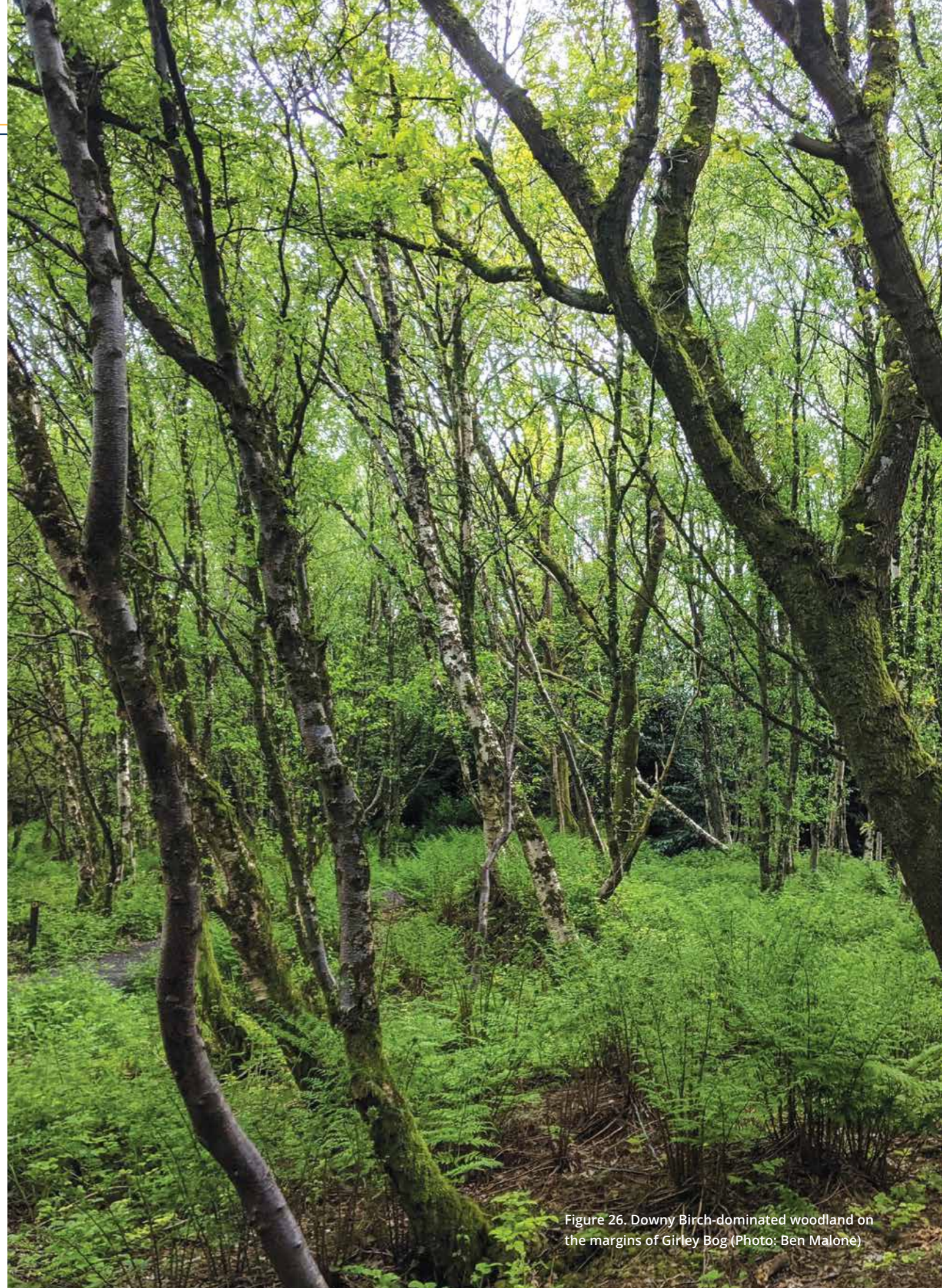


Figure 26. Downy Birch-dominated woodland on the margins of Girley Bog (Photo: Ben Malone)

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are vital linear ecosystems in County Meath, offering essential refuge and corridors for a diverse array of flora and fauna, including many species typically associated with woodlands. These dense lines of vegetation provide crucial food resources like berries, nuts and nectar, alongside vital shelter from predators and harsh weather for small mammals, Hedgehog, Fox and bats, as well as a multitude of bird species, from Wren and Robin to Blackbird and Long-tailed tit. For instance, of the 110 bird species regularly recorded in the Countryside Bird Survey in Ireland during the breeding season, 55 use hedgerows. Of these, 35 nest in hedgerows over 1.4m high and 1.2m wide (Teagasc, *The Value of Hedgerows*, 2004).



Figure 27. The Dunnock is a common species of bird found throughout Meath. It typically builds well-concealed nests within the dense, protective cover of hedgerows (Photo: Emily Byrne)

The sheltered leeward sides of hedgerows are particularly important for a rich variety of insects, including numerous butterflies

and moths, which contribute significantly to pollination and form a key food source for other wildlife. As prominent features of the Meath landscape, hedgerows facilitate the movement and dispersal of wildlife between otherwise isolated habitats, thereby enhancing ecological connectivity across the region.

Beyond their ecological significance, hedgerows are deeply ingrained in Meath's cultural and agricultural heritage, shaping the visual character of the countryside and providing essential ecosystem services such as natural flood management, carbon sequestration and shelter for livestock and crops.

The *County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey* (2010) estimated that there were over 22,000km of hedgerow in the county. This translates to an average length of 9.5km of hedgerow per km² of land. At the time this was determined to be more than most counties in Ireland. Research published as part of the EPA Research Programme 2014 – 2020 in 2019 increased the estimation of total hedgerow length to 26,000km, but this was based on a far broader definition of hedgerows, which is likely to lead to an overestimation (Green *et al.*, 2019).

In addition, most Meath hedgerows are old. While more than 80% are shown as field boundaries on maps from the 1840s, many are likely to be much older and act as a significant ecological corridor.

Development on the margins of urban settlements such as our towns and villages has been and remains an ongoing pressure on hedgerows, where hedgerow removal is often required. Agricultural land restructuring

has also resulted in the loss of hedgerows driven by the need for bigger field systems for larger machinery in tillage farming and the expansion of grazing land in dairy systems.



Figure 28. Hawthorn, also known as Whitethorn or the Maybush (Photo: Ben Malone)

While the vast network of hedgerows in the county remains an invaluable feature for wildlife, the form and structure of hedgerows in Meath compares unfavourably with that of neighbouring counties. This is due to lack of long-term management, or in some cases excessive and inappropriate management. This underscores the critical need for their continued protection and sustainable management to safeguard their invaluable benefit to nature and ecosystem service contributions.

Arable land

Arable lands are a long-established habitat in County Meath. Once associated with a rich variety of “weed” species, many arable weeds have now become less common or disappeared. Plants still associated with

arable fields include Common Hemp-nettle, Corn Spurrey, Field Pansy, Marsh Cudweed, Red Dead-nettle and Water-pepper. Despite the changes that have taken place in arable systems over time, these farmlands in County Meath still hold significant potential for biodiversity when managed with nature in mind.

Field margins of flowering plants provide crucial foraging habitat for bees, hoverflies, and other pollinating insects. A variety of other insects, including grasshoppers, crickets, and leafhoppers, can find refuge in areas where semi-natural vegetation is retained. Specialist farmland species like Skylarks, Yellowhammer, Linnet, and Grey Partridge, once more common, can still be supported by arable farmland with appropriate management.



Figure 29. The Yellowhammer is a declining species in Ireland, now mainly found in the east and south-east of Ireland (Photo: Caroline Legg)

Grassland

The small fragments of semi-natural grasslands that persist in County Meath, often confined to field corners, road verges and perhaps the odd unmanaged patch, represent a disproportionately high value for biodiversity compared to the vast swathes of improved agricultural grassland. These remnants are like living archives, holding a genetic reservoir of native grass and wildflower species that have adapted to local conditions over centuries.

Unlike the limited species composition of improved grasslands (typically a few high-yielding grasses like Perennial Ryegrass), semi-natural grasslands can support a remarkable array of native grasses (for example, Common Bent, Crested Dog's-tail, Sweet Vernal-grass) and a vibrant tapestry of wildflowers (for example, Knapweed, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Meadow Buttercup, Selfheal, Lady's Bedstraw and Common Spotted-Orchid). Each of these

plant species supports a unique community of associated insects and other invertebrates. Other more specialised types of semi-natural grasslands, including calcareous grassland on limestone outcrops and esker ridges, acidic grassland on poorer soils and winter-wet meadows by riverbanks, host distinct plant and fauna communities further contributing to the overall biodiversity of Meath.

The fact that semi-natural grasslands are a rarity in Meath, as highlighted by the *Irish Semi-natural Grasslands Survey* (2013), underscores the significant biodiversity loss experienced by the county due to agricultural intensification. The conversion of these species-rich habitats to species-poor improved grassland has had cascading effects throughout the ecosystem, impacting pollinators, farmland birds, soils and overall ecological health.



Figure 30. Floral rich semi-natural grassland on the outskirts of Navan (Photo: Ben Malone)

County Meath's urban areas

While often overlooked, the towns and villages of County Meath play a role in supporting biodiversity by providing green spaces, connectivity and resources for various species.



Figure 31. Pictured here at Emlagh Bog, the Common Frog is the only native frog species found in Ireland and is widespread in Meath (Photo: Ciaran O'Kelly)

These areas harbour surprisingly valuable wildlife habitats, including gardens, parks, playing fields, churchyards, cemeteries and derelict sites. They can provide homes for a diverse range of creatures, from familiar birds like the Robin, Blackbird, House Sparrow and Wren, to amphibians like Common Frog and Smooth Newts, various butterflies and damselflies, numerous bee species, and even larger mammals such as the Fox and Badger. The past decade has seen a growing number of initiatives to enhance urban areas

for declining species like the Swift and House Sparrow as well as various bat species and amphibians.

Looking ahead, large tracts of rural land fringing towns and villages are likely to be developed. A key design challenge will be integrating nature into these new developments. Successfully accommodating wildlife will not only benefit biodiversity, but will also provide crucial ecosystem services, along with health and economic advantages for residents.

05

Our legal responsibilities regarding the protection of biodiversity

While much of the wildlife species found in Meath is common and abundant in Ireland, some species and habitats are afforded legal protection under European and National wildlife legislation. This legislation has far-reaching implications for the way in which MCC and other statutory bodies operate. A list of all protected sites is given in Appendix 2.

The principal legislation relating to biodiversity in Ireland is as follows:

- EU Habitats Directive (HD) (Council Directive 92/43/EEC).
- EU Birds Directive (BD) (Directive 2009/147/EC).
- EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) (Directive 2000/60/EC).
- EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR).
- Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2023.
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).



Red Squirrel
Sciurus vulgaris

Photo: Ita Boyle

EU Habitats and Bird Directives

Habitats Directive

The Habitats Directive is one of the most important pieces of nature conservation legislation in Europe. Its aim is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation status for habitats and species that are rare and threatened throughout Europe. Articles in the Habitats Directive provide the legislative means for EU Member States to designate, protect and manage core areas, known as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), for habitat types, as listed in Annex I and species, as listed in Annex II.

The designation of sites in County Meath, determined by which habitat types are rare in an all-Ireland or county context, can be traced back to an inventory originally compiled by An Foras Forbartha (Young, 1972). This inventory listed “Areas of Scientific Interest” (ASIs) in the county. The selection of the botanically important ASIs was informed by the voluntary work of the Dublin Naturalists’ Field Club.

The Habitats Directive also requires all Member States to establish a strict protection regime for species listed in Annex IV, both within and outside Natura 2000 sites. Some of the most important annexed species in Meath include the Otter and all bat species that occur in the county.

Ecological Corridors and Article 10 of the EU Habitats Directive

The countryside also supports large numbers of flora and fauna species that may not itself be rare or protected. However, they are all

part of the interrelated, natural fabric of the countryside.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive seeks to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of these natural habitats in the wider landscape. It calls for land-use planning and development policies to “encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora”. Such features are defined as “those which by their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers and their banks or the traditional systems of marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species”.

Birds Directive

The Birds Directive requires all Member States to protect all wild bird species, as well as to protect and restore their habitats. For all wild bird species, EU Member States must preserve, maintain and re-establish bird habitats to ensure a sufficient diversity and area of habitats. For threatened bird species, Member States must classify SPAs for species and sub-species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, as well as for other migratory birds, paying particular attention to the protection of wetlands of international importance.

SPAs are protected areas that form an integral part of the Natura 2000 network, which also includes SACs designated under the Habitats Directive.

Protecting designated sites, habitats and species

In Ireland, both the Habitats and Birds Directives are implemented within a legal framework known as the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011). In other words, these Regulations translate the requirements of both EU Directives into Irish law.

MCC has an international responsibility to protect SAC sites like the River Boyne and Blackwater, Mount Hevey Bog and Rye Water Valley/Carton to safeguard habitats such as fens, bogs, and petrifying springs, and species like Salmon and Otter. Sites designated as SPAs such as the Boyne Estuary and River

Nanny Estuary and Shore also require rigorous protection, as they are crucial for bird species like Golden Plover and Black-tailed Godwit, and their estuarine and shoreline habitats.

It is important to note that the occurrence of protected habitats, flora and fauna species is not just confined to the protected nature conservation sites. Several habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive occur on sites outside the SACs in County Meath. The same can be said for animal and plant species listed on Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, and bird species listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive. MCC has an obligation to make sure that these species and their habitats are protected.



Figure 32. After disappearing from the island of Ireland by the early 20th century, the recent natural re-colonisation of Buzzard is heartening (Photo: Ita Boyle)

EU Water Framework Directive

This Directive provides a framework for the protection and improvement of all our waterbodies – groundwater, rivers, estuaries and coastal waters – with the aim of achieving “good” status (both ecologically and chemically) by 2027. Compliance with the WFD is to be achieved through RBMPs

and a programme of measures. The Directive requires that RBMPs be prepared and renewed in six-year cycles.

The *WAP 2024* is Ireland’s third RBMP and is detailed in Section 3.

EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR)

The EU NRR entered into force in August 2024 and represents a landmark piece of legislation that will significantly influence biodiversity conservation efforts in Ireland. It aims to restore a broad range of degraded ecosystems, key habitats and the habitats of various species/communities of species across the EU’s land and seas.

This new regulation legally binds EU Member States to restore at least 20% of the EU’s land and sea areas by 2030 and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. The proposed target builds on the international commitment and obligations of the EU and its Member States as parties to the global Convention on Biological Diversity.

Specific restoration targets under the NRR include:

- Terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems, particularly those habitats protected under the Habitats Directive.
- Marine ecosystems, including seagrass beds, shellfish beds and certain seaweed communities.

- Rivers, addressing issues impacting the ecological status of waters, removing physical barriers and reconnecting rivers with their natural floodplains.
- Halting the loss of pollinators and increasing their diversity and abundance in the landscape.
- All agricultural ecosystems, using indicators such as farmland birds, butterflies and share of high diversity landscape features (for example, buffer strips, hedgerows, field margins, small wetlands and ponds) on agricultural land to measure progress.
- All forest ecosystems, using indicators such as forest birds, standing and lying deadwood, age structure of tree within forests and forest connectivity to measure progress. There is also a tree-planting target of at least 3 billion trees by 2030.
- No net loss of urban green space and no net loss of urban tree canopy cover by 2030, as compared to 2024.

The cost and benefits of nature restoration

The cost of restoring ecosystems will be significant considering the large areas across which restoration is needed. However, the benefits are expected to be far greater.

For instance, it is estimated that every €1 invested in nature restoration will generate €4 to €38 in returned benefits (European Commission, 2025).

The costs of failing to take any action are also significantly higher. Another important consideration is that, typically, the cost of nature-based solutions is very often significantly lower than the cost of technical infrastructure solutions. For instance, reconnecting a river to its floodplains to absorb excess flood water is

usually much cheaper than building a concrete storm basin further upstream.

National restoration plans

EU countries are expected to submit National Restoration Plans to the Commission within two years of the Regulation coming into force (so by mid-2026), showing how they will deliver on the targets. Ireland’s revised *NPF* includes a National Policy Objective for local planning authorities to support the preparation and implementation of the National Restoration Plan.

The State will also be required to monitor and report on Ireland’s progress. By 2033, the Commission will review the application of the regulation and its impacts on the agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors, as well as its wider socio-economic effects.

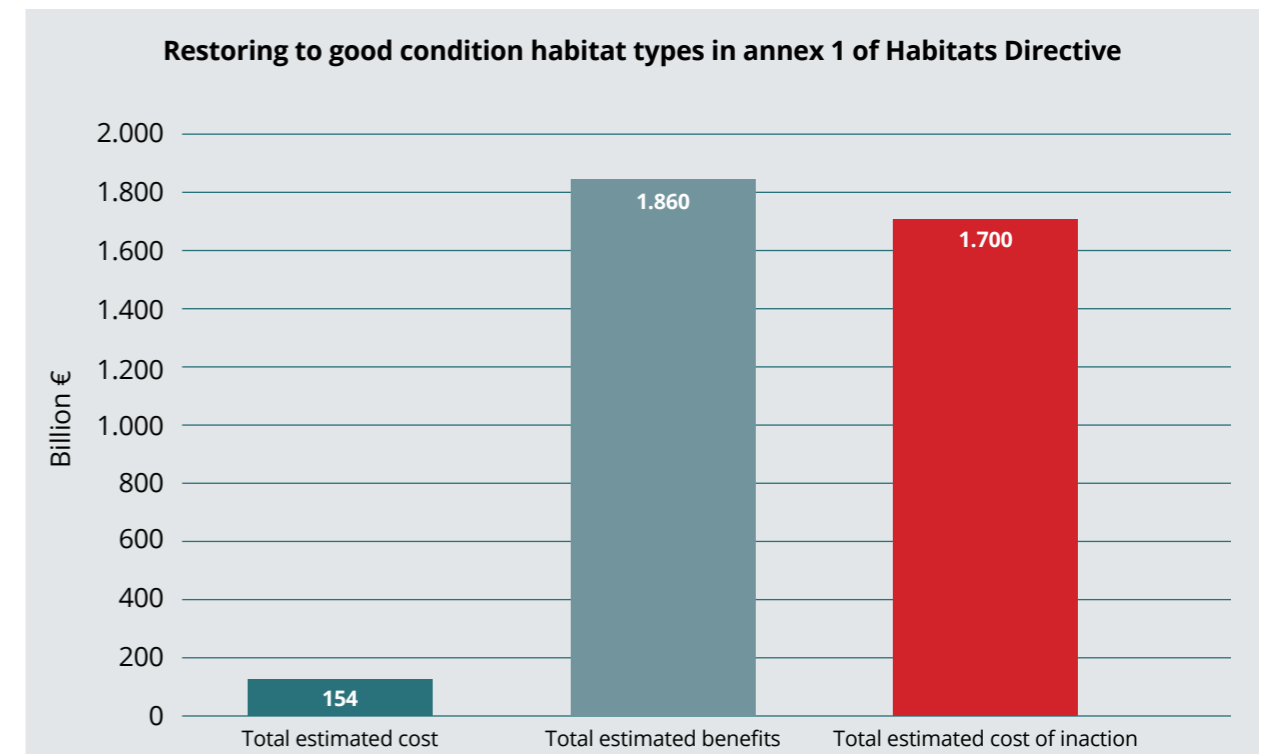


Figure 33. The costs and benefits of nature restoration (European Commission, 2025).

Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2023

The Wildlife Acts (1976 to 2018), the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2020 and the most recent Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 are Ireland’s primary national legislation for the protection of wild flora and fauna in Ireland.

The aims of the Wildlife Act 1976 are to provide for the protection and conservation of wild fauna and flora, to conserve a representative sample of important ecosystems, to provide for the development and protection of game resources and regulate their exploitation, and to provide the services necessary to accomplish such aims.

Currently, all bird species, 23 other animal species or groups of species, and 157 species of flora are afforded protected status under the Act. Animal species/species groups protected under the Act are listed in Appendix 3.



Figure 34. Badger emerging from its sett (Photo: Caroline Legg)

Natural Heritage Areas

Under the Wildlife Act, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and Refuges for Fauna (RFF) are designated to conserve species and habitats of national importance. Jamestown Bog, Girley Bog and Molerick Bog are the only designated NHAs in County Meath. There are currently no Refuges for Fauna designated in the county.

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), of which there are a total of 28 in County Meath, lack statutory designation. However, these sites attract enhanced consideration during the planning process. A complete list of pNHAs is provided in Appendix 2.

Nature Reserves

In January 2019, Josepha Madigan, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht at the time, published notice of making Statutory Instrument (S.I. No. 602 of 2018) under section 16 of the Wildlife Act, thus establishing the first Nature Reserve in County Meath at Newcastle Lough. The reason for recognising the land as a nature reserve is the presence of lake, reed bed, wet grassland and woodland habitats and an associated diversity of flora and fauna.

The objective for which the land is to be used or managed as a nature reserve is to maintain

and enhance the diversity of the habitats and species on the land.



Figure 35. A female Sparrowhawk keeping a watchful eye on its surroundings (Photo: Ita Boyle)

Sites of County Geological Importance

NHAs are not only designated for wildlife, but they also provide for statutory protection of important geological and geomorphological sites. Previous work carried out in Meath resulted in the completion of an audit of the geological heritage of Meath in 2007, which identified 28 sites of county geological importance. These sites are due to be designated as NHAs because of their geological interest from a national perspective.

County Geological Sites can be important for local biodiversity and botany because their unique soils and landforms often support specialised and rare plant species.

In the interim, MCC, through the County Development Plan, will protect and will maintain the geological heritage value of these sites. Any development proposals within or likely to have an impact on County Geological Sites may

be referred to the GSI to seek their advice.

A list of County Geological Sites can be found in Appendix 2.

Flora (Protection) Order 2022

In accordance with Section 21 of the Wildlife Act 1976, the current list of plant species protected in the Republic of Ireland is set out in the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022. Under the Flora (Protection) Order it is illegal to cut, uproot or damage the listed species in any way, or to offer them for sale. This prohibition extends to the taking or sale of seed. In addition, it is illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation.

The Flora (Protection) Order 2022 includes 67 vascular plants in the Republic of Ireland, of which eight are particularly relevant to Meath (see Appendix 4).



Figure 36. Wild Clary (*Salvia verbenaca*) is a species of plant currently listed in the Flora (Protection) Order 2022 (Photo: Peter O'Connor)

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2024

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is a cornerstone piece of Irish legislation that governs the planning system in Ireland. Since its enactment it has been amended multiple times to reflect evolving priorities, including environmental protection, climate action and sustainable development.

It requires that development plans and area plans prepared by local authorities incorporate principles of proper planning and sustainable development, giving local authorities a central role and responsibility in protecting the natural environment. This is achieved by determining policies for its administrative area and for applying that policy, through planning control, in deciding on planning applications and enforcing planning decisions.

MCC has a mandatory obligation to take biodiversity into account when drawing up or considering plans or proposals for development. This includes both statutorily protected nature conservation sites and habitats and species in the wider countryside.

The **Planning and Development Act 2024** was signed into law in October 2024. The 2024 Act will be commenced on a phased basis, with the existing provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (the 2000 Act) remaining in place until the relevant provisions of the 2024 Act are commenced and the corresponding provisions of the 2000 Act are repealed. Key changes in the 2024 Act include:

- Streamlined planning processes, meaning reduced timeframes for decisions and simplified application procedures.
- Enhanced local authority powers to address housing needs.
- Focus on sustainability and climate action.
- Judicial review reform, including eligibility criteria that must be met to issue proceedings.

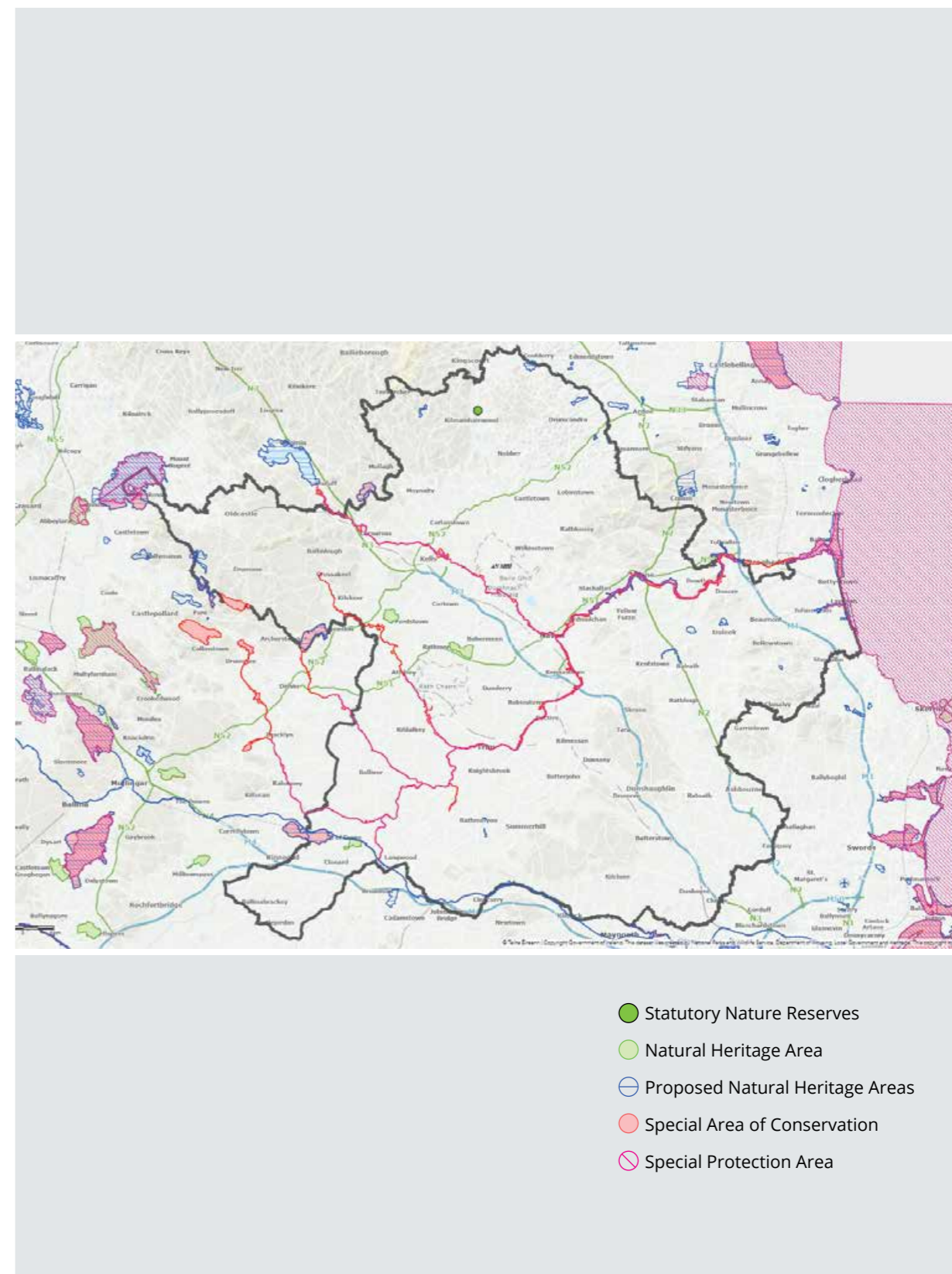
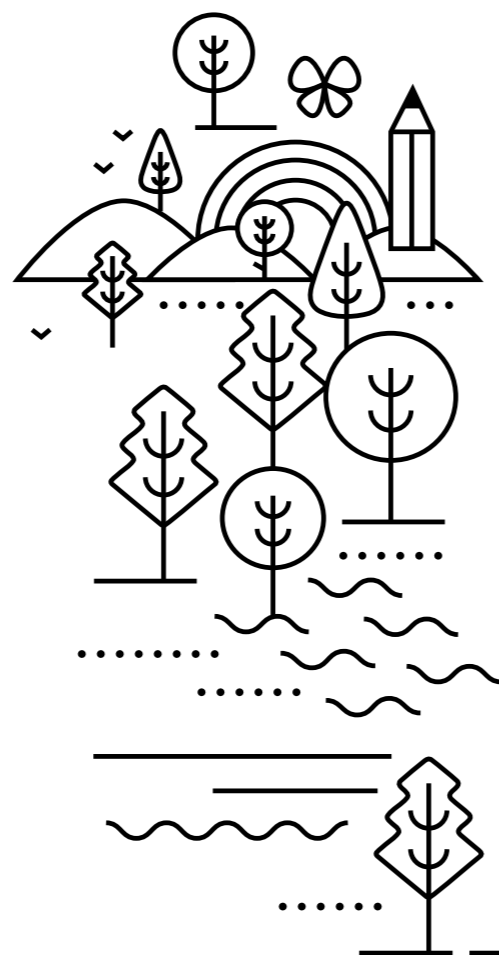


Figure 37. Sites in Meath designated for the protection of nature. Proposed sites for designation are included

06

Decline of biodiversity

When the variety and abundance of habitats and species are reduced, or when small local sub-populations of a species are lost and cannot be replaced owing to their unique genetic lineage, whether plant, animal or any other kind of living thing, we lose nature and biodiversity. This is how Ireland's *State of the Environment Report (2024)* describes the decline of biodiversity.



Jackdaw
Coloeus monedula
Photo: Emily Byrne

It is estimated that up to 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, more than ever before in human history (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019). Globally, the loss of nature and biodiversity is higher than at any point in recent history and is continuing at an unprecedented rate, so much so that we are said to be amid a sixth global mass extinction event (IPBES, 2019; Finn *et al.*, 2023).

Human activity is the primary driver behind biodiversity loss (IPBES, 2019); and Bar-On *et al.* (2018) estimate that humanity has resulted in the loss of 83% of wild animals since civilisation began.



Figure 38. Barn Owl surveyed under licence in Meath in 2024 (Photo: Ben Malone)

Ireland is not immune to the decline of biodiversity. In 2019, the Irish Government declared a Biodiversity Emergency. Listed below are some examples of biodiversity decline in Ireland:

- Nationally, 85% of our EU-protected habitats are in unfavourable conditions, while 30% of our 60 EU-protected species are in unfavourable status (NPWS, 2019). See Appendix 5 for further information on the national status of each Annex I habitat found in County Meath.
- A total of 26% of birds are on the Red List and considered to be of conservation concern (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021).
- More than 50% of native Irish plant species have declined in distribution range between the years 2000 and 2020 (Stroh *et al.*, 2023; Faulkner, 2023).
- Nearly 33% of our semi-natural grasslands have been lost in the last decade (Martin *et al.*, 2018).
- Over 50% of Ireland's 100 bee species have seen substantial declines in numbers since 1980, with 30% of species threatened with extinction (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2007).

In contrast to the decline of Ireland's native flora, 80% of non-native vascular plant species have increased in distribution range between the years 2000 and 2020 (Stroh *et al.*, 2023; Faulkner, 2023). While most are benign, some have become invasive, such as Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and *Rhododendron ponticum*, with negative impacts on native flora and fauna. There is also a significantly growing threat associated with emergent diseases.

Those that have established in Ireland include Ash Dieback, Fireblight and Crayfish Plague.

How we live in and use our land has significant implications for human life, our economy and our society, and it also has consequences for nature and biodiversity.



Figure 39. Drainage of bogs and extraction of peat to burn as turf is an ongoing issue for peatland habitats in Meath. (Photos: Ita Boyle)



Figure 40. Salmon attempting to leap up and swim past Balmoral weir on the Kells Blackwater in Navan, upstream from its confluence with the Boyne (Photo: Ciaran O'Kelly)

Biodiversity loss at a local level in County Meath



Wetlands

- In 2010, MCC commissioned consultants to carry out a Wetland and Coastal Survey of County Meath.
- During the field survey and the documentation of sites from existing reports, almost every wetland identified had some degree of damage. Over-enrichment of wetlands by fertilisers was the most commonly observed issue, though threats to wetlands ranged from infilling of sites to drainage, invasive species and afforestation (Compass Informatics and Wilson, 2010).

Grasslands

- Semi-natural grasslands are a rarity, relative to the extent of other habitat types in Ireland, as demonstrated by the *Irish Semi-natural Grasslands Survey 2007 – 2012* (O'Neill *et al.*, 2013).
- In the past, these grasslands would have been managed traditionally by cutting or light grazing, but these practices are now largely a thing of the past.
- Conversion to intensive forms of agriculture (for example, ploughing, re-seeding, fertilising, overgrazing) is the primary cause of their reduced distribution.



Hedgerows

- The county has a rich resource of hedgerows as illustrated by the *County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey* (Smith *et al.*, 2010).
- An inspection of 1840s six-inch Ordnance Survey maps shows that in some locations at least, a significant length of hedgerow has been removed at some period to increase field size.
- The majority of Meath hedgerows exhibit sub-optimal structure: 80% are either overgrown, relict or derelict, or remnant hedgerows.



Woodlands

- Meath currently has the lowest percentage area of “Forest and Woodland” cover in Ireland at 3.7% (Central Statistics Office, 2024).
- Woodlands in Meath of a non-commercial nature are often observed to be impacted by the presence of non-native invasive species (Cherry Laurel for example) and in many cases suffer from poor management or lack of management altogether.
- Extreme weather events such as storms or droughts are also problematic, along with emergent pests and disease.



Rivers

- 82% of the river waterbodies in Meath are not meeting their water quality objective (i.e. ‘Good’ ecological status).
- A small section of the Dee river catchment in the north of the county is the only stretch of river which is hanging on to its ‘High’ ecological status in Meath (WFD Status report 2019-2024).
- The most significant issues for water quality in Meath’s river catchments are nutrient pollution (i.e. excess phosphorus and nitrogen; phosphate fertiliser use doubled since 2012), and impacts on the physical condition of river channels.
- The source of these issues include agriculture, inadequate waste water infrastructure, arterial drainage, water abstraction and presence of river barriers such as weirs (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021).

Coastal

- The ecological health of our dune systems has deteriorated also which is largely attributable to recreational activities (Aster Environmental Consultants, 2023).
- Estuaries on the Meath coastline are suffering from moderate pollution, largely a result of excess nutrients originating from agriculture and waste water infrastructure (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021).
- Mud and muddy sand habitats which characterise much of the inshore habitat on Meath’s coast is regularly disturbed by commercial fishing, impacting Meath’s local coastal ecosystem (Aitken and Knott, 2018; Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2025).



To summarise, the primary causes of decline in biodiversity at a local level include:

- **Agricultural intensification** (for example, the use of fertilisers and pesticides, the replacement of semi-natural grasslands by modified improved grasslands or the loss of sediment to waterbodies).
- **Drainage of land and land conversion** resulting in the loss of habitats that support nature (for agriculture, forestry and peat cutting).
- **Development** (for example, the construction and use of residential, commercial, industrial, transport and recreational infrastructure, including associated light pollution).
- **Discharges from wastewater infrastructure** (that is, the release of polluted effluent into waterbodies such as local rivers, lakes and the sea).
- **Drainage of rivers** (that is, the straightening, widening and deepening of river channels by mechanical means).
- **Presence of river barriers** (such as dams and weirs that physically prevent migration of aquatic animals upriver).
- **Invasive alien species** (that is, non-native plants and animals, which can negatively affect our native wildlife).
- **Emergent diseases**, which are harmful to native biodiversity (for example, Ash Dieback and Fireblight).

All the above contribute to a decline in availability of high-quality habitat for biodiversity, both locally and nationally (NPWS, 2019).

It is important to note that while climate change has not been mentioned in the above, it is fast becoming a very significant pressure and will affect biodiversity in Meath at significant scale through the occurrence of extreme weather events and an exacerbation of all other pressures.

Importantly, underpinning these drivers are our societal values and behaviours. Transforming these is crucial if we are to reverse the trends of loss (NPWS, 2024).



Figure 41. A tributary of the Inny, identified by the EPA as the Inny_020. The physical nature of this waterbody, like many in Meath, is impacted by arterial drainage works (Photo: Ben Malone)



Figure 42. American Mink is a non-native invasive mammal that preys on many species in Ireland, thus negatively impacting native biodiversity (Photo: Ita Boyle)

07

A vision for biodiversity – Meath in 2030

Ireland's Vision for Biodiversity is that biodiversity "is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people" – *Ireland's 4th NBAP 2023 – 2030.*



White-tailed Bumblebee on Gorse
Bombus lucorum agg | *Ulex europaeus*
Photo: Ben Malone

In Meath, the significance of the challenge in addressing biodiversity loss and the changing climate is recognised. We need nature in our lives. This is widely accepted and MCC, under the steer of central government and in collaboration with partners in both public and private sectors, has demonstrated its commitment to implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan by working with communities, farmers and landowners, state bodies, business and anyone in possession of similar values.

Projects stemming from delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan ensure that an evidence-based approach is embedded in spatial planning. Developers, architects, engineers and planners are equipped and supported to ensure “No net loss of biodiversity” and in many circumstances have helped to achieve biodiversity net gain in developments. Protection and retention of habitats is cornerstone to these efforts, but more widespread adoption and uptake of nature-based solutions have proven to be critical, offering multiple benefits to local communities and therefore greater cost-effectiveness in project delivery.

Open space management has become less intensive and pesticide use is measured and used only when necessary. People have become accustomed to the less manicured appearance of our public green spaces and road verges, and many residents have made their gardens more wildlife friendly too. People are observing nature more and reaping the health and wellbeing rewards of a greater connection with the outdoors. A movement of citizen science in the county not only helps

interested members of the public to tune into nature’s natural seasonal cycles and identify wildlife on their doorstep but also helps them to witness the changes occurring to our environment over time and helps to build an evidence base for local conservation action.

Through cultivation of partnerships and collaboration, landowners and farmers are encouraged and supported to increasingly farm with nature in mind. As the custodians of our local landscape, many have broadened their field margins and sensitively managed their hedgerows. Streams and rivers flowing through farmland have begun to see their riparian habitats rebound as more people understand the simple measures that can reduce loss of nutrients to our waterways while reconnecting ecological corridors. There has never been such a focus on healthy soils and regenerative practices, which in turn has had a positive impact on both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.

In all, MCC has helped to facilitate and play an important role in ensuring a nature-positive trajectory in County Meath, securing benefits for people and nature, while building resilience in the landscape to help adapt to a changing climate.



Figure 43. Skylark is a breeding bird in Ireland whose unique warbling notes in Spring offer a sign of brighter days ahead (Photo: Caroline Legg).

08

Objectives and actions of the *Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP) 2025 – 2030*

A total of 55 actions make up the *MBAP 2025 – 2030*. The actions are based upon recommendations made during ecological studies, proposals put forward by the Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum, views shared by members of the public, input from various council departments, and the objectives and actions laid out by pre-existing plans and policies at national, regional and local levels.

The actions of the plan are organised under five broad, strategic objectives:

Objective 1

Reaching a deeper spatial understanding of nature in county meath.

Objective 2

Leading the way in policy, planning and practice.

Objective 3

Action for biodiversity.

Objective 4

Research and monitoring.

Objective 5

Raising awareness and appreciation of biodiversity.

All lower-order plans and projects supported by this plan (for example, site management plans and habitat management projects) shall be subject to AA Screening, where necessary, in accordance with the requirements of the European Communities (Birds and

Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) or the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), where appropriate.

All objectives and actions align with the key priorities of *Ireland's 4th NBAP 2023 – 2030*. This ensures that MCC is playing its part in the whole-of-government approach to protecting and conserving biodiversity. Some actions are broad in nature to allow for projects to develop as project partners and funding streams are identified during the lifetime of the plan.

Actions are listed below, along with their respective aims, associated proposed outputs/indicators, action owners and possible partners.

Appendix 8 provides a list of the actions alongside information on the proposed timescale for implementation and any pre-existing policies and/or plans with which the action aligns.

Stream Water-crowfoot
Ranunculus penicillatus

Photo: Ben Malone

**Delivering for nature – creating wilder,
more wooded and ecologically connected
catchments from source to sea.**

The creation of this illustration was inspired
by public submissions on the *MBAP 2025 – 2030*
received during the pre-draft public
consultation in 2024.



Objective 1: Reaching a deeper spatial understanding of nature in County Meath

To protect many of our most precious species and habitats, it is essential to know where they occur. There are many sites throughout the county that host a range of plant and animal species or their habitats (including

Annex I Habitats, Annex I Birds, Annex II and IV species, Flora (Protection) Order etc.), which are not designated for nature conservation but whose ecological value is nonetheless of high importance in the county.

These sites play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity at a local level. They offer essential ecosystem services to nearby communities and contribute to the overall ecological health of a region. Identifying, mapping and

periodically monitoring these sites or specific species provides local authorities and key local stakeholders with the evidence base to protect and conserve biodiversity.

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
1	Undertake a state-of-knowledge exercise of biodiversity in County Meath.	To collate all known information on local biodiversity to inform the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan and future projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report completed every five years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) BSBI
2	Undertake a countywide wetland resurvey and mapping project, building on the information garnered from the <i>County Meath Wetlands and Coastal Habitats Survey (2010)</i> .	To compare findings with baseline information from <i>County Meath Wetlands and Coastal Habitats Survey (2010)</i> and implement recommended follow-up actions as far as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resurvey completed every 5-10 years. Detailed survey report completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services NPWS NBDC BSBI Irish Ramsar Wetlands Committee Environmental Non-governmental Organisations (eNGOs) Farming organisations Local communities Landowners
3	Undertake a countywide resurvey and mapping project of Meath’s trees, woodlands and hedgerows, building on the baseline information garnered from the <i>County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey (2010)</i> .	To compare findings with baseline information from <i>County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey (2010)</i> and implement recommended follow-up actions as far as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resurvey completed every 5-10 years. Detailed survey report completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services NPWS NBDC BSBI eNGOs Farming organisations Local communities Landowners

4	Undertake a countywide survey and mapping project of Meath's semi-natural grassland habitats.	To identify semi-natural grassland sites across County Meath, understand their distribution, and implement recommended follow-up actions as far as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey completed every 5-10 years. • Detailed survey report completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • NBDC • BSBI • eNGOs • Farming organisations • Local communities • Landowners
5	Using an evidence-based approach, create a detailed geodatabase "Site Inventory" of designated and non-designated sites of high intrinsic biodiversity value within County Meath.	To provide a framework within which knowledge on County Meath's biodiversity can be recorded, stored and used to inform nature conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site inventory created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Information Systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • NBDC • The Heritage Council • BSBI
6	Using an evidence-based approach, identify and map County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) in County Meath, according to Heritage Council guidelines, to ensure their continued protection through existing or new policies in the County Development Plan.	To understand the distribution of areas important for nature that are not designated for protection and endeavour to protect same through the implementation of planning controls and the promotion of sustainable land-use practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial information incorporated into MCC mapping system(s). • Clear policies for protection of CBAs integrated into the <i>MCDP</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Information Systems • MCC Forward Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • NBDC • The Heritage Council • BSBI • Farming organisations

Photos: Barry Cronin



**Meath County Council leading by example,
being proactive in planning, protecting and
providing space for nature.**

The creation of this illustration was inspired
by public submissions on the *MBAP 2025 - 2030*
received during the pre-draft public
consultation in 2024.



Conceptualised by Ben Malone
and illustrated by Aga Grandowicz

Objective 2: Leading the way in policy, planning and practice

Actions under this objective represent many of the direct interventions that MCC, throughout all sections of the local authority, will make to protect, conserve and support nature through new and focused projects, and during the

daily work of the local authority. Actions will be implemented that seek to raise awareness of elected members, senior management and staff, that showcase MCC’s commitment to biodiversity initiatives in the county, and which

demonstrate best practice. These actions align closely with the priority objectives laid out in the Revised *NPF*, the *RSES*, as well as policies and objectives contained in the *MCDP 2021 – 2027* and the *MCC Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029*.

Leading the way in policy

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
7	Align the <i>MCDP</i> , all area plans and the <i>MBAP</i> with the objectives of the <i>NBAP</i> , where relevant.	To align and integrate the objectives of the <i>NBAP</i> with the statutory land use plans of <i>MCC</i> and with the <i>MBAP 2025 – 2030</i> , where relevant, by 2030.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of plans that align with the objectives of the <i>NBAP</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>MCC</i> Forward Planning <i>MCC</i> Biodiversity 	
8	Devise and support the implementation of good governance strategies to facilitate the integration of EU and national biodiversity legislation and policy requirements into council plans, projects, and services, where relevant.	Devise and support the implementation of good governance strategies to facilitate the integration of EU and national biodiversity legislation and policy requirements into council plans, projects, and services, where relevant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of an Internal Cross-Departmental Biodiversity Working Group. Number of Internal Cross-Departmental Biodiversity Working Group meetings per annum. Creation of a biodiversity checklist for project managers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>MCC</i> Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All <i>MCC</i> Sections
9	Support the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in protecting, and, where possible, improving the conservation status of protected species and habitats in County Meath.	To achieve and maintain favourable conservation status for habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant projects supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>NPWS</i> <i>MCC</i> Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All <i>MCC</i> Sections

10	Support the review and update of policies, objectives and development management standards in the <i>MCDP</i> .	To integrate policies and objectives in the <i>MCDP</i> that support the delivery of actions in the <i>MBAP 2025 – 2030</i> .	<p>Policies and objectives updated to support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No net loss of biodiversity through strategies, planning, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/ or investment in Blue-Green infrastructure. • Biodiversity measures and nature-based solutions are considered in new public and private projects and developments, where appropriate. • Alignment of plans and the design and delivery of public projects and private developments with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI's) guideline document <i>Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment</i>. • Minimisation of the impact of artificial lighting on nocturnal biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Forward Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • IFI • LAWPRO • Bat Conservation Ireland • Dark Skies Ireland
11	Work with the relevant authorities to support the preparation of, and implement, Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan, when adopted, and where relevant for MCC, to help achieve national restoration targets.	To help Ireland to achieve its national nature restoration targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with partners. • Actions undertaken to support implementation of the Nature Restoration Law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS
12	Identify locally important breeding sites in County Meath for select rare and threatened species, such as the Swift and Barn Owl, and ensure that these are mapped and protected by including relevant policies and objectives in the <i>MCDP</i> .	To protect rare and threatened fauna.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects/tenders with these requirements in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Housing Capital Schemes • MCC Transportation • MCC Active Travel • MCC Urban Regeneration • MCC Development Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • Birdwatch Ireland • Farming organisations • Local communities • Landowners • Homeowners

13	Promote a policy to ensure the purchase and use of appropriate native hedge and tree stock of local provenance, where possible, in plans and projects, and avoid the use of species classified as “invasive” such as Cherry Laurel.	To adhere to the principles of green procurement, reduce the risk of importing invasive alien species and emergent plant diseases, and maintain the genetic integrity of native flora.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects/tenders with these requirements in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Housing Capital Schemes MCC Transportation MCC Active Travel MCC Urban Regeneration MCC Development Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services MCC Asset Management MCC Community Development eNGOs Local communities
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Leading the way in planning

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
14	Provide a central place for all biodiversity data for decision-makers in MCC.	To make biodiversity data more accessible to inform decision-making and sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up-to-date spatial information incorporated into MCC mapping system(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Information Systems MCC Biodiversity 	
15	Develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Strategy in accordance with international best practice and emerging national guidance.	To identify, protect, enhance, provide and manage Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner in the <i>MCDP</i> and relevant area plans, and have regard to ecosystem services and the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Infrastructure Working Group established. Green Infrastructure Strategy for County Meath developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Forward Planning MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services MCC Heritage & Conservation MCC Transportation MCC Community Development MCC Active Travel MCC Urban Regeneration MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First MCC Development Management
16	Support habitat retention and the integration of biodiversity measures into plans and the design and delivery of public projects and private developments, aiming for no net loss of biodiversity and biodiversity net gain where possible.	To protect and support nature, improve climate resilience and strive for sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff training delivered to build awareness of and share information on the principles of “no net loss” and “biodiversity net gain”. Development management standards updated as appropriate. Highlight several MCC projects demonstrating no net loss of biodiversity. Highlight several MCC projects demonstrating biodiversity net gain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Forward Planning MCC Development Management MCC Transportation MCC Housing Capital Schemes MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First MCC Asset Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services MCC Community Development

17	Support the integration of nature-based solutions into plans and the design and delivery of public projects and private developments.	To protect and support nature, improve climate resilience and strive for sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training delivered to support the integration and implementation of nature-based solutions in rural and urban plans, projects and private development. • Development management standards updated as appropriate. • Highlight a number of MCC plans and projects that incorporate or support nature-based solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Forward Planning • MCC Development Management • MCC Transportation • MCC Housing Capital Schemes • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel • MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First • MCC Asset Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Community Development
18	Align public projects and private developments with IFI's guideline document <i>Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment</i> and update development management standards as appropriate.	To protect County Meath's watercourses and their associated riparian zones in urban areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development management standards updated as appropriate. • Number of MCC projects demonstrating alignment with IFI's guideline document <i>Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Forward Planning • MCC Development Management • MCC Transportation • MCC Housing Capital Schemes • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel • MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First • MCC Asset Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Community Development
19	Apply appropriate lighting specifications and mitigation measures to new development, new projects, lighting upgrades and existing lighting stock, as appropriate, to minimise disturbance to local biodiversity.	To strive to ensure that artificial light is managed so wildlife is not disrupted within, nor displaced from, important habitat; and is able to undertake critical behaviours such as foraging, reproduction and dispersal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public lighting policy and development management standards updated as appropriate. • Number of MCC projects demonstrating ecologically sensitive lighting design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Forward Planning • MCC Development Management • MCC Transportation • MCC Housing Capital Schemes • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel • MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First • MCC Asset Management • MCC Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • Bat Conservation Ireland • Dark Skies Ireland • eNGOs • Local communities

20	Protect existing Swift nesting sites where possible, establish new sites in existing public and private properties; and request integration of artificial Swift nest bricks and boxes in new development.	To maintain and increase the nesting opportunities for Swift in urban areas and address threats to Swifts from the renovation of old buildings and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing known Swift nest sites mapped. Spatial information incorporated into MCC mapping system(s). Number of public and private developments demonstrating integration of Swift bricks and Swift boxes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Development Management MCC Facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Housing Capital Schemes Schools Birdwatch Ireland Local communities Homeowners
21	Pilot a biodiversity-inclusive design for a social housing estate, prioritising retention of pre-existing habitats and several other possible actions such as the regeneration of semi-natural grasslands, installation of blue/green roofs, green walls, wetland and pond SuDS, green carparking, Swift bricks in facades, nest cups and nest boxes under eaves, and wildlife friendly shrubs and trees in open space.	To gain practical experience in the design, implementation and management of nature-based solutions within the local authority, as well as an understanding of effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration site developed of a social housing site where biodiversity inclusive design has been applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Housing Capital Schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Development Management MCC Transportation MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services
22	Develop and provide guidance on the management of biodiversity issues for developers in the planning process.	To protect and support nature, improve climate resilience and strive for sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance developed. Number of training engagements undertaken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Development Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS IFI NBDC eNGOs
23	Pilot an Urban Nature Plan for Navan.	To prepare, in line with the EU Restoration Regulation and <i>Ireland's Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plan</i> , an Urban Nature Plan for Navan in partnership with the local community that commits to promoting and protecting biodiversity and urban nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Nature Plan prepared for Navan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Forward Planning MCC Biodiversity MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services MCC Transportation MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Community Development Navan 2030 eNGOs Local communities

Leading the way in practice

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
24	Produce Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines for staff across all sections of the local authority.	To build capacity within the local authority to lead, coordinate and promote biodiversity measures across all sections and support biodiversity-proofing of plans, projects and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines produced for staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All MCC Sections
25	Develop a biodiversity training programme for MCC staff.	To build capacity within MCC to deliver on the Objectives of the <i>MBAP 2025 – 2030</i> by developing and delivering an annual training programme. Content will be devised to support staff with the integration of biodiversity into all council plans, projects and services, where relevant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training needs assessment completed. Annual training programme developed and delivered. Number of training engagements undertaken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Human Resources, Learning & Development MCC Biodiversity All MCC Sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage Council NPWS LASNTG eNGOs
26	Develop a tree management strategy outlining the policies and objectives for the sustainable and efficient management of trees, consistent with best practice, and provide training in tree and hedgerow maintenance to council staff, contractors and landowners.	To protect and manage trees and hedgerows in a manner that is sustainable and prevents no unnecessary or undue damage to biodiversity, and maintains ecological corridors, while ensuring adequate safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy developed. Best practice guidance promoted. Number of training events organised. Number of attendees at training events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Transportation MCC Biodiversity MCC Human Resources, Learning & Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Facilities MCC Development Management MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services Teagasc Farming organisations eNGOs Farmers Landowners
27	Adopt and implement a pesticide reduction strategy within MCC.	To halve the use of chemical pesticides by 2030 for the betterment of local biodiversity and human health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy document prepared and approved. Use of chemical pesticides by MCC halved by 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Transportation MCC Facilities MCC Development Management MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity NBDC eNGOs Local communities

28	Implement the <i>All-Ireland Pollinator Plan</i> as part of MCC's partnership agreement with the NBDC.	To support and promote <i>AIPP</i> actions for Councils and monitor resulting changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify at least 10 locations that are mown under a pollinator friendly regime (five cut and lifts per year) on local-authority-owned lands. • Manage at least five meadows (one cut and lift per year) on local-authority-owned lands. • Identify at least 10 flagship roadside verges that are managed to be pollinator friendly (one cut and lift per year). • Number of roadside verges where a layered mowing approach has been applied. • Number of council pollinator-friendly actions completed and/or ongoing. • Actions logged on the "Actions for Pollinators" on the mapping system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Transportation • MCC Facilities • MCC Development Management • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Public Works (OPW) • NPWS • NBDC
29	Develop biodiversity management plans for select open spaces/parks/greenways within local authority ownership, focusing initial pilots on Blackwater Park and the Boyne Valley to Lakelands Greenway.	To take the opportunity to support local biodiversity on local-authority-owned lands and to enable the public to connect with nature in high amenity areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity Management Plan developed and adopted for Blackwater Park. • Biodiversity Management Plan developed for the Boyne Valley to Lakelands Greenway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Transportation • MCC Community Development • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity
30	Continue to deliver local-authority-led actions in relation to monitoring, protection and the restoration of ecological status of waterbodies in County Meath.	To support implementation of the <i>WAP 2024</i> and any subsequent plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of inspections carried out annually as part of the National Agricultural Inspection Programme. • Number of domestic wastewater inspections carried out annually as part of the Domestic Wastewater (DWW) National Inspection Programme. • DWW awareness raising activities delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Forward Planning • MCC Development Management • MCC Biodiversity • LAWPRO
31	Provide updates to the Meath Biodiversity Working Group on unauthorised developments impacting biodiversity.	To endeavour to protect local biodiversity through implementing planning controls and promoting sustainable land-use practices in a transparent manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of unauthorised developments updated upon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Planning Enforcement 	

Working in partnership with stakeholders to protect, sustainably manage and restore nature in our countryside.

The creation of this illustration was inspired by public submissions on the *MBAP 2025 - 2030* received during the pre-draft public consultation in 2024.



Objective 3: Action for biodiversity

Actions grouped under this objective commit to continued support for pre-existing biodiversity projects, as well as initiatives viewed as important for protecting and conserving certain habitats and species or

those aimed at furthering national, regional or local objectives for biodiversity. Partnerships maintained and those fostered within and outside the local authority, across a diverse range of organisations, community groups,

landowners and individuals, represent a key element of these actions, acknowledging that by pooling resources, knowledge and expertise, diverse stakeholders can achieve

greater impact than any single entity alone.

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
32	Where possible, support IFI in the removal/alteration of disused weirs to facilitate migration.	To improve migration for salmon, eel, trout and lamprey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project engaged in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS LAWPRO Boyne Rivers Trust Boyne Catchment Angling Association Angling clubs
33	Where possible, work with relevant partners to protect and/or restore high ecological status waterbodies in County Meath and along its borders.	To support implementation of the <i>WAP 2024</i> and any subsequent plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project(s) initiated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services MCC Biodiversity LAWPRO Blue Dot Catchments Programme Steering Group Teagasc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Westmeath County Council Boyne Rivers Trust Oriel River Catchments and Coastal Association Boyne Catchment Angling Association Angling clubs Landowners Farmers Local communities
34	Engage with neighbouring local authorities on biodiversity projects that require a landscape and/or catchment scale approach.	To collaborate with neighbouring local authorities and the relevant agencies to support the development of ecological networks and enhanced connectivity between protected sites, while also addressing the need for management of alien invasive species and the conservation of native species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of meetings with neighbouring local authorities relating to cross-county projects. Projects supported and/or implemented with partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbouring local authorities LAWPRO NPWS IFI eNGOs Local communities

35	Plant appropriate native species of trees and support the establishment of woodland and/or agroforestry on appropriate local-authority-owned sites.	To support the <i>MCAP</i> and EU NRR objectives of increased numbers of trees in the landscape and increased woodland cover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hectares of land planted. • Number of trees planted per annum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Assets • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Transportation • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel • MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First • Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) • Boyne Rivers Trust • eNGOs
36	Facilitate the planting of groups of appropriate native species of trees within the boundary/built footprint of existing built-up areas.	To support the <i>MCAP</i> and EU NRR objectives of increased numbers of trees in the landscape and increased woodland cover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of trees planted per annum by the local authority and/or in partnership with local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Assets • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Urban Regeneration & Active Travel • MCC Rural Regeneration & Town Centre First • Boyne Rivers Trust • eNGOs • Local communities
37	Assess the feasibility of developing a nursery of appropriate native tree species and outdoor classroom space on a local-authority-owned site with a view to rearing a stock of local provenance that can supply local projects and initiatives.	To support efforts to reduce the risk of importing invasive alien species and emergent plant diseases, maintain the genetic integrity of native flora, and help to build capacity in County Meath to rear tree stock of local provenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility study completed. • Potential sites for the establishment of a native tree nursery and outdoor classroom space identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Assets • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Transportation • Meath Partnership • NBDC • NPWS • IFI • LAWPRO • Meath Partnership • Boyne Rivers Trust • Local communities
38	Continue to implement biodiversity and habitat management measures recommended for Balrath Woods.	To support biodiversity and improve climate resilience of Balrath Woods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Populations of target species being stable or increasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Transportation • Tree Council of Ireland • Balrath Woods Preservation Group • Balrath Woods Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services
39	Continue and expand biodiversity-friendly grassland management practices that benefit biodiversity on the Commons of Lloyd and seek to implement similar practices on other public lands.	To support biodiversity and improve climate resilience of the Commons of Lloyd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Populations of target species being stable or increasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Assets • MCC Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • NMS • Farmers • Local communities

40	Continue to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on a suitable peatland site(s) to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques, and to promote their heritage and educational value.	To manage, protect and raise awareness of peatland sites in County Meath.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of wetland conservation projects supported. • Annual participation in World Wetlands Day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Heritage & Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • NPWS • Coillte • Bord na Móna • LAWPRO • Irish Peatland Conservation Council • Community Wetlands Forum • eNGOs • Landowners • Local communities
41	Support initiatives that promote the conservation of County Meath’s coastal dune habitats.	To support biodiversity and improve climate resilience of County Meath’s coastal dune habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives supported relating to County Meath’s coastal dunes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastwatch • Clean Coasts • CARO • Local communities
42	Provide support to local communities (e.g., Tidy Towns, environmental groups) to develop Community Biodiversity Action Plans, promote and support biodiversity initiatives, advise on funding streams, and encourage citizen science initiatives at a local level.	To increase the number of Community Biodiversity Action Plans in the county, promote biodiversity funding opportunities, and increase participation in citizen science initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagements held/ supported. • Number of training events delivered. • Number of Community Biodiversity Action Plans that MCC helped to develop. • Number of Community Biodiversity Action Plans that MCC helped community groups to implement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Community Development • MCC Climate Action, Environment and Water services • Meath Partnership • Local communities
43	Continue to deliver the Hare’s Corner project or equivalent.	To provide support and assistance to farmers, private landowners and community groups to implement simple yet effective actions for biodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of applicants/ participants supported. • Number of actions supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Landowners • Local communities
44	Continue to support Barn Owl conservation in County Meath in conjunction with partners.	To work with partners to recover the barn owl population of County Meath.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training delivered for volunteer surveyors. • Monitoring activity supported. • Awareness-raising campaign delivered on best practice rodenticide use and impacts of rodenticides on local biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birdwatch Ireland • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Development Management • MCC Transportation • MCC Facilities • Irish Raptor Study Group • eNGOs • Farmers • Landowners • Local communities

Bending the biodiversity curve, helping wildlife to flourish and we have the evidence to prove it.

The creation of this illustration was inspired by public submissions on the *MBAP 2025 - 2030* received during the pre-draft public consultation in 2024.



Indicators of biodiversity

Time

Objective 4: Research and monitoring

The challenge of halting biodiversity loss must be underpinned by sound science. While actions under Objective 1 also contribute to the evidence base for protecting and conserving biodiversity in Meath, they primarily focus on identifying and assimilating knowledge of locally important sites by habitat

type. However, actions under Objective 4 will aim to further bolster the evidence base in a targeted programme of survey activity on a site-by-site basis, within and outside the local authority land holding, irrespective of primary habitat types. MCC will also seek to identify new opportunities for improved ecosystem

service provision in our river catchments, building resilience in a changing climate and dealing with threats posed by invasive alien species that harm our local environment and risk human health. Efforts to build capacity in the local community to engage in citizen

science activity will help to track positive and negative changes in our environment, helping to inform conservation action.

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
45	Support new studies and surveys to fill knowledge gaps, improve our understanding of local biodiversity, and gauge the ecological status of target NHAs, pNHAs and non-designated sites in County Meath.	To build knowledge on local biodiversity, inform conservation action, and assist the local authority across functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of surveys completed. Student research projects supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity NPWS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services NPWS NBDC BSBI eNGOs Third-level institutions
46	Implement an annual programme of ecological surveys, climate change risk assessments, and ecological conservation work, as necessary, on local-authority-owned-lands.	To improve knowledge and understanding of the ecological health of local-authority-owned sites, to inform ecological conservation action to restore and enhance natural systems for biodiversity and to increase resilience to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of surveys completed. Number of risk assessments completed. Number of conservation projects per year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS NBDC BSBI eNGOs
47	Explore opportunities to progress river restoration measures, natural water retention measures, and nature-based solutions for integrated catchment management (NbS-ICM) in appropriate locations in the Boyne catchment, where feasible, and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.	To engage with stakeholders taking account of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously undertaken analysis, including but not limited to the <i>Integrated Framework for River Restoration and Nature-based Solutions for Integrated Catchment Management (NbS-ICM)</i> report prepared by RPS and CBEC Eco-engineering on behalf of the EPA. Relevant actions in the <i>WAP 2024</i> related to the <i>Land Use Review</i> and review of arterial drainage requirements and the underpinning Arterial Drainage Act. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public body engagement. Locations in the Boyne catchment identified where river restoration could be progressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC Biodiversity MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPWS EPA OPW IFI LAWPRO ASSAP DAFM Bord na Móna Neighbouring local authorities Farming organisations Boyne Rivers Trust eNGOs

48	Consider projects that include the mapping, appropriate treatment and eradication, where possible, of invasive alien species.	To monitor, and where possible, deal with the threat posed by invasive alien species to local biodiversity and the local economy in County Meath.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key invasive species in County Meath identified and mapped. • Annual programme of invasive alien species management supported. • Number of projects supported and/or delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • IFI • OPW • LAWPRO • eNGOs • Local communities
49	Support and encourage an inclusive volunteer network and local communities to carry out biological recording and citizen science projects.	To continue to build knowledge on local biodiversity, inform conservation action, and use citizen science activities to engage the public with nature and the outdoors to benefit mental health and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturalist Field Club for County Meath re-established and supported. • Annual events programme delivered. • Using 2025 as a baseline, increased biological recording activity by 50% by 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBDC • Healthy Ireland • eNGOs • Local communities



Photos: Ben Malone

Reconnecting people with nature.

The creation of this illustration was inspired by public submissions on the *MBAP 2025 - 2030* received during the pre-draft public consultation in 2024.



Objective 5: Raising awareness and appreciation of biodiversity

Educating people of all ages and demographics about biodiversity and the essential role it plays in our society and economy is fundamental to the success of the *MBAP*. The best way to learn about the natural environment is to be in it and to have direct involvement in

nature conservation projects. These actions will ensure MCC, alongside partners and in key locations around the county, such as the new Boyne Valley (Brú na Bóinne) National Park, will continue to collaborate with and support community/voluntary groups and schools, and

interested farmers and landowners, to engage in efforts that benefit nature on their lands and in their respective localities. Actions here include strategic communications, resource development and the provision of events and training.

No.	Action	Aim	Proposed output/indicator	Action owner	Possible partners
50	Develop and implement an inclusive outreach and engagement programme for the public.	To showcase and promote the county's biodiversity and facilitate active engagement through new and established annual event programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach and engagement programme developed. • Biodiversity content on MCC website updated. • Number of events/outings organised per year. • Number of people and/or attendees engaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Corporate Affairs & Governance • MCC Library, Arts & Culture • MCC Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS • NBDC • Meath Partnership • eNGOs • Local communities
51	Support a landowner and land manager network for those interested in farming sustainably and managing space for nature in the countryside.	To support those managing our countryside and facilitate knowledge exchange among farmers and landowners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagements held with the farming and agricultural sector per annum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Economic Development & Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teagasc • NPWS • IFI • OPW • LAWPRO • Meath Partnership • Farming for Nature • Farming organisations • Farmers • Landowners • Boyne Rivers Trust • Birdwatch Ireland • eNGOs

52	Explore the use of demonstration farm(s) for biodiversity conservation (e.g., hedgerow management, field margins, river management, soil improvement, integrated pest management, and nest boxes).	To set up a demonstration farm with a local farmer(s) showcasing best practice for biodiversity conservation and monitoring effectiveness of measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration farm(s) identified. • Number of visits by interested farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • Economic Development & Tourism • Farming Groups • Farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teagasc • NPWS • OPW • LAWPRO • Meath Partnership • Farming for Nature • National Organic Training Skillnet • eNGOs • Farming organisations • Farmers • Landowners
53	Produce Tree Planting and Management Guidelines for communities.	To provide communities with the necessary guidance and support to undertake tree planting projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eNGOs • Local communities
54	Continue to work with the MCC Culture and Creativity Team to promote biodiversity through creative and inclusive projects, and with support from the Creative Ireland programme.	To increase the appeal and accessibility of biodiversity outreach events in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects and outreach events per annum incorporating music, visual art, film and performance art, including dance, poetry and photography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Library, Arts & Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Heritage & Conservation
55	Develop guidance and supports for schools and schoolteachers in County Meath relating to biodiversity.	To support biodiversity education in the education sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on pre-existing initiatives in County Meath collated and made available for schools on an annual basis. • Repository of educational supports relating to biodiversity generated, including access to professional development for school staff to promote sustainable practices and build biodiversity awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Biodiversity • MCC Climate Action, Environment & Water Services • MCC Library, Arts & Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navan Education Centre

09

Implementing and resourcing the *MBAP 2025 – 2030*

MCC, supported by one full-time Biodiversity Officer post, will be the main coordinating body overseeing the implementation of the *MBAP*. The Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum will provide feedback and assistance in the implementation and monitoring of the plan. Meetings of the Biodiversity Working Group will provide an opportunity for cross-collaboration and partnership among participant members.

Beech Tree at Balrath Woods
Fagus sylvatica

Photo: Barry Cronin

It is important to note that the delivery of actions contained in this plan will be dependent upon several factors including:

Stakeholder buy-in: To deliver and fulfil the aims of the actions contained in this plan, stakeholder buy-in and participation in collaborative approaches will be essential. Stakeholders include those listed within the table columns of “Action Owner” and “Possible Partners” in Section 8, for example public sector bodies, NGOs, local community groups and private landowners.

Available funding: Successful implementation of actions often requires funding outside the local authority’s assigned budgets. Therefore, the availability of funding/grants from government and non-governmental sources will be a key determinant in the delivery of some actions contained in this plan. The current funding (2025) that is directly available to help implement actions in the MBAP is approximately €150,000 per year. This figure includes the internally allocated budget and external funding allocations subject to grant application approval from The Heritage Council and the NPWS. It is also subject to change over the lifetime of this plan.

Prior/prerequisite actions: Actions contained in this plan may be dependent on the delivery of prerequisite actions. For example, environmental assessments may be required prior to the implementation of habitat management plans.

Reporting and monitoring of progress

The progress of the Biodiversity Action Plan will be reported to the Council’s Chief

Executive and elected members through the monthly *Chief Executive Report*. An *Annual Progress Report* will be prepared and presented to the Biodiversity Working Group, and various SPCs and summarised in MCC’s *Annual Report*.

Biodiversity Duty Form

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 places the *NBAP 2023-2030* on a statutory footing. There is an obligation for local authorities to have regard to the objectives and targets of the *NBAP* in the performance of their functions. An online survey to allow public bodies to fulfil their reporting obligations has been developed by the NPWS.

Actions outlined under the *MBAP 2025-2030* (underpinned by the *NBAP*) will be reported on an annual basis with input from cross-departmental directorates within MCC. The information provided by the Council will be collated by NPWS and will contribute towards informing the implementation review of *Ireland’s 4th NBAP*.



Figure 44. The Biodiversity Working Group of the Meath Heritage Forum (Photo: Loreto Guinan)



Pine Marten
Martes martes

Photo: Ita Boyle

10

What you can do to help

Protecting and conserving biodiversity requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Everybody can do something to help nature.



Great tit
Parus major

Photo: Emily Byrne

Here are a few ideas you might like to try in your locality:

At home:

- Encourage native grassland species to flower in your lawn by reducing your mowing to once every six weeks, or even once a year. Ensure that you remove and dispose of the clippings responsibly and avoid sowing wildflower seed.
- If you have flower beds, pots and boxes, plant them up with a range of pollinator-friendly plants and herbs that provide both colour and food for pollinators throughout the year. Night-flowering/scented blossoms will attract night-flying insects such as moths, which in turn are great for bats.
- Look for ways to create nesting opportunities for solitary bees – remove vegetation from a south- or east-facing soil bank and they will find it.
- Plant appropriate native species of trees grown from seed in Ireland or create a traditional orchard. Consider a hedgerow of native tree species if you need a vegetated border.
- Add a pond. It does not have to be large if you are constrained by space. Even a sunken bathtub or basin can create a habitat for wildlife.
- Participate in nature-based, citizen-science activities such as the Garden Bird Survey, Garden Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and the Flower Insect Timed Count. You do not need to be an experienced ecologist to participate in these surveys, so go and give it a try.

At work:

- Manage your grounds for wildlife – plant appropriate species of trees, hedgerows and colourful plants, and build bird and bat boxes, which will attract a range of wildlife species.
- Sponsor a local nature conservation organisation in the delivery of their projects or in the running of an event.
- Organise a company nature conservation activity day or donate staff time to participate in practical nature conservation activities.

In the community:

- Get involved in local discourse. Let your local elected representatives know you care.
- Manage open space in residential areas and public spaces for nature. Partner with your neighbours, local Tidy Towns group or the local authority to make your community more pollinator friendly. Check out the self-assessment tool for communities supporting the *AIPP* and pollinators checklist to choose and prioritise actions that are suitable for your community.
- Take action for Swifts. Work with the local authority and the local branch of Birdwatch Ireland to identify locations to erect nest boxes and caller systems for Swifts.
- Become a member and volunteer with a local conservation organisation to help manage and support local habitats – your local meadow, woodland, river or coastal dunes may need conservation action.



Red fox
Vulpes vulpes

Photo: Ita Boyle

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: County Meath Biodiversity Audit 2024 – Recommended Priority Actions.

Short-term Actions:

1. The findings of this Biodiversity Audit should be fully incorporated within the forthcoming Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030, with inclusion of this report as an Appendix.
2. The GIS shapefiles generated in this Biodiversity Audit should be made available to Meath County Council staff. Use of these shapefiles should be made routine when assessing future planning applications, designing and developing projects and undertaking physical works within Co. Meath.
3. Create a detailed geodatabase ‘Site Inventory’, to ultimately include all designated and non-designated sites of biodiversity importance within County Meath. The development of such a Site Inventory will be an iterative process, and this audit is a baseline from which such an inventory can be developed.
4. Work to identify locally important biodiversity sites in County Meath and ensure these are mapped and protected through inclusion of policies in the County Development Plan – these sites should focus particularly on those hosting regionally/nationally/internationally rare species, such as the vascular plant *Calamagrostis purpurea* (Scandinavian Small-reed) (see section 3.3 for discussion

of this species), threatened bryophytes (see section 3.4), rare fauna, including invertebrate species, and rare habitats. It will be particularly important to highlight rare invertebrate species as key elements of the diversity of each site of interest, as invertebrates are all too rarely used to justify site designation.

Medium-term Actions:

1. Commission surveys of species and biological groups which are either entirely under-recorded in Co. Meath, or which are under-recorded in recent decades. Examples of the former include lichens, fungi, Diptera, and other invertebrate groups, whilst examples of the latter include bryophytes, water beetles and mayflies.
2. Commission ecological surveys of Meath Natura 2000 network sites in order to inform future Site-specific Conservation Objectives for their Qualifying Interests.

Long-term Actions:

1. Commission extensive ecological surveys of NHAs, pNHAs and non-designated sites in Co. Meath, to update our knowledge of these often-under-studied sites – fieldwork should include habitat, flora and fauna surveys to attain a full context for the current state of these sites. The results of these surveys should be included for each site in the county Site Inventory.

2. Commission a Biodiversity Audit to focus on enhancing knowledge of habitats and species of county or regional importance in Meath, whilst also providing an update on

threatened/rare/legally protected species. A biodiversity audit should be repeated (at a minimum) in the year before every new Biodiversity Action Plan is published.

APPENDIX 2: Designated sites and habitats in County Meath.

Site name	Site code
Boyne Coast and Estuary	001957
Girley (Drewstown) Bog	002203
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	000006
Lough Bane and Lough Glass	002120
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs	002340
Mount Hevey Bog	002342
River Boyne and River Blackwater	002299
Rye Water Valley/Carton	001398
White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo	001810

Table 6. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in County Meath

Site name	Site code
Boyne Estuary	004080
Lough Sheelin	004065
River Boyne and River Blackwater	004232
River Nanny Estuary and Shore	004158

Table 7. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in County Meath

Site name	Site code
Girley Bog	001580
Jamestown Bog	001324
Molerick Bog	001582

Table 8. Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) in County Meath

Site name	Site code
Ballyhoe Lough	001594
Ballynabarny Fen	001573
Balrath Woods	001579
Boyne Coast and Estuary	001957
Boyne River Islands	001862
Boyne Woods	001592
Breaky Loughs	001558
Corstown Loughs	000552
Crewbane Marsh	000553
Cromwell's Bush Fen	001576
Dowth Wetland	001861
Doolystown Bog	001577
Duleek Commons	001578
Kilconny Bog (Cloghbally)	000006
Laytown Dunes/Nanny Estuary	000554
Lough Naneagh	001814
Lough Sheelin	000987
Lough Shesk	000556
Mentrim Lough	001587
Mount Hevey Bog	001584
Rathmolyon Esker	000557
Rossnaree Riverbank	001589
Royal Canal	002103
Rye Water Valley/Cartron	001398
Slane Riverbank	001591
Thomastown Bog	001593
Trim Wetlands	001357
White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo	001810

Table 9. Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) in County Meath

County Geological Sites	
1. Gibbstown Castle	15. Boyne Valley
2. St Keeran's Well	16. Galtrim Moraine
3. Bellewstown	17. Mullaghmore
4. Grangegeeth	18. Murrens
5. Barley Hill Quarry	19. Rathkenny
6. Cregg	20. Rathmolyon Esker
7. Poulmore Scarp	21. Trim Esker
8. Laytown to Gormanston	22. Altmush Stream
9. Benhead	23. Bray Hill Quarry
10. Blackwater Valley	24. Duleek Quarry
11. Kilbride Quarry	25. Riverbank at Nobber
12. Painestown Quarry	26. Rockwood Cliffs
13. Carrickleck Quarry	27. Dunshaughlin (site)
14. Boyne River, Trim	28. St Gorman's Spring

Table 10. County geological sites in County Meath

APPENDIX 3: Table of animal species or groups of species afforded protection under the Wildlife Act 1976.

Animal species or group of species protected under the Wildlife Act 1976	
Badger	Species
Bat species	Group of species
Deer species	Group of species
Hare species	Group of species
Hedgehog	Species
Otter	Species
Pine Marten	Species
Pygmy Shrew	Species
Red Squirrel	Species
Stoat	Species
Natterjack Toad	Species
Common Newt	Species
Common Frog	Species
Common Lizard	Species
Kerry Slug	Species
Freshwater Crayfish	Species
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	Species
Basking Shark	Species
Dolphin species	Group of species
Porpoise species	Group of species
Seal species	Group of species
Whale species	Group of species
Marine turtles	Group of species

APPENDIX 4: Table of vascular plant species currently or previously listed on the Flora (Protection) Order (FPO) that have been recorded in County Meath.

Scientific name	Common name	FPO 2022	FPO 2015	FPO 1999	FPO 1987	FPO 1980
<i>Lathyrus palustris</i>	Marsh Pea					Yes
<i>Hypericum hirsutum</i>	Hairy St John's-wort	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>	Annual Knawel	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<i>Pyrola minor</i>	Common Wintergreen	Yes				
<i>Pyrola rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved Wintergreen					Yes
<i>Betonica officinalis</i>	Betony	Yes	Yes		Yes	
<i>Galeopsis angustifolia</i>	Red Hemp-nettle	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	Wild Clary					Yes
<i>Logfia minima</i>	Small Cudweed		Yes	Yes	Yes	
<i>Omalotheca sylvatica</i>	Heath Cudweed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<i>Epipactis phyllanthes</i>	Green-flowered Helleborine					Yes
<i>Anacamptis morio</i>	Green-winged Orchid				Yes	
<i>Juncus compressus</i>	Round-fruited Rush	Yes				
<i>Hordeum secalinum</i>	Meadow Barley	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

APPENDIX 5: National status of each Annex I habitat found in County Meath based on 2019 Article 17 reporting by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Habitat	Habitat code	Overall status	County Meath SACs
Active raised bogs	7110	Bad	002342, 002340, 000006
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	7120	Bad	002343, 002203, 002340, 000006
Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	7150	Bad	002344, 002340
Alkaline fens	7230	Bad	002299
Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>)	91E0	Bad	002299
Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.	3140	Bad	002120, 001810
Estuaries	1130	Inadequate	001957
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	1140	Inadequate	001957
Annual vegetation of drift lines	1210	Inadequate	001957
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	1310	Favourable	001957
Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>)	1330	Inadequate	001957
Embryonic shifting dunes	2110	Inadequate	001957
Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)	2120	Inadequate	001957
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)	2130	Bad	001957
Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)	7220	Inadequate	001398

APPENDIX 6: National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) Actions relevant to local authorities.

Following are a range of selected Actions and Objectives in the NBAP 2023-2030 that are allocated, or of most relevance, to local

authorities. For the full plan see <https://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-action-plan>

Objective 1: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-society Approach to Biodiversity.

Target	Number	Action
By 2024, and in each year thereafter, relevant entities report on their progress against this Plan	1A4	Each entity responsible for actions within this Plan will provide an annual update on progress and contribute to an Interim and Final Review of the Plan
By 2024, cross departmental capacity and capability required to achieve biodiversity targets reviewed	1B3	All relevant Departments and Government Bodies will explore the biodiversity expertise and training requirements across government to ensure the appropriate expertise is available to implement this Plan
By the end of 2026, all Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan in place	1C6	All Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan adopted by the end of 2026 which is subject to regular review and revision processes in line with relevant guideline standards
By 2027, all Local Authorities are supported to carry out biodiversity related projects on an annual basis	ID5	NPWS will continue to support Local Authorities biodiversity projects through the LBAF, which includes action on invasive alien species, throughout the lifetime of this Plan
By 2026, Ireland has mainstreamed the engagement of the public and stakeholders in biodiversity-related environmental policy implementation and the conservation of biodiversity	1D12	DAFM, DHLGH and other relevant stakeholders will build and enhance engagement with terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine stakeholders and the wider community to promote the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the responsible, sustainable use of resources

Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs.

Target	Number	Action
By 2024, Ireland has identified preliminary areas that will be pledged as future protected areas under the EU Biodiversity Strategy	2A8	NPWS, with relevant stakeholders will identify areas that will be pledged as protected areas following the criteria laid out under the EU Biodiversity Strategy
By 2030, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the use and risk of pesticides is reduced by 50% by 2030	2B6	DAFM, Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders will implement existing and new measures to reduce chemical pesticide use, in line with the EU regulatory framework for pesticides
Continued support for native tree planting	2B11	DAFM will continue to promote and/or support native tree planting by Local Authorities and other State/semi-state bodies
By 2027, a diversified national and local native plant stock is available for tree and landscape planting schemes	2B12	Local Authorities, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), NPWS and OPW will encourage a more reliable supply and use native species, varieties, and landraces from appropriate native sources in their landscaping works, where possible
By 2030, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the decline of pollinators is halted and reversed	2B13	NBDC with partners in Northern Ireland and other actors listed in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 will implement appropriate actions listed in the Plan and support farmland pollinator conservation activities post-2025
By 2025, nature-based solutions are contributing to national climate ambitions	2C7	To support the National Climate Objective of achieving a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy, DECC, DAFM, DHLGH, Local Authorities, and Climate Action Regional Offices will promote terrestrial nature-based solutions in national, regional, and local rural and urban programmes

By 2027, protection and restoration measures detailed in Ireland’s third RBMP are implemented to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed, that freshwater resources are protected so that there is no further deterioration; and where required, Ireland’s rivers, lakes and coastal water bodies are restored to at least good ecological status	2D1	Relevant bodies such as DHLGH, DAFM, Local Authorities and partners will deliver a RBMP to better protect, enhance and monitor the ecological status of water during the third cycle of the RBMP
By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place	2D5	OPW will work with relevant authorities to ensure that Flood Risk Management planning and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), EIA and Appropriate Assessment (AA), minimises loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services through policies to promote more catchment-wide and non-structural flood risk management measures
By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place	2D7	The OPW, in coordination with other relevant stakeholders, will continue to enhance its knowledge and capacity with regards to Nature-based Solutions for Catchment Management (NBS-CM) and will assess the potential NBS-CM as part of the development of the future flood relief schemes
By 2030, 300 km of rivers are restored to a free-flowing state	2D21	DHLGH, Inland Fisheries Ireland, OPW and other relevant bodies will explore the restoration of 300 km or rivers to a free-flowing state
By 2027, implementation of a National Restoration Plan has begun	2F5	DHLGH and all stakeholders across Government, will put in place restoration measures as described in the National Restoration Plan, within the appropriate timeframes
By 2027, implementation of the National Restoration Plan is monitored	2F6	DHLGH and all stakeholders across Government, will monitor implementation of the National Restoration Plan

By 2030, IAS are controlled, managed, and where possible, eradicated within Protected Areas and effectively controlled in urban, peri-urban areas, the wider countryside and marine and coastal areas	2H4	NPWS in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders will resource and implement on-the-ground actions to control, manage and where possible and feasible, eradicate occurrences of invasive alien species, including the removal of stands of invasive species from protected areas and national parks
By 2030, IAS are controlled, managed, and where possible, eradicated within Protected Areas and effectively controlled in urban, peri-urban areas, the wider countryside and marine and coastal areas	2H6	NPWS, NBDC and relevant partners will implement recommended measures arising from the 2021 EPA Report No. 368 Prevention, Control and Eradication of Invasive Alien Species

Objective 3: Secure Nature’s Contribution to People.

Target	Number	Action
By the end of 2027, the biocultural value of green and blue urban environments (GBUE) in all local authority areas is enhanced	3A3	Local Authorities will work to identify and respond to opportunities for enhancing the biocultural value of GBUE through appropriate design strategies, the use of visual and performing arts, and enhancing equity of access and promoting use of GBUE by community groups, and integrating cultural services in local biodiversity action plans
By 2030, shared responsibility for the conservation of biodiversity acted on	3C1	All Public Authorities and private sector bodies move towards no net loss of biodiversity through strategies, planning, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Blue-Green infrastructure
By 2024, guidance is available on best practice for biodiversity, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions in planning and development	3C2	The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) will work to prepare and publish a Case Study Paper examining best practice in integrating green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and ecosystem services into the preparation of land use plans

By 2030, the objectives of the NBAP, where relevant, are aligned with and integrated, within the statutory land use plans of the Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities and within LBAPs	3C3	All Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, City and County Development Plans, Local Area Plans and LBAP’s shall be aligned with the objectives of the NBAP, where relevant
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Objective 4: Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity.

Target	Number	Action
By 2030, biodiversity and related data is widely accessible	4B7	NPWS and other relevant bodies will ensure that biodiversity and related data adheres to national open data policy
By 2024, biodiversity monitoring programmes are sufficiently robust to detect changes over time and fulfil our national, regional and global reporting obligations	4C4	The contribution from citizen science to support biodiversity monitoring will be supported by all relevant organisations

Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland’s Contribution to International Initiatives.

Target	Number	Action
By 2025, the All-Island Pollinator Plan (AIPP) is supported	5A5	Relevant bodies will continue to support and utilise the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

APPENDIX 7: Irish Wetland Bird Survey (IWeBS) trend data for the Boyne Estuary and Nanny Estuary sites.

Species	Trend (%)			Long Term Trend
	Boyne Estuary – 5 Year	Boyne Estuary – 12 Year	Boyne Estuary – 23 Year	
Turnstone	-35.8	-74.9	-82.1	Large Decline
Lapwing	14.1	-43.2	-63.3	
Golden Plover	-36.2	-72	-61.4	
Ringed Plover	-63.5	-67.1	-58.9	
Grey Plover	-78.8	-71.1	-54.9	
Bar-tailed Godwit	-71.9	-15.9	-51.9	
Mallard	-47.4	-45.8	-45.5	Moderate Decline
Wigeon	-2	-6.5	-23.7	Intermediate Decline
Dunlin	-19.5	-34.8	-20.8	
Curlew	32.8	-18.2	-19	
Oystercatcher	-22.6	-37.4	-18	Stable or Increasing
Cormorant	17.6	-26.6	-0.8	
Redshank	4.3	-9	1.7	
Knot	52.8	-17.3	14.1	
Sanderling	-67.8	-63.9	16.9	
Shelduck	-10.7	-16.8	17.6	
Black-tailed Godwit	12.8	34.7	29.3	
Light-bellied Brent Goose	-35.7	-41.3	80.5	
Teal	-40.1	25.8	143.5	

IWeBS trend data for the Boyne Estuary. Only species with sufficient data are presented (Irish Wetland Bird Survey, 2024).

Species	Trend (%)			Long Term Trend
	Nanny Estuary & shore – 5 Year	Nanny Estuary & shore – 12 Year	Nanny Estuary & shore – 23 Year	
Golden Plover	-35.3	-75.7	-85.9	Large Decline
Cormorant	-32.1	-90.6	-81.1	
Bar-tailed Godwit	-71.6	-78.8	-75.9	
Grey Plover	-58.5	-80.1	-75.1	
Dunlin	-59.7	-51.2	-44.3	Moderate Decline
Turnstone	-50	-74.5	-43.6	
Sanderling	-75.3	-71.4	-29.5	Intermediate Decline
Lapwing	118.6	-11.3	-29.3	
Ringed Plover	-50	-68.3	-23.2	
Mallard	34.5	-35.1	-6.3	
Oystercatcher	32.3	-45.6	28.4	
Curlew	9.7	-32	47.8	Stable or Increasing
Knot	32.1	-75.2	76.2	
Light-bellied Brent Goose	-42.3	-48.6	133.3	
Redshank	-15.7	-26.3	311.8	
Teal	40	157.9	1533.3	
Black-tailed Godwit	27.4	116.1	1916.7	

IWeBS trend data for the Nanny Estuary. Only species with sufficient data are presented (Irish Wetland Bird Survey, 2024).

APPENDIX 8: Table of MBAP 2025 –2030 actions, timescale of action implementation and information on alignment between actions and pre-existing policies and pre-existing plans.

Objective 1: Reaching a deeper spatial understanding of nature in County Meath.

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
1	Undertake a state-of-knowledge exercise of biodiversity in County Meath.	Long term	NBAP Action 1C6 <i>Heritage Council – Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines</i> Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 21
2	Undertake a countywide wetland resurvey and mapping project, building on the information garnered from the <i>County Meath Wetlands and Coastal Habitats Survey</i> (2010).	Short term	EU Habitats Directive (HD) Article 10 NBAP Action 2C7 RSES RPO 7.15, 7.16, 7.21, 7.22, 7.23 NPF National Priority Objective (NPO) 66, 79, 82, 83, 85 MCDP INF OBJ 23 MCDP HER POL 35 MCDP HER POL 47 MCDP HER POL 48 MCDP HER POL 50 MCDP HER POL 56 MCDP HER POL 58 MCDP HER POL 59 MCDP HER POL 60 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 21
3	Undertake a countywide resurvey and mapping project of Meath’s trees, woodlands and hedgerows, building on the baseline information garnered from the <i>County Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey</i> (2010).	Short term	HD Article 10 NBAP Action 2C7 RSES RPO 7.15, 7.16, 7.21, 7.22, 7.23 NPF NPO 66, 79, 82, 83, 85 MCDP DM OBJ 11 MCDP DM POL 9 MCDP HER POL 35 MCDP HER POL 40 MCDP HER POL 56 MCDP HER POL 58 MCDP HER POL 59 MCDP HER POL 60 MCDP HER OBJ 36 MCDP HER OBJ 38 MCDP HER OBJ 60 MCDP RD OBJ 18 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 21

4	Undertake a countywide survey and mapping project of Meath’s semi-natural grassland habitats.	Medium term	HD Article 10 NBAP Action 2C7 RSES RPO 7.15, 7.16, 7.21, 7.22, 7.23 NPF NPO 66, 79, 82, 83, 85 MCDP HER POL 35 MCDP HER POL 56 MCDP HER POL 58 MCDP HER POL 59 MCDP HER OBJ 60 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 21
5	Using an evidence-based approach, create a detailed geodatabase “Site Inventory” of designated and non-designated sites of high intrinsic biodiversity value in County Meath.	Short term	NPF NPO 66 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 21
6	Using an evidence-based approach, identify and map CBAs in County Meath, according to Heritage Council guidelines, to ensure their continued protection through existing or new policies in the County Development Plan.	Ongoing	HD Article 10 NBAP Action 2C7 NPF NPO 66 RSES RPO 7.15 MCDP HER POL 35 MCDP HER OBJ 60 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 21 Heritage Council Policy and Guidelines for the Identification and Protection of County Biodiversity Areas

Objective 2: Leading the way in policy, planning and practice.

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
Leading the way in policy			
7	Align the MCDP, all area plans and the MBAP with the objectives of the NBAP, where relevant.	Ongoing	NPF NPO 85 NBAP Action 3C3

8	Devise and support the implementation of good governance strategies to facilitate the integration of EU and national biodiversity legislation and policy requirements into council plans, projects and services, where relevant.	Short term	NPF NPO 66, 85 & 87 RSES RPO 7.16 MCDP HER POL 31 MCDP HER POL 32 MCDP HER POL 34 MCDP HER POL 44 MCDP HER OBJ 34 MCDP HER OBJ 35 MCDP RUR DEV SO 9 MCDP RD POL 53
9	Support the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in protecting, and where possible, in improving the conservation status of protected species and habitats in County Meath.	Ongoing	NPF NPO 87 RSES RPO 7.16 Ireland's Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plan (IBSCAP) Action 1.5
10	Support the review and update of policies, objectives and development management standards in the MCDP.	Medium term	MCDP HER POL 28 NPF NPO 82 & 86 RSES RPO 7.22 & 7.23 NBAP Action 3C1 NPF NPO 77, 80 & 82 RSES RPO 7.22 IBSCAP Action 4.1 NBAP Actions 2C7 & 2D1 WAP Action 3.5 & Urban Run-off 3 MCAP 2024 BET1 & NE3 HD Article 10 RSES RPO 7.26 MCDP HER OBJ 60 MCDP INF OBJ 38 EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011-2021 - Reg 51 RSES RPO 7.9 MCDP INF OBJ 74 MCDP 9.6.1 Access and Other Ancillary Works
11	Work with the relevant authorities to support the preparation of, and implement, Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan, when adopted, and where relevant for MCC, to help achieve national restoration targets.	Ongoing	NPF NPO 84

12	Identify locally important breeding sites in County Meath for select rare and threatened species, such as the Swift & Barn Owl, and ensure these are mapped and protected through inclusion of policies and objectives in the County Development Plan.	Ongoing	BD Article 5 Wildlife Act 1976 Section 19 NPF NPO 87 MCDP DM OBJ 32
13	Promote a policy to ensure the purchase and use of appropriate native hedge and tree stock of local provenance, where possible in plans and projects, and avoid the use of species classified as "invasive", such as Cherry Laurel.	Ongoing	NBAP 2B12 MCDP HER POL 44 AIPP MHS Theme 4

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
Leading the way in planning			
14	Provide a central place for all biodiversity data for decision-makers in MCC.	Ongoing	Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 10 Meath County LECP 2023 – 2029 Action 1.1.8
15	Develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Strategy in accordance with international best practice and emerging national guidance.	Medium term	HD Article 10 NPF NPO 82 & 83 RSES RPO 7.21 & 7.22 IBSCAP Action 3.3 MCDP Section 11.5.10 MCDP INF OBJ 23 MCDP HER POL 55 MCDP HER POL 56 MCDP HER OBJ 58 MCDP HER OBJ 59 MCDP HER OBJ 60

16	Support habitat retention and the integration of biodiversity measures into plans and the design and delivery of public projects and private developments, aiming for no net loss of biodiversity and biodiversity net gain where possible.	Ongoing	HD Article 10 NPF NPO 66, 85 & 86 NBAP Action 3C1 MCAP Action BET1 MCAP DM POL 9 MCAP DM OBJ 11 MCAP HER POL 28 MCAP HER POL 37 MCAP HER POL 39 MCAP HER POL 40 MCAP RD OBJ 9 MCAP RD OBJ 10 MCAP 9.6.1 Access and Other Ancillary Works
17	Support the integration of nature-based solutions into plans and the design and delivery of public projects and private developments.	Ongoing	WFD NPF NPO 77, 79 & 80 RSES RPO 7.12 IBSCAP Action 4.1 NBAP Action 2C7 & 2D1 WAP Action 3.5 & Urban Run-off 3 MCAP 2024 BET1 & NE3 MCDP INF OBJ 26 & 27
18	Align public projects and private developments with IFI's guideline document <i>Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment</i> and update development management standards as appropriate.	Ongoing	WFD HD Article 10 MCDP INF POL 33 MCDP INF OBJ 38 MCDP HER OBJ 60
19	Apply appropriate lighting specifications and mitigation measures to new development, new projects, lighting upgrades and existing lighting stock, as appropriate, to minimise disturbance to local biodiversity.	Ongoing	HD Article 10 HD Article 12 RSES RPO 7.9 MCDP HER OBJ 60 MCDP 9.6.1 Access and Other Ancillary Works
20	Protect existing Swift nesting sites, where possible, establish new sites in existing public and private properties, and request integration of artificial Swift nest bricks and boxes in new development.	Ongoing	BD Article 5 Wildlife Act 1976 Section 19 NPF NPO 87 MCDP DM OBJ 32

21	Pilot a biodiversity inclusive design for a social housing estate, prioritising retention of pre-existing habitats and several other possible actions such as the regeneration of semi-natural grasslands, installation of blue/green roofs, green walls, wetland and pond SuDS, green carparking, Swift bricks in facades, nest cups and nest boxes under eaves, and wildlife friendly shrubs and trees in open space.	Long term	NPF NPO 66, NPO 77, 79, 85 & 86 RSES RPO 7.12 IBSCAP Action 3.3 & 4.1 NBAP Action 2C7 & 2D1 WAP Action 3.5 & Urban Run-off 3 MCAP Action BET1 & NE3 MCDP DM POL 9 MCDP DM OBJ 11 MCDP HER POL 28 MCDP HER POL 37 MCDP HER POL 39 MCDP HER POL 40 MCDP RD OBJ 9 MCDP RD OBJ 10 MCDP 9.6.1 Access and Other Ancillary Works
22	Develop and provide guidance on the management of biodiversity issues for developers in the planning process.	Medium term	NPF NPO 66 & 85 IBSCAP Action 3.3 & 3.4 MCAP Action BET1 MCDP DM POL 9 MCDP DM OBJ 11 MCDP HER POL 28 MCDP HER POL 37 MCDP HER POL 39 MCDP HER POL 40 MCDP RD OBJ 9 MCDP RD OBJ 10 MCDP 9.6.1 Access and Other Ancillary Works
23	Pilot an Urban Nature Plan for Navan.	Long term	EU NRR IBSCAP Action 4.4

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
Leading the way in practice			
24	Produce Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines for staff across all sections of the local authority.	Short term	<i>Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action Report on Biodiversity 2022: Recommendation 54 & 63</i>
25	Develop a biodiversity training programme for MCC staff.	Ongoing	Continuation of <i>MBAP 2015 – 2020</i> Action 23.
26	Develop a Tree Management Strategy outlining the policies and objectives for the sustainable and efficient management of trees, consistent with best practice, and provide training to council staff, contractors and landowners in tree and hedgerow maintenance.	Short term	HD Article 10 EU NRR <i>NPF</i> NPO 83 <i>MCAP</i> Action NE11 <i>MCDP</i> DM OB 11 <i>MCDP</i> DM POL 9 <i>MCDP</i> HER POL 37 <i>MCDP</i> HER POL 38 <i>MCDP</i> HER POL 39 <i>MCDP</i> HER POL 40 <i>MCDP</i> HER OBJ 36 <i>MCDP</i> HER POL 53 <i>MCDP</i> HER OBJ 60 <i>MCDP</i> RD OBJ 9 <i>MCDP</i> RD OBJ 10 <i>MCDP</i> RD POL 41 <i>AIPP</i>
27	Adopt and implement a pesticide reduction strategy within MCC.	Short term	<i>NBAP</i> 2B6 <i>AIPP</i> <i>MCDP</i> HER OB 34 Continuation of <i>MBAP 2015 – 2020</i> Action 26
28	Implement the <i>AIPP</i> as part of MCC's partnership agreement with the NBDC.	Ongoing	EU NRR <i>MCDP</i> HER OB 32 <i>MHS</i> Theme 4 <i>AIPP</i>
29	Develop biodiversity management plans for select open spaces/parks/ greenways within local authority ownership, focusing initial pilots on Blackwater Park and the Boyne Valley to Lakelands Greenway.	Long term	EU NRR <i>RSES</i> RPO 7.15 <i>MCAP</i> Action NE4 <i>MCDP</i> HER OB 32 <i>MHS</i> Theme 4 <i>AIPP</i>

30	Continue to deliver local-authority-led actions in relation to monitoring, protection and the restoration of ecological status of waterbodies in County Meath.	Ongoing	WFD HD Article 10 <i>NPF</i> NPO 77 <i>RSES</i> RPO 7.10 & 7.11 <i>NBAP</i> Action 2D1 <i>WAP</i> Agri 2 <i>WAP</i> DWW3 & DWW4 <i>MCDP</i> INF OBJ 13 <i>MCDP</i> INF POL 14 <i>MCDP</i> INF POL 15 <i>MCDP</i> INF POL 32 <i>MCDP</i> INF OBJ 29 <i>MCDP</i> INF OBJ 38 <i>MCDP</i> RD POL 53 <i>MCDP</i> HER OBJ 60
31	Provide updates to the Meath Biodiversity Working Group on unauthorised developments impacting biodiversity.	Ongoing	

Objective 3: Action for biodiversity.

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
32	Where possible, support IFI in the removal/ alteration of disused weirs to facilitate migration.	Ongoing	EU NRR HD Article 10 <i>MCDP</i> HER OBJ 60
33	Where possible, work with relevant partners to protect and/or restore high ecological status waterbodies in County Meath and along its borders.	Short term	<i>WAP</i> Action 5.5 <i>RSES</i> RPO 7.11
34	Engage with neighbouring local authorities on biodiversity projects that require a landscape and/or catchment scale approach.	Ongoing	<i>RSES</i> RPO 7.17

35	Plant native species of trees and support the establishment of woodland and/ or agroforestry on appropriate local authority owned sites.	Ongoing	EU NRR MCDP RD POL 15 MCDP RD POL 16 MCAP Action NE4
36	Facilitate the planting of groups of appropriate native species of trees within the boundary/built footprint of existing built-up areas.	Ongoing	EU NRR NPF NPO 83 MCAP Action NE11
37	Assess the feasibility of developing a nursery of native tree species and outdoor classroom space on a local-authority-owned site with a view to rearing stock of local provenance that can supply local projects and initiatives.	Ongoing	EU NRR NBAP 2B12 AIPP MCAP Action NE11
38	Continue to implement biodiversity and habitat-management measures recommended for Balrath Woods.	Ongoing	EU NRR MCDP HER OBJ 37
39	Continue and expand biodiversity-friendly grassland management practices that benefit biodiversity on the Commons of Lloyd and seek to implement similar practices on other public lands.	Ongoing	EU NRR MCDP HER OB 32 MHS Strategic Theme 4 AIPP

40	Continue to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on a suitable peatland site(s) to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques, and to promote their heritage and educational value.	Ongoing	EU NRR NBAP Action 2C7 MCDP HER OB 45 MCDP HER POL 39 Meath County LECP 2023 – 2029 Action 1.1.7
41	Support initiatives that promote the conservation of County Meath’s coastal dune habitats.	Ongoing	EU NRR NPF NPO 87 RSES RPO 7.16 IBSCAP Action 1.8
42	Provide support to local communities (e.g. Tidy Towns, environmental groups) to develop Community Biodiversity Action Plans, promote and support biodiversity initiatives, advise on funding streams, and encourage citizen science initiatives at a local level.	Ongoing	Continuation of MBAP 2015 - 2020 Action 16 MHS Theme 4
43	Continue to deliver the Hare’s Corner project.	Ongoing	EU NRR IBSCAP Action 1.5
44	Continue to support Barn Owl conservation in County Meath in conjunction with partners.	Ongoing	BD Article 5 Wildlife Act 1976 Section 19 NPF NPO 87

Objective 4: Research and monitoring.

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
45	Support new studies and surveys to fill knowledge gaps, improve our understanding of local biodiversity and gauge the ecological status of target Implement ecological surveys targeting NHAs, pNHAs and non-designated sites in County Meath.	Ongoing	NPF NPO 87 WAP Action 3.5
46	Implement an annual programme of ecological surveys, climate change risk assessments and ecological conservation work, as necessary, on local authority owned lands.	Ongoing	IBSCAP Action 1.2 IBSCAP Action 3.2 MHS Theme 4 MCAP Action NE2
47	Explore opportunities to progress river restoration measures, natural water retention measures and nature-based solutions for integrated catchment management (NbS-ICM) in appropriate locations in the Boyne catchment, where feasible and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.	Medium term	EU NRR RSES RPO 7.16 IBSCAP Action 1.2, 1.5, 4.1 NBAP Actions 2C7 & 2D1 WAP Hymo 9 MCDP INF OBJ 23 See also Table 3-1 <i>Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) Overview and Recommendations for Use in Ireland Version no. 2 (2020)</i>
48	Consider projects that include the mapping, appropriate treatment and eradication, where possible, of invasive alien species.	Ongoing	IBSCAP Action 1.6 WAP Invasive 5 RSES RPO 7.17 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 5
49	Support and encourage the volunteer network and local communities to carry out biological recording and citizen science projects.	Ongoing	IBSCAP Action 4.3 MHS Strategic Theme 2

Objective 5: Raising awareness and appreciation of biodiversity.

No.	Action	Timescale	Pre-existing policy/plan alignment
50	Develop and implement an inclusive outreach and engagement programme for the public.	Ongoing	MCDP HER POL 29 Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 20
51	Support a landowner and land manager network for those interested in farming sustainably and managing space for nature in the countryside.	Ongoing	EU NRR Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 6 Meath County LECP 2023 – 2029 Action 1.1.6 MCDP HER POL 29 MCAP 2024 SR5
52	Explore the use of demonstration farm(s) for biodiversity conservation (e.g., hedgerow management, field margins, river management, soil improvement, Integrated pest management, and nest boxes).	Long term	EU NRR Continuation of MBAP 2015 – 2020 Action 6 Meath County LECP 2023 – 2029 Action 1.1.6 MCDP HER POL 29 MCAP 2024 SR5
53	Produce Tree Planting and Management Guidelines for communities.	Medium term	EU NRR MCDP HER POL 29 MCDP HER OBJ 36 MCAP Action NE11
54	Continue to work with the MCC Culture and Creativity Team to promote biodiversity through creative and inclusive projects, and with support from the Creative Ireland programme.	Ongoing	MCDP HER POL 29 MHS Theme 5
55	Develop guidance and supports for schools and schoolteachers in County Meath relating to biodiversity.	Ongoing	WAP Action 7.1 AIPP MCDP HER POL 29

Notes



Cryptic Wood White
Leptidea juvernica

Photo: Ben Malone

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