

Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan 2026 – 2031

Pre-Draft Discussion Paper

Public Consultation:
April 16th – May 20th 2026



COMHAIRLE CONTAE
CHEATHARLACH
CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Ceangal
Clár den Chomhairle Oidhreachta
A Heritage Council programme

Introduction

Carlow County Council has undertaken a review of the Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2025 (set out below), that was presented to the March 2026 meeting of the Transportation, Environment, Emergency Services & Capital Projects Strategic Policy Committee, who recommended to commence the preparation of a new Plan for the period 2026-2031.

In advance of this, and in line with the Heritage Council's "Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines 2024", Carlow County Council has established a Biodiversity Working Group to oversee the Plan-making process, made up of internal Carlow County Council representatives from Environment, Planning, Transportation and Community, and external representatives from National Parks and Wildlife Services, National Biodiversity Data Centre, ACRES Leinster, and SETU Carlow.

A Pre-Draft Discussion Paper (this document) has been prepared, and we are now seeking your input on the following:

Based on the review of the Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2025, do you think we are going in the right direction? If not, what do you think we need to change?

Are there specific actions/initiatives that you think we need to prioritise in the period 2026-2031? Or are there actions/ sites that we have overlooked?

Have you engaged in any way with any of the Actions of the Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2025 (e.g. The Hare's Corner, Urban Pollinators Foraging Network, Community Forests, Farming for Nature, etc).

Do you own or manage any land (private or community) on which you are interested in conserving/enhancing/restoring for biodiversity? Have you already taken steps to do so?

Do you know of any landowner/ community volunteer/ citizen scientist/ educator/ etc., who you think are actively delivering for biodiversity? We are keen to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of Carlow people to conserving and restoring our biodiversity.

We are keen to hear from our older citizens, what are the biggest changes in biodiversity/landscape that you have seen? What was it like before? We'd love to hear any stories or see any photos.

We are also keen to hear from our young, and not-so-young citizens, what, if anything, is preventing you from taking actions for biodiversity, on your own or in your community? Have you tried?

You can have your say in person, as follows:

Carlow Town Library, Drop-In, Monday, May 11th, 12.30 – 3pm

Tullow Library, Drop-In, Tuesday, May 12th, 12.30 – 3pm

Bagenalstown Library, Drop-In, Thursday, May 14th, 2 – 4.30pm

By email, to scasey@carlowcoco.ie

Online, at <https://consult.carlow.ie/>

Online workshop, hosted by Carlow PPN,

Thursday, May 7th, 1.15pm-1.45pm

Register at

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Mik60a1UR2-nDJ_jHaV4wA

Carlow County Council wish to acknowledge the role of the Heritage Council in funding the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme and in particular, supporting the preparation of this Biodiversity Action Plan, in partnership with Carlow County Council.

Review of Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2025

In March, 2023, Carlow County Council adopted their first Biodiversity Action Plan. The following month, in April, 2023, Carlow County Council adopted their first Green Infrastructure Strategy. They have been implemented in tandem, with the latter serving to inform priority locations for biodiversity surveys and conservation efforts.

A review of each Action within the Carlow Biodiversity Action Plan is set out in the table below:

Vision:		
To further improve our understanding of County Carlow's biodiversity, and take actions for its conservation and restoration.		
Objective 1: Ensure alignment with national biodiversity policy and appropriate resourcing for implementation		
Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>1.1: Apply for project funding to implement the actions of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan as they relate to County Carlow, and the actions outlined below, from the funding streams identified by the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, and any other funding streams that become available during the lifetime of the Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the period 2023-2025, over €300,000 was secured for biodiversity projects across Co. Carlow, to implement the actions outlined herein, through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (National Parks and Wildlife Services) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Funding (Heritage Council). • Project specific funding was also secured from Inland Fisheries Ireland and Creative Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain, with addition of reference to future iterations of NBAP. <p><i>Support the Actions of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, and any future iterations, as they relate to County Carlow, including compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements.</i></p> <p><i>Apply for project funding to implement the Actions outlined below, under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (NPWS), Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund (Heritage Council), and any other relevant funding streams that become available during the lifetime of the Plan.</i></p>

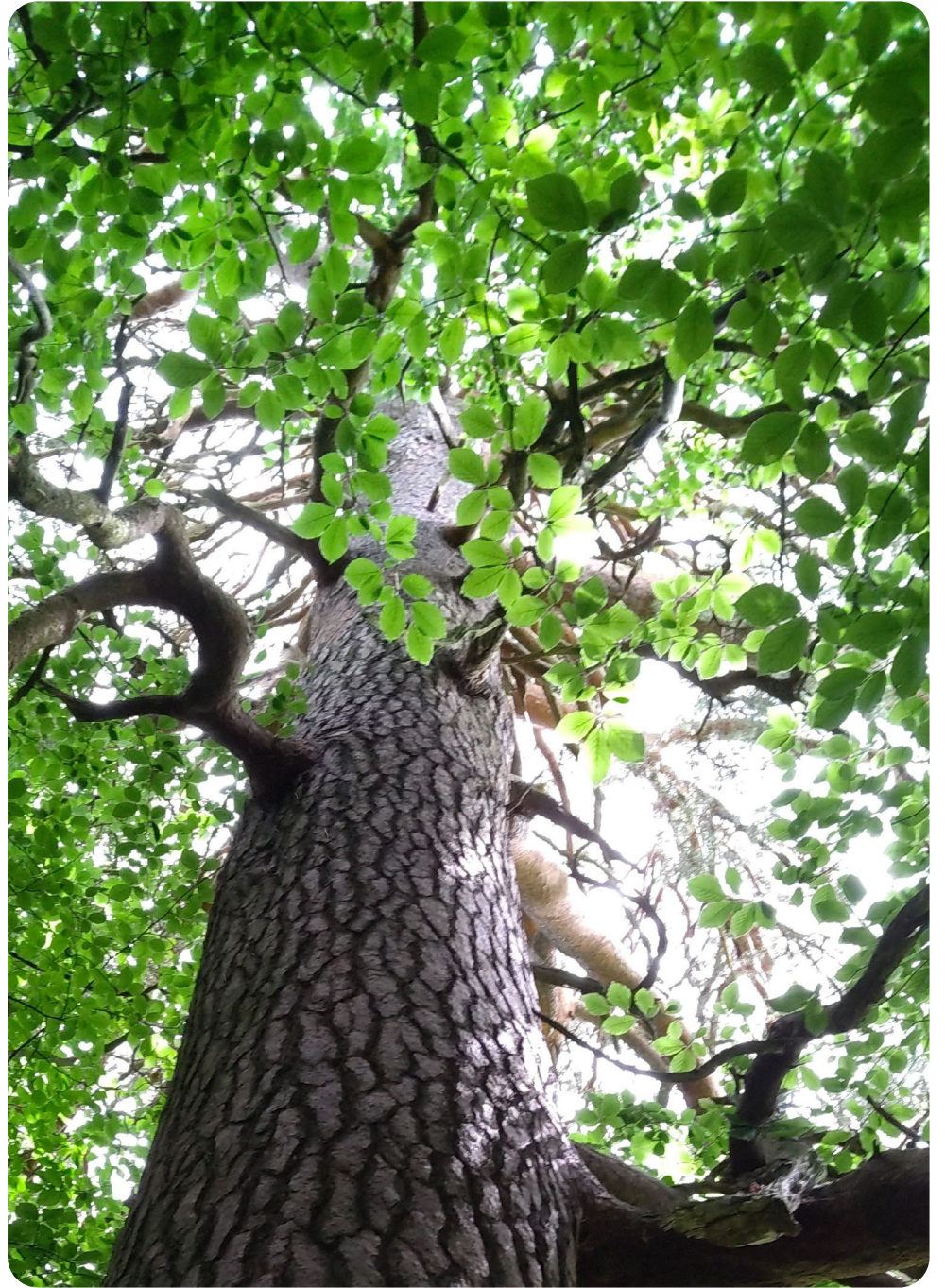
1.2:
To ensure that Carlow County Council's existing resources, including supports to communities and schools, contribute towards the actions below as appropriate.

- Corporate Services: promotion of projects, events, and information through social media channels and website.
- Public Participation Network: promotion of projects and events, and engagement opportunities at Network events.
- Municipal District Teams: Urban Pollinator Foraging Network management, Nature-Based Solutions projects (e.g. Greening the Grey), Invasive Alien Species management, etc.
- Libraries: facilitation of biodiversity workshops and events, including Grow It Forward Free Seeds initiative.
- Community: biodiversity actions & best practice encouraged through re-structured Community Awards (e.g. Pride of Place), annual training for Tidy Towns, Community and Creative Ireland Grants, and Community Gardens.
- Fire Services: engagement through Urban Pollinator Foraging Network projects.
- Environment: Lead section on BAP implementation, in addition to Environmental Awareness and Climate Action.
- Roads: PLEEP (Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project) rollout ongoing.

- Retain as is, with addition of businesses and landowners.

To ensure that Carlow County Council's existing resources, including supports to communities, schools, businesses, and landowners, contribute towards the actions below as appropriate.

<p>1.3: Strengthen partnerships between stakeholders (statutory agencies and non-statutory bodies) to ensure sharing of biodiversity data, and where appropriate, pooling of resources to effect biodiversity conservation and restoration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed river restoration projects in Powerstown, Orchard and Borris, undertaken with the support of Inland Fisheries Ireland. • Farming for Nature celebration with Carlow IFA, ICA, Teagasc, Acres, NPWS, CCDP and others. • All survey consultants introduced to locally-based statutory agency personnel, and data shared. • Collaboration with Kilkenny County Council on Biodiversity Awareness projects. • All practical conservation actions undertaken in compliance with AA requirements. • All surveys completed in compliance with NPWS & NBDC data standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain as is. <p><i>Strengthen partnerships between stakeholders (statutory agencies and non-statutory bodies) to ensure sharing of biodiversity data, and where appropriate, pooling of resources to effect biodiversity conservation and restoration.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain as is, with addition of reference to future iterations of NBAP. <p><i>Ensure all actions comply with legislative and policy requirements, as set out in the Carlow County Development Plan and the National Biodiversity Action Plan (both existing and future iterations), and other relevant legislation.</i></p>
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Objective 2: To map and conserve what is valuable.

Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>2.1: To collate existing data, identify gaps, and map Annex habitats (EU Habitats Directive), semi-natural habitats, and biodiversity hotspots in County Carlow.</p> <p>2.1.1: Prioritize non-SAC areas which are not routinely monitored by NPWS or afforded the same level of protection as designated sites.</p> <p>2.1.2: Map the existing data which was received from Carlow-based ecologists and agencies as part of the BAP consultation process.</p> <p>2.1.3: Identify priority locations for survey or re-survey work and apply for project funding for same.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing data has been collated from Carlow-based ecologists and agencies as part of the BAP consultation process, along with existing data within Carlow County Council, and used to inform Carlow County Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy (adopted in 2023). The Green infrastructure Strategy maps have subsequently been used to inform priority survey locations, with initial focus on the R. Burrin and R. Mountain, as the spine connecting the Blackstairs Mountains SAC and R. Barrow SAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update to reflect data gathered during BAP 2023-2025, and emerging priorities at local and national level, with input from NPWS and Heritage Council. Incorporate commitments to developing a Carlow Woodlands Strategy (as set out under CCAP). <p><i>To ensure that biodiversity data, including mapping, which has been produced as part of previous (2023-2025), current (2026-2031), and future Biodiversity Action Plans, are appropriately reflected in the Carlow County Development Plan (current and future iterations), in line with Heritage Council guidance.</i></p> <p><i>To survey, assess and map woodlands of conservation value across Carlow, in line with Heritage Council Guidance.</i></p> <p><i>To identify opportunities for Carlow County Council to support, or deliver, nature enhancement interventions in existing woodland/forestry plantations, or in the establishment of new woodland/forestry areas.</i></p> <p><i>To identify, with the support of the Heritage Council and National Parks & Wildlife Service, an appropriate approach to mapping and managing grasslands of conservation value.</i></p>

<p>2.2: To survey and map Carlow wetlands.</p> <p>2.2.1: Ground-truth the 114 potential wetland sites identified by desktop survey as part of the Map of Irish Wetlands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desktop survey of all Carlow wetlands was undertaken in 2023 and 2024, with field surveys of a selection of wetland sites (18) undertaken in 2024 and 2025. • The desktop survey identified a greater number of sites than previously anticipated (165 in total), of which 124 sites had limited, if any, site survey information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding has been approved for the period 2026-2028 (inclusive) under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, to complete field surveys, conservation assessments, and site specific reports for the remaining 106 sites (those with limited or no background data). <p><i>To complete field surveys, conservation assessments, and site specific reports for Carlow Wetland Sites, which previously had limited or no background data.</i></p>
<p>2.3: To survey sites with historical records for protected and rare plants.</p> <p>2.3.1: Request data on extant sites from the National Parks & Wildlife Service, the National Biodiversity Data Centre, and the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, and resurvey to assess current status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 3-year survey (2024-2026) underway of extant sites. Interim reports confirm what was expected, i.e. many sites lost over time due to habitat loss and management changes. However, many sites remain, with positive engagement from landowners, and new sites identified following engagement with local botanists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch focus to liaison with landowners and relevant agencies/farm advisors to enable survey findings to inform management. <p>To identify and pursue opportunities to work with landowners, either directly, or in conjunction with relevant agencies or farm advisors, to deliver on the recommendations of surveys carried out under the Carlow BAP 2023-2025, including Wetlands, Catchment Hedgerows, Rara Flora, Otters, Significant Tress, Barn Owls, and Hedgehogs.</p>



<p>2.4: To identify and map culturally significant trees and ancient hedgerows.</p> <p>2.4.1: Assess current status of trees from the Heritage Trees of Ireland database.</p> <p>2.4.2: Collate existing data on ancient hedgerows in Carlow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2024, Carlow County Council commissioned the Tree Council of Ireland to undertake a survey of all "Significant Trees" in Co. Carlow. In total, 775 individual trees were recorded, with a further 480 trees recorded as part of avenues, roadsides, and groves. These have been added to Carlow County Council's GIS database. • In 2025, with the support of Creative Ireland funding, a hard-copy book was produced, "The Significant Trees of Co. Carlow", which is available through all public library branches. • Hedgerow survey has focussed on "Catchment Hedgerows", which have water quality functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Significant Tree Survey data is reflected in next iteration of CCDP, as part of "Biodiversity Data & Mapping" Action (see Action above). • Promote findings of Catchment Hedgerow Survey as they relate to ancient hedgerows, and identify suitable approach to mapping ancient hedgerows. <p>To promote the stories associated with hedgerows, including ancient hedgerows, identified as part of Carlow BAP 2023-2025 surveys.</p> <p>To undertake desktop survey, utilizing aerial photography overlain on historic maps, to identify suitable scope and approach to mapping remaining ancient hedgerows.</p>
<p>2.5: To improve knowledge of the distribution of protected and iconic Carlow wildlife, including otters, hedgehogs, and raptors.</p> <p>2.5.1: Initial focus on Barn Owls in County Carlow.</p> <p>2.5.2: Design and implement citizen science hedgehog survey.</p> <p>2.5.3: Develop project scope for otter survey and human disturbance index study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey on Barn Owls undertaken in 2023. Prey species distribution is primary limiting factor, rather than nest site availability in Carlow. • Citizen Science survey of Hedgehogs undertaken in 2024, with over 30 new records for the county. • Hedgehog boxes produced, to be disseminated to locations with records. (To be extended, with greater time dedicated, in next BAP). • Otter survey undertaken in 2025-2025 focussing on R. Burrin, R. Mountain, and the urban stretches of R. Barrow and R. Slaney. • Notable results include video evidence for the first time of otters scaling trees to mark them and significant otter activity on the R. Burrin. • Survey of rare and threatened mayfly to establish conservation status, as part of national survey coordinated by Biodiversity Officer Network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch focus to liaison with landowners and relevant agencies/farm advisors to enable survey findings to inform management (see Action above). • Assess applicability of Woodland Bats Survey to Carlow (delivered with support of Bat Conservation Ireland). <p>To identify and trial approach to mapping priority ecological corridors, based on activity levels by a range of species, including bats, nesting birds, protected mammals, and raptor prey species - to be undertaken towards end of BAP timeframe to take account of surveys completed.</p> <p>To identify opportunities to support Barn Owl territories (habitat management).</p>

2.6:

To use the above data to inform management guidelines as appropriate and disseminate to relevant landowners.

- All survey consultants have been directed to spend time engaging with landowners on findings, with positive engagement reported. This is in addition to relevant officials from NPWS, ACRES, ASSAP, etc.

- Action on engagement as above, with additional reference to Farming for Waters as a vehicle for same.

To contribute to the Better Farming for Waters campaign, with initial focus on the River Burrin, through pooling of knowledge and resources, including survey data, as opportunities arise.



Objective 3: To restore where possible.

Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>3.1: To support initiatives under the Water Framework Directive that contribute to the restoration of ecology in water bodies, and the Blue Dot Catchments Programme.</p> <p>3.1.1: To assess the potential for removing/ altering disused weirs, to facilitate fish migration, as identified by Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p> <p>3.1.2: To support or lead initiatives, including litter clean-ups, invasive species management, and riparian habitat management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration works, in collaboration with Inland Fisheries Ireland, was carried out along 4 river courses as follows: • Powerstown Stream (2023): historically dredged too wide and too deep, which had removed spawning gravels, eliminated riffle habitat, and facilitated overgrowth of vegetation, making it unsuitable for fish spawning. Restoration involved removing selected sections of overgrown vegetation, adding mixed-size stones to the stream, and then levelling and spreading the stones to create a more suitable fisheries habitat. • Orchard River (2024-2025): historically dredged too wide and too deep, removing any spawning gravels, undermining the river-bank in sections, and the riparian zone contained predominantly annuals, offering little protection from surface water run-off. Stones were added to the river in sections, following methodology from the Powerstown river restoration project. An attenuation swale and berm were created, following mapping to identify the sections of the river with highest potential for surface run-off. A bespoke perennial riparian wildflower mix was developed and sown. A “before and after” video was posted online to highlight the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify further opportunities to deliver river restoration, following methodologies from Powerstown and Orchard Streams. <p><i>Identify opportunities to deliver river restoration across Co. Carlow, following methodologies from Powerstown and Orchard Streams.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Better Farming for Waters campaign through data sharing – as per Action above. • Identify opportunities to strengthen the ecological connectivity along R. Burrin and R. Mountain corridors as the “spine” of Carlow’s Green Infrastructure – As per Actions above for Better Farming For Waters Campaign and Priority Ecological mapping.

- Barkers Stream (2024-2025): control of Cherry Laurel and Rhododendron, which had been blocking out light to a significant stretch of river.
- Dinan River (2024-2025): a dilapidated weir was identified by Inland Fisheries Ireland, as preventing fish migration to a significant catchment of suitable spawning habitat upstream. Through engagement with the landowner, the barrier was removed.
- Annual Clean Coasts "Big River (Beach) Clean-up" supported.
- Carlow Catchments Hedgerow Survey (2024-2026): undertaken within R. Burrin and R. Mountain catchments, focussing on hedgerows and other wooded lands with a flooding/water quality/climate action function, e.g. hedgerows running parallel to a river, at the lower end of sloping land, and with a good structure (wide base and no gaps), which are of most benefit to both pluvial and fluvial flooding, along with water quality. Arising from this, it is intended to identify hedgerow specific recommendations for improving structure, through biodiversity enhancement, that will contribute to protecting the relevant landowner's property/ community.
- River Burrin Habitat Gaps and Fragmentation Survey, i.e. not surveying habitats, but instead mapping the stretches devoid of natural or semi-natural habitats and ecological connectivity to prioritize intervention.

<p>3.2: To identify opportunities to restore species-poor hedgerows into species-rich hedgerows.</p> <p>3.2.1: Develop a 'Flowering Hedgerows' policy and guidance for County Carlow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A "Flowering Hedgerows" brochure has been developed, but not yet disseminated, as results from the Catchments Hedgerow Survey, Rare Flora Survey, and other projects, have revealed unexpected insights into Carlow's hedgerows, including localised prominence of spindle, double ditch hedgerows, and rare species. • Care is required to ensure unique traits are not lost through the application of "blanket" guidelines, and as a result, a review/dissemination will be delayed until the next iteration of the BAP, when further information will be available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedgerow Action as above. <p><i>To identify suitable sites, and deliver demonstration events, on hedgerow management for both landowners and contractors.</i></p>
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<p>3.3: To control Invasive Species across Carlow.</p> <p>3.3.1: Assess current status of Invasive Species at previously recorded sites.</p> <p>3.3.2: Develop and implement control protocols for Carlow County Council staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing records included many mobile species (e.g. brown rat) and duplicate records (i.e. same animal/plant recorded by several people). • A control programme for Japanese Knotweed along roadside verges was undertaken from 2023-2025, inclusive, based on locations previously identified by Municipal District Teams. • Invasive species guidance and control protocols for 14 Invasive Species found in Carlow developed and disseminated to relevant staff. • Control of Cherry Laurel and Rhododendron at Barkers Stream, Carrigduff, which had been blocking out light to a significant stretch of river (2024-2025). 	<p><i>To control Invasive Species, where applicable, as part of the nature restoration initiatives undertaken under this Biodiversity Action Plan.</i></p>
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Objective 4: To enhance where possible.		
Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>4.1: To identify opportunities for habitat creation in areas of low biodiversity across Carlow.</p> <p>4.1.1: Identify potential sites, and initiate proposals, within Carlow County Council managed lands.</p> <p>4.1.2: Identify potential sites, and initiate proposals, within institutional lands in Carlow.</p> <p>4.1.3: To encourage habitat creation as a primary function of SUDS, as opposed to a by-product of water management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greening the Grey: several public realm projects completed in Carlow Town, including rain gardens, where hard surfaces (tarmac/concrete), were replaced with trees and plants. • Carlow Town Edible Pollinator Patch at Carlow College: two gardens installed, one on either side of the College's main entrance gate, with fruit trees underplanted with fruit bushes, and all underplanted with a variety of herbs, providing food for pollinators and ourselves. The planting is laid out in a Celtic knot design, with traditional bee skeps installed as a non-functional feature to reflect the role of pollinators in food production. 	<p><i>Continue to rollout the "Lawns into Lunch" initiative, and any related initiatives, in support of Carlow Green Infrastructure's Urban Pollinator Foraging Network.</i></p> <p><i>To continue to strengthen training and judging criteria for Community Grants and Awards, such as Carlow Pride of Place.</i></p>

- “Lawns into Lunch” initiative launched in 2025, to extend the Urban Pollinators Foraging Network, as set out in the County Carlow Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- This initiative follows on from the mapping exercise undertaken in 2024, when community green spaces with pollinator potential across Carlow’s main towns and villages were mapped. In 2025, the focus switched to encouraging a change in their management – to move away from regular mowing (saving time and labour and reducing carbon footprint), and towards long-flowering meadows in these areas (significantly improving conditions for biodiversity and enabling enhanced ecosystem services).
- A number of demonstration sites were identified, and in April and September 2025, working with the Old Irish Goat Society, a herd of goats visited sites across five towns and villages (Carlow Town, Bagenalstown, Tullow, Leighlinbridge and Hacketstown), with engagement of over 3,500 people, outlining the Urban Pollinator Foraging Network policy of Carlow’s Green Infrastructure Strategy, and encouraging groups and residents to turn “lawns into lunch”.
- Working with the County Carlow Environmental Network, two sites were used for scything demonstration workshops in September 2025, assisting local groups with the challenges of “cutting and lifting”.

<p>4.2: To facilitate schools and communities to deliver pollinator and other biodiversity initiatives.</p> <p>4.2.1: Provide advice and guidance as appropriate, including guidance on improving nesting sites for swifts, sand martins and bats.</p> <p>4.2.2: Raise awareness of appropriate funding calls</p> <p>4.2.3: Encourage the development of a 'Biodiversity Corridor of Gardens.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Carlow Community Forests" initiative launched in 2023, and continued annually, providing free tree saplings to community groups across Co. Carlow, who are seeking to transform community-managed green spaces into Community Forests. • "Community Garden & Allotment Policy" launched in 2025, making Carlow the first local authority in Ireland to introduce such a dedicated policy. The policy is accompanied by a dedicated handbook that includes guidance on pollinator-friendly gardening techniques and encourages community groups to raise awareness about the importance of pollinators in food production and ecosystem health. • Swift surveys, walks and talks undertaken with Birdwatch Ireland. • Funding calls promoted through Carlow County Council's Social Media channels and mailing lists. • School supports for Biodiversity Green Flags. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to reflect policies and initiatives <p><i>To promote opportunities, and facilitate schools, communities and businesses to engage with nature restoration and habitat creation initiatives across Carlow.</i></p>
<p>4.3: To support development and implementation of existing and future local BAPs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey on Barn Owls Guidance and support provided to a range of community projects and applications, but not specific to local BAPs. 	<p>Provide support and guidance to project proponents to ensure local initiatives support the Vision of this BAP.</p>

4.4:

To identify opportunities to pilot the Hare's Corner project on farms in Carlow.

4.4.1: Promote the Hare's Corner project through farming groups (a traditional practice, linked to superstitions around the Irish Hare, of leaving field corners to go wild, as a refuge for wildlife).

4.4.2: Identify potential participants.

- Piloted in 2023 and 2024, administered directly by the Biodiversity Officer, with 7 ponds, 13 Plans for Nature, and 3 Heritage Orchards delivered.
- Administered at a larger scale by the Burrenbeo Trust in 2025, with over 150 applicants across the county, and 28 Plans for Nature, 8 Plans for Water, 5 ponds, 30 Woodlands, 25 Heritage Orchards, and 30 Hedgerows approved.
- Of particular note, was that pond applicants created ponds on average six times the minimum required size.
- Given the popularity, and more importantly, the positive impact, it is expected to continue rollout until 2028 at a minimum..

- To extend the rollout of The Hare's Corner initiative across Co. Carlow (funding in place until 2028 under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund).

To strengthen, expand and connect the network of habitats created as part of The Hare's Corner initiative across Co. Carlow.



Objective 5: To adopt Biodiversity friendly policies.

Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>5.1: To roll out low mow/ no mow areas in all town centres in County Carlow.</p> <p>5.1.1: Adopt Low Mow/No Mow as a Council policy, with associated management specifications.</p> <p>5.1.2: Map green spaces in Carlow where this policy will be applied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Mow/No Mow areas in Carlow town mapped and used to inform the Urban Pollinator Foraging Network mapping in Carlow County Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy (adopted in 2023), with associated management specifications for these areas. • Rollout to other town centres has been limited, and expected to have a greater focus in the next BAP. 	<p><i>To extend Carlow's Urban Pollinator Foraging Network through suitable management of green spaces and public realm SuDS initiatives.</i></p>
<p>5.2: To implement the 'right tree, right place' approach to tree planting by Carlow County Council.</p> <p>5.2.1: Adopt Right Tree, Right Place as a Council policy, with associated management specifications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach implemented in relevant projects as they have arisen, e.g. public realm projects and proposals. • • Policy adopted as part of Carlow County Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy (adopted in 2023), however, further supporting information required. 	<p><i>To provide training and further guidance on the "right tree, right place" approach to project managers (Carlow County Council and contractors, and community groups via Pride of Place training).</i></p>

<p>5.3.1: To implement a pesticide reduction strategy within Carlow County Council.</p> <p>5.3.1: Identify and trial alternatives to pesticides</p> <p>5.3.2: Develop and implement a communications campaign for the public that encourages a higher level of tolerance for "weeds" in a pesticide-free environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practical implications of the pesticide reduction strategy for relevant Council Departments have been identified, and policies/procedures drafted. • Positive examples of pesticide elimination have been identified and trialled, e.g. base of trees in Carlow Town Park. • Timeline for rollout of strategy will inform timeline for rollout of a communications campaign. 	<p><i>To rollout a communications campaign for the public that encourages a higher level of tolerance for "weeds", and highlights the benefits of a pesticide-free environment for biodiversity.</i></p>
<p>5.4: To replace all public lighting in Carlow with bat/wildlife friendly lighting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress made on PLEEP (Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project) rollout, which will be ongoing during the lifetime of the next BAP. Implementation is slow due to factors at a national level. 	<p><i>To develop and rollout a communications campaign that highlights the impacts of lighting on nocturnal wildlife, and the benefits of embracing Dark Skies.</i></p>



Objective 6: To improve the understanding of stakeholder's roles in biodiversity conservation.

Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>6.1: To develop an awareness programme that:</p> <p>6.1.1: Focuses on Carlow's rare/ high conservation-value biodiversity rather than common/ easily accessible biodiversity (as identified under Objective 2 above).</p> <p>6.1.2: Highlights the challenges faced by biodiversity and explains how our individual behaviours can influence local biodiversity.</p> <p>6.1.3: Demonstrates the pro's and con's of popular biodiversity initiatives, and how they are likely to look in the environment.</p> <p>6.1.4: Highlights actions that individuals, communities and other stakeholders can take to support local biodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A selection of videos, social media posts, radio adverts, and newspaper articles published through KCLR, Carlow Nationalist and Carlow County Council's Social Media Channels. • Distribution of informational materials, such as "Gardening for Biodiversity" to schools, community groups, residents associations, etc. <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity in Focus Campaign for Biodiversity Week 2024-2025 • River Slaney in-stream Ecology • Otter behaviours on the Barrow • Impacts of lighting on nocturnal wildlife • Management of Green Spaces for biodiversity and children • Birds of the Barrow • Good Hedgerow Management and Hedgerow Appreciation • Carlow Significant Trees • Farming for Nature • Hedgehogs in Gardens • Threats to Biodiversity in Carlow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain, but specify messages further. <p><i>To develop an awareness programme that:</i></p> <p><i>Promotes the findings of surveys completed during Carlow's first BAP, and initiatives currently underway as part of this BAP.</i></p> <p><i>Highlights examples of positive behaviours influencing biodiversity, and promotes behavioural changes where impacts are negative.</i></p>

6.2:

To roll out the above awareness programme for the following groups:

1. All council staff and councillors
2. Community groups, through the Public Participation Network
3. Businesses
4. Farming Groups, including identification of Farming for Nature Ambassadors
5. Schools (all levels)

- Links to the above, along with regular project updates, circulated to all council staff and councillors, in addition to reports/presentations to Council meetings.
- Links to the above, in addition to other project information, circulated through PPN social media channels and e-bulletin, in addition to stands at PPN events. In addition to guidance provided through Pride of Place and Tidy Towns information events.
- Strong support through the Carlow Chamber of Commerce, with strengthening of relationship expected during next BAP.
- Carlow Farming for Nature Celebration held in 2025, recognising the contribution of four local families to our local landscape. Eric & Catherine Osborne (Rathanna), Leonie Baldwin & Andrew Llyod (Knockroe), Richard & Geraldine Brennan (Leighlinbridge), and Michael & Margaret Purcell (Lacken), were shortlisted, following collaboration between Carlow County Council, Carlow IFA, Carlow ICA, Teagasc, ACRES, NPWS, and partner organisations operating in the county, with the intention of having a Carlow representative in the National Farming for Nature Ambassador Awards in 2026.
- Blackstairs Schools Educational Programme delivered in 2025, building on the 2024 Blackstairs Applied Learning Programme for HNV Landscape Communities, which included the publication of "Landscapes of Inspiration and Imagination" with Borris College.

- To extend the rollout of The Hare's Corner initiative across Co. Carlow (funding in place until 2028 under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund).

To strengthen, expand and connect the network of habitats created as part of The Hare's Corner initiative across Co. Carlow.



Objective 7: To strengthen existing, and develop new, partnerships to deliver the above actions.

Actions:	Review:	Logical Next Steps/ Suggestions for BAP 2026-2031
<p>7.1: To ensure Biodiversity is appropriately represented on the Carlow Heritage Forum and Climate Action Team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Update from Biodiversity Officer” is an ongoing Agenda item on Heritage Forum. • Biodiversity Officer is part of internal Climate Team, along with Environmental Awareness Officer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain as is. <p><i>To ensure Biodiversity is appropriately represented on the Carlow Heritage Forum and Climate Action Team.</i></p>
<p>7.2: To maximise the use of existing fora, e.g. Public Participation Network and Strategic Policy Committees, for two-way communication on biodiversity issues in County Carlow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Participation Network utilized as outlined above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain as is. <p><i>To maximise the use of existing fora, e.g. Public Participation Network and Strategic Policy Committees, for two-way communication on biodiversity issues in County Carlow.</i></p>
<p>7.3: To work with stakeholder groups in the Blackstairs Mountains, Drummin Bog, and other biodiversity sites, to ensure the actions above complement their conservation efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drummin Bog: Ongoing support provided through Community and Arts Department, including Gnáthóga Nádúrtha (Natural Habitats): Expanding connections with human and nonhuman communities of the bog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update <p><i>To promote, and build upon, the learnings and working relationships, developed as part of the “Applied Learning Programme for HNV (High Nature Value) Landscape Communities” in the Blackstairs</i></p> <p><i>To promote, and build upon, the learnings and working relationships developed with the Drummin Bog Project stakeholders.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackstairs Mountains: Applied Learning Programme for HNV (High Nature Value) Landscape Communities delivered in 2024, and shortlisted for Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards in 2025. The stated aim of this project was “delivering an improved understanding of results-based landscape management to the broader Blackstairs community, encouraging farming and non-farming relationships, and strengthening the foundations for future community stewardship”. By project end, 13 Plans for Nature have been produced. 7 local groups have completed the Heritage Keepers programme, 60 attendees at “The Landscapes that Connect our Farming and Non-Farming Communities” conference, 4 farm walks completed with 95 participants (60 from Agricultural Science and Green Schools of Borris College), and “Landscapes of Inspiration and Imagination” publication has been produced by students and staff of Borris College. 	
<p>7.4: To identify an appropriate structure for a Carlow Biodiversity Forum, in liaison with the Heritage Council and the Biodiversity Officer Network Programme, to support the role of a Carlow Biodiversity Officer. Carlow County Council will act immediately to appoint a Biodiversity Officer, upon receipt of funding and sanction from the relevant Government Department.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carlow Biodiversity Officer appointed in January 2024 as part of a 3-year Service Level Agreement with the Heritage Council. • Carlow Biodiversity Forum to be established as part of the next BAP development process, in line with the Service Level Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Update.</i> <p><i>To ensure that the role of Biodiversity Officer is included as a permanent position within the Local Authority workforce</i></p>



Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031:

Arising from this review, there are five emerging themes as follows:

1. Ensure resources and structures are in place at a County level to enable implementation, and alignment with national biodiversity policy and legislation
2. Strengthen the “Spine” of Carlow’s Green Infrastructure Network - the ecological connectivity of the River Burrin and River Mountain catchments that link the Blackstairs Mountains to the River Barrow.
3. Undertake county-wide surveys and actions that contribute to the Vision of this Biodiversity Action Plan
4. Strengthen the Urban Pollinator Foraging Network across Carlow’s towns and villages.
5. Celebrate and encourage positive “Behaviours for Biodiversity” through education and awareness



Potential BAP 2026-2031 Objectives and Actions

– based on above Review

Objective 1: Ensure resources and structures are in place at a County level to enable implementation, and alignment with national biodiversity policy and legislation

1. Support the Actions of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, and any future iterations, as they relate to County Carlow, including compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements.
2. To ensure that the role of Biodiversity Officer is included as a permanent position within the Local Authority workforce
3. Apply for project funding to implement the Actions outlined below, under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (NPWS), Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund (Heritage Council), and any other relevant funding streams that become available during the lifetime of the Plan.
4. To ensure that biodiversity data, including mapping, which has been produced as part of previous (2023-2025), current (2026-2031), and future Biodiversity Action Plans, are appropriately reflected in the Carlow County Development Plan (current and future iterations), in line with Heritage Council guidance.
5. To ensure that Carlow County Council's existing resources, including supports to communities, schools, businesses, and landowners, contribute towards the actions below as appropriate.
6. Strengthen partnerships between stakeholders (statutory agencies and non-statutory bodies) to ensure sharing of biodiversity data, and where appropriate, pooling of resources to effect biodiversity conservation and restoration.
7. Ensure all actions comply with legislative and policy requirements, as set out in the Carlow County Development Plan and the National Biodiversity Action Plan (both existing and future iterations), and other relevant legislation.
8. To ensure Biodiversity is appropriately represented on the Carlow Heritage Forum and Climate Action Team, and maximise the use of existing fora, e.g. Public Participation Network for two-way communication on biodiversity issues in County Carlow.

Objective 2: Strengthen the “Spine” of Carlow’s Green Infrastructure Network - the ecological connectivity of the River Burrin and River Mountain catchments that link the Blackstairs Mountains to the River Barrow.

1. To identify and trial approach to mapping priority ecological corridors, based on activity levels by a range of species, including bats, nesting birds, protected mammals, and raptor prey species - to be undertaken towards end of BAP timeframe to take account of surveys completed.
2. To contribute to the Better Farming for Waters campaign, with initial focus on the River Burrin, through pooling of knowledge and resources, including survey data, as opportunities arise.
3. Identify opportunities to deliver river restoration across Co. Carlow, following methodologies from Powerstown and Orchard Streams.

Objective 3: Strengthen the Urban Pollinator Foraging Network across Carlow’s towns and villages.

4. Continue to rollout the “Lawns into Lunch” initiative, and any related initiatives, in support of Carlow Green Infrastructure’s Urban Pollinator Foraging Network.
5. To continue to strengthen training and judging criteria for Community Grants and Awards, such as Carlow Pride of Place.
6. To promote opportunities, and facilitate schools, communities and businesses to engage with nature restoration and habitat creation initiatives across Carlow.
7. Provide support and guidance to project proponents to ensure local initiatives support the Vision of this BAP.
8. To extend Carlow’s Urban Pollinator Foraging Network through suitable management of green spaces and public realm SuDS initiatives.
9. To provide training and further guidance on the “right tree, right place” approach to project managers (Carlow County Council and contractors, and community groups via Pride of Place training).

Objective 4: Undertake county-wide surveys and actions that contribute to the Vision of this Biodiversity Action Plan

10. To survey, assess and map woodlands of conservation value across Carlow, in line with Heritage Council Guidance.
11. To identify opportunities for Carlow County Council to support, or deliver, nature enhancement interventions in existing woodland/forestry plantations, or in the establishment of new woodland/forestry areas.
12. To identify, with the support of the Heritage Council and National Parks & Wildlife Service, an appropriate approach to mapping and managing grasslands of conservation value.
13. To complete field surveys, conservation assessments, and site specific reports for Carlow Wetland Sites, which previously had limited or no background data.

14. To identify and pursue opportunities to work with landowners, either directly, or in conjunction with relevant agencies or farm advisors, to deliver on the recommendations of surveys carried out under the Carlow BAP 2023-2025, including Wetlands, Catchment Hedgerows, Rara Flora, Otters, Significant Tress, Barn Owls, and Hedgehogs.
15. To undertake desktop survey, utilizing aerial photography overlain on historic maps, to identify suitable scope and approach to mapping remaining ancient hedgerows.
16. To identify opportunities to support Barn Owl territories (habitat management).
17. To control Invasive Species, where applicable, as part of the nature restoration initiatives undertaken under this Biodiversity Action Plan.
18. To strengthen, expand and connect the network of habitats created as part of The Hare's Corner initiative across Co. Carlow.

Objective 5: Celebrate and encourage positive "Behaviours for Biodiversity" through education and awareness

19. To promote the stories associated with hedgerows, including ancient hedgerows, identified as part of Carlow BAP 2023-2025 surveys.
20. To identify suitable sites, and deliver demonstration events, on hedgerow management for both landowners and contractors.
21. To rollout a communications campaign for the public that encourages a higher level of tolerance for "weeds", and highlights the benefits of a pesticide-free environment for biodiversity.
22. To develop and rollout a communications campaign that highlights the impacts of lighting on nocturnal wildlife, and the benefits of embracing Dark Skies.
23. To develop an awareness programme that:
 - Promotes the findings of surveys completed during Carlow's first BAP, and initiatives currently underway as part of this BAP.
 - Highlights examples of positive behaviours influencing biodiversity, and promotes behavioural changes where impacts are negative.
24. To roll out the above awareness programme for the following groups:
 - All council staff and councillors
 - Community groups
 - Businesses
 - Farming Groups
 - Schools (all levels)
25. Host an annual "Carlow Farming for Nature Celebration".
26. To promote, and build upon, the learnings and working relationships, developed as part of the "Applied Learning Programme for HNV (High Nature Value) Landscape Communities" in the Blackstairs
27. To promote, and build upon, the learnings and working relationships developed with the Drummin Bog Project stakeholders.







Ceangal

Clár den **Chomhairle Oidhreachta**
A **Heritage Council** programme