

# KILKENNY LAUNCHES BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)



*Kilkenny kids keeps a close eye on biodiversity in their area: John (5) and Andrew (2) Cavanagh from Galmoy, Kilkenny pictured in Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum in Inistioge at the launch of the plan.*

Nature-inclusive parks and open spaces are the key objectives under the new five-year Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan, which will provide Kilkenny County Council with an opportunity to examine its own work practices, in terms of committing to record, conserve and restore habitats, protect and restore ecological corridors.

**C**ommunity groups, landowners, statutory agencies, elected members and council officials all worked together with biodiversity specialists over a period of 18 months on the five-year action plan, recently unveiled at Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum, Inistioge in Kilkenny.

The plan builds on work completed over the past 20 years by Kilkenny's Heritage Officer, and more recently by the Biodiversity Officer, Bernadette Moloney. It showcases how Kilkenny is leading the way by designing nature-inclusive housing estates, parks and open spaces. It also commits to improving water quality and habitat diversity on public grounds.

A structured approach has now been provided

to biodiversity restoration, outlining objectives and actions needed to protect and enhance biodiversity developed in the context of both national and international biodiversity commitments, as well as regional and local policies, priorities and local consultation.

Offaly, Galway County and Limerick are just the three other counties to have so far published Biodiversity Action Plans under Heritage Council guidelines.

The development of the Action Plan was assisted by the newly established Biodiversity Working Group. It identified a demand for and ran a community biodiversity course over the summer with Kilkenny Carlow Education Training Board. The course is just one example

## Biodiversity Action Plans

of possible opportunities when stakeholders collaborate effectively, according to those behind the Action Plan.

### COMMUNITIES CONNECT WITH NATURE

Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, said that by completing biodiversity best practice, the council will improve ecological connectivity and empower local communities to connect with nature.

“Biodiversity policy is being embedded in all aspects of council operations. Through educational and outreach initiatives, appropriate biodiversity actions will be encouraged, with skills developed to contribute towards biodiversity recording and restoration well beyond the duration of this Action Plan.”

Lar Power, Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council, said that it is a strategic plan to protect and restore the county’s biodiversity. “This plan underscores our commitment to preserving biodiversity, as well as addressing the impacts of climate change. Our vision is to foster a climate-resilient, natural environment in Kilkenny, where biodiversity flourishes, ecosystems are restored, enhanced and protected.”

Dr Martina Moloney, Chairperson of The

Heritage Council, described the Action Plan as a milestone initiative that brings national biodiversity to life at a local level, rooted in Kilkenny’s unique landscapes, ecological richness and unrivalled community spirit.

“The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme, initiated by the Heritage Council in collaboration with the City and County Management Association, has been instrumental in ensuring that biodiversity becomes a central consideration in local governance,” Dr Maloney noted.

### Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan objectives:

- Provide Biodiversity leadership at local level.
- Strengthen local biodiversity policy and integrate biodiversity procedures into council operations.
- Manage public open spaces for biodiversity.
- Conduct habitat mapping and monitoring to support data-driven management decisions.
- Record and monitor protected species or species of conservation concern.
- Foster engagement, education and promotion of best practice biodiversity action.



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*Lar Power, Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council*



**Pictured at the launch of Kilkenny’s Biodiversity Action Plan in Woodstock Gardens in Inistiogue (l-r): Cllr Maria Dollard, Cllr Stephanie Doheny, Natasha Newsome Drennan TD, Cllr Eugene McGuinness, Cllr Michael McCarthy, Peter ‘Chap’ Cleere TD, Dr Martina Moloney, Heritage Council; Ann Marie Shorthall, Kilkenny County Council; Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer, Kilkenny County Council; Catherine Callaghan TD, Cllr Fidelis Doherty and Cllr Thomas Breathnach.**



Senator Malcolm Noonan pictured with biodiversity officers Claire Goodwin (Wexford), Bernadette Moloney (Kilkenny) and Marina Mulligan (Waterford), at the launch of the Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan.

“ Kilkenny now joins Offaly, Galway County and Limerick to have published their Biodiversity Action Plans under Heritage Council guidelines.



Paul Moran, Thomas Moore and Frank Stafford from Kilkenny County Council's Parks Department pictured at the launch in Woodstock Gardens, Inistioge.

Invasive species control works have been taking place at Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum in the run-up to the launch of the plan. A Grassland Ecology Kit, the first of its kind in Ireland, has also been developed to assist community groups and secondary school groups to monitor their biodiversity actions under the National Parks and Wildlife Services Local Biodiversity Action Fund.

Other initiatives already underway include a hedgerow campaign, a collaboration between Kilkenny and Carlow local authorities, The Heritage Council and Nore Vision.

Kilkenny now joins Offaly, Galway County and Limerick to have published their Biodiversity Action Plans under Heritage Council guidelines. Six other plans were published previous to the guidelines in Kerry, Fingal, Carlow, Cork City, Dublin City and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown.

Local Authority Biodiversity Officers work at city and county level collecting data on biodiversity, carrying out conservation projects, developing policy, providing advice and information and raising awareness.

City and County Biodiversity Officers are employed by local authorities in collaboration with the Heritage Council and supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The Heritage Council provides financial subsidisation of employment costs to local authorities to employ biodiversity officers. Additionally, it provides grant assistance annually to local authorities for projects that support the implementation of their County Biodiversity Plans through a designated grant scheme.