

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

Report to Inform Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

Prepared for:

Kildare County Council



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Report to Inform SEA Screening to Kildare County Council for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Kildare County Council (KCC) is in the process of preparing a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for its functional area (the Plan Area) for the years 2026-2031. The aim of the LABAP is to promote biodiversity conservation at local authority level.

KCC appointed Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) to complete reports to inform SEA and AA Screening of the LABAP.

This report is the report to inform SEA Screening and documents the SEA Screening Assessment undertaken to identify the need for full SEA for the LABAP. This report should be read in conjunction with the corresponding Report to Inform AA Screening and the LABAP.

1.2 Background to Biodiversity Action Plans

LABAPs must be prepared in accordance with The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). These guidelines provide best practice guidance to local authorities on preparing and implementing biodiversity conservation actions within their functional area. These guidelines advise that LABAPs *'should aim to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.'*

LABAPs are designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at local level. Local authorities are required to develop a compelling vision for their LABAP and a set of clear, measurable and achievable objectives for biodiversity conservation in their functional area. LABAPs are developed by local authority Biodiversity Officers with the support of a dedicated Biodiversity Working Group. Public engagement and consultation must be undertaken at the Pre-draft and Draft Plan stages of the Plan-making process. All submissions from stakeholders and members of the public should be considered during the development of a LABAP.

LABAPs should serve to define targeted and focussed action for promoting biodiversity conservation through the functions of a local authority in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes. LABAPs should be in harmony with and support the land use planning framework, including City and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

LABAPs - as non-statutory land use plans - should be screened for the need for SEA and AA.



2. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview of SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme.

SEA aims to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

SEA of plans and programmes is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC ('the SEA Directive'). For a specific range of land-use plans, this Directive is transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

For all other relevant plans and programmes in Ireland (including other types of plans in the land-use planning sector), the SEA Directive is transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

2.2 Overview of the SEA Process

The SEA process comprises the following steps:

- Screening – the process whereby a decision is made on whether a particular plan or programme, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would require SEA. This report relates to this stage of the SEA process.

The following steps are necessary if a plan or programme requires SEA:

- Scoping – Scope and level of detail in the environmental assessment is decided upon, in consultation with the identified statutory bodies;
- Environmental Assessment - An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the relevant plan or programme;
- Preparation of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation of the plan or programme and associated Environmental Report;
- Evaluation of the submission and observations made on the plan or programme and environmental report; and
- Provision of an SEA Statement, identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final plan or programme



SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans or programmes – which give rise to individual projects – are being developed. It is noted that SEA should result in more sustainable development through the systematic appraisal of policy options.

2.3 Legislative Context

LABAPs, as non-statutory land use plans, require to be screened for the need for SEA in accordance with the requirements of:

- The SEA Directive, particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) and 3(5) in relation to ‘screening’; and,
- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011)(termed 'SEA Regulations' from this point onward), particularly Schedule 1, which sets out the *'Criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment.'*

2.4 Overview of the SEA Screening Process

The first step of the SEA process is to carry out SEA Screening to determine the need for SEA of a plan or programme

The first stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is the carrying out of a 'Pre-screening Check' (also known as a 'Stage 1 Applicability'). This allows rapid screening-out of a plan or programme that is clearly not going to have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that do require SEA. The second stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is known as 'Stage 2 Screening.' The purpose of this stage is to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment and whether SEA must be carried out in conjunction with a plan or programme. The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required. Annex II of Directive 2001/42/EC sets out the statutory criteria that should be addressed when undertaking this stage. This process is typically undertaken following a broad 8-step approach, as depicted in Figure 2-1.

The first environmental significance criterion relates to the characteristics of the plan or programme, having regard to: the degree to which the plan or programme sets out a framework for other projects and activities; the influence of the plan or programme on other projects, plans or activities; the role of the plan for integrating environmental considerations to promote sustainable development; environmental issues of relevance to the plan or programme and the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of EU legislation on the environment.

The second environmental significance criterion refers to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected, having regard to; the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; the cumulative nature of the effects; the transboundary nature of the effects; the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or intensive use; the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European or international protection status.



Figure 2-1: SEA Screening steps as per the EPA's Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening

2.5 Relevant SEA Guidance

This SEA Screening has been carried out in accordance with and having appropriate regard to the following guidance documents primarily:

- Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening (EPA, 2021).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022)
- SEA of Local Authority Land-Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources (EPA, 2024).

2.6 Appropriate Assessment and Relationship to SEA Screening

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) be carried out where a plan or project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 Site. Natura 2000 Sites in Ireland include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Areas of Protection (SPAs).

The first step is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This is referred to as Screening for AA and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in relation to the site's conservation objectives.



Screening for AA is relevant to Screening for SEA where it is found that a plan may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 Site, or where such an impact cannot be ruled out taking a precautionary approach, an appropriate assessment of the Plan must be carried out, and in any case where a SEA is not otherwise required.

Article 3(c) of the SEA Directive requires that an SEA is carried out on a plan or programme wherever such a plan or programme requires an AA under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Therefore, where the LABAP requires an appropriate assessment, it will also require an SEA.

This SEA Screening Report and the LABAP is accompanied by an AA Screening Report which should be read in conjunction with this document. The Report to Inform AA Screening concluded *'beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information, that the plan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant (negative) effect on European sites.'*



3. LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

3.1 Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan

The Vision of the LABAP is to *“lead the way with a step-change in biodiversity protection, where consideration and restoration are prioritised, through urgent, inclusive and targeted actions. These actions will benefit nature, facilitate people connecting to nature, and will grow a legacy of thriving, resilient and sustainable communities in the county.”*

The following Objectives are defined in the LABAP:

- Objective 1: Landscapes for Nature
- Objective 2: Engagement, Awareness and Understanding
- Objective 3: Recording, Monitoring and Data Management
- Objective 4: Embed Action Across Kildare County Council
- Objective 5: Support Community-led Initiatives

A series of Actions have been defined in the LABAP under each Objective. The higher-level Objectives are broader in scope, whilst the Actions underpinning the Objectives are more defined and measurable. These are presented in Table 3-1.



Table 3-1: LABAP Objectives and corresponding Actions

Objective	Action Reference	Action
Objective 1: Landscapes for Nature	1.1	Identify and map all local authority owned land holdings, categorise and rank, then identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Risk to site, b) Suitability for nature restoration, and c) Assess for protection through statutory planning.
	1.2	Identify, map and where possible create site inventories for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) to determine areas with high biodiversity value. Investigate feasibility of legal protection for high biodiversity value sites, through statutory plans.
	1.3	Create a “Kildare Ecological Network” map and site list, of all sites of ecological and geological importance to include designated sites.
	1.4	Review and update the County Kildare Wetland Survey 2012-2014 and develop a Wetlands Action Plan based on the findings.
	1.5	Support the development of Management Plans for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites, as appropriate.
	1.6	Prepare a Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan (including green, blue and brown infrastructure) that can inform the delineation of core areas, stepping stones, and corridors, that would identify ecologically sensitive areas to be excluded from any potential amenity/ tourism plans and that may inform the designation of an interconnected Nature Reserve, Regional Park, a potential National Peatlands Park, inter alia.
	1.7	Support LAWPRO and other key stakeholders to identify and support waterbody, wetland and water quality projects to develop co-benefits for climate action and biodiversity.
	1.8	Continue to promote 'Nature Based Solutions' in urban and rural areas, and in existing towns and villages.
	1.9	Prepare a County Policy for Wildlife-Friendly Lighting.
	1.10	Actively support the implementation of national biodiversity initiatives, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
	1.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Devise a Kildare County Council Tree Management Plan b) Promote native tree and broadleaf planting within the council and throughout the community c) Promote the “Right Tree, Right Place” message



Objective	Action Reference	Action
	1.12	Support the development of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for County Kildare.
	1.13	Promote habitat mapping in all Master Plans, Settlement Plans, including in smaller settlements, towns, villages, rural settlements and nodes, and require that trees and hedgerows are also identified for surface water management properties.
Objective 2: Engagement, Awareness and Understanding	2.1	Contribute to the development a communications 'toolkit', with materials ¹ , messaging and informative content on key biodiversity topics ² .
	2.2	Develop a 'Community Biodiversity Demonstration Garden' for use in training and capacity-building on all aspects of biodiversity (and climate action) for Community Groups, KCC Staff and potentially as a best practice regional demonstration site.
	2.3	Explore opportunities to encourage and/or grant-aid local nurseries (business and community) to cultivate indigenous hedgerow species and indigenous broadleaf tree species, with best practice guidance, logistical and potentially financial supports where possible.
	2.4	Continue to pursue an inclusive and targeted approach towards working with new and already engaged/active groups ³ by supporting them to raise awareness of biodiversity and take nature-positive actions.
	2.5	Actively investigate opportunities to improve incentivisation of community biodiversity actions through awards and grants schemes, e.g. Pride of Place and TidyTowns scoring, and via implementing biodiversity conditions on KCC-administered community funding.
	2.6	Support the KCC Environmental Awareness Officer in providing composting educational materials and workshops to community groups, schools, residential and industrial estates and businesses to increase basic horticulture skills within the public space, such as group composting schemes where food and gardening waste is collected and can be used locally.

¹ materials potentially including print, broadcast, signage, social media, podcasts, online video, short films etc.

² include topics on the fundamental role of biodiversity in our lives, managing pets on high nature value areas, Invasive Alien Species, Impacts of lighting, Traditional Skills (such as seed saving and hedge laying), Wildlife and the Law, Peat Free gardening, Glyphosate science and alternatives etc.

³ faith communities, GAA Green Clubs, landscaping contractors, architects, garden nurseries, artists, amongst others.



Objective	Action Reference	Action
	2.7	Engage with young people through targeted youth-focused nature-positive projects being run by Scouts, pre-schools, schools, youth clubs and community biodiversity groups/organisations. Encourage and support actions that work with the staff who maintain and manage the grounds and campuses for these young people, to embed the learning.
	2.8	Support the preservation and passing on of ecological field-skills and knowledge, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) supporting/hosting specialist field clubs b) knowledge-share events and opportunities c) supporting third-level placements for ecology/zoology/botany amongst others, and d) explore course development with the Education and Training Board (ETB)
	2.9	Work with relevant agencies, public bodies and local groups annually to continue to assess wildfire risk to bogs and upland habitats and their management and explore publication of “fire risk maps”.
	2.10	Work with Kildare Local Enterprise Office to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives via demo projects at regional hubs b) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives as part of sustainable economic development (e.g. farm diversification opportunities)
	2.11	Support collaborative projects with farming groups to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) raise awareness of positive action already being taken, b) highlight importance of farmland for biodiversity, c) facilitate community connecting to the land, natural and cultural heritage, d) focus on semi-natural grasslands e) promote EIP opportunities, Hare's Corner, Farming for Nature, inter alia.
	2.12	Investigate the feasibility of a national campaign to dissuade the public from planting Laurel hedging via the Biodiversity Officer Network.
	2.13	Provide guidance and supports to develop nature-based tourism responsibly.



Objective	Action Reference	Action
Objective 3: Recording, Monitoring and Data Management	3.1	Continue to commission and publish ecological surveys, where appropriate ⁴ , to gather baseline and/or regular monitoring data on under-surveyed aspects of Kildare's natural heritage, for the purposes of informing county policies and priorities and to provide an evidence base for the Council in meeting its obligations under European and Irish Environmental legislation, subject to available resources.
	3.2	Update Kildare County Council's Pollinator Plan, and as part of that process design-in ways to assess changes in sample local pollinator populations, resulting from the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions at site level.
	3.3	Review accessibility of and provide signposting and training on the accessing and interpretation of, water quality data, to inform the public.
	3.4	Support the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) to have up to date biological records for Kildare by ensuring survey results from KCC projects and surveys are fed into the national database.
	3.5	Develop a 'Citizen Science Strategy for Kildare' – in conjunction with existing environmental non-governmental organisations and natural heritage groups in the county.
Objective 4: Embed Action Across Kildare County Council	4.1	Support delivery of Part 8 projects and local authority owned development with best practice guidance for development, at inception, design and delivery, with best-practice guidance for development.
	4.2	Develop and deliver a biodiversity education programme for all staff, including elected members, to upskill awareness, knowledge and understanding, especially with regard to the council's legal obligations to nature protection, invasive species management, nature restoration and reporting.
	4.3	Develop a regional working group for professional stakeholders of (internationally and nationally) protected sites for infrequent but regular information sharing, and to coordinate the monitoring, protection and management of these sites.
	4.4	Consider the progression of a bond scheme on landscaping and biodiversity conditions for new developments.
	4.5	Strengthen hedgerow preservation by establishing a hedgerow protection policy using a quality rating system (e.g. Level 1 - Retain at all costs = townland boundary, Level 2 - Consider alternatives = other high quality / high nature value hedgerows, Level 3 – minimise removal = medium quality nature value, Level 4- Low value hedgerows, such as non-native, invasive species, e.g. Laurel, Leylandii).

⁴ Some ecological datasets are sensitive and for conservation purposes it is necessary to keep the data unpublished, for example the location of rare plants, or the breeding sites of rare birds; revealing location data may open the species up to illegal exploitation.



Objective	Action Reference	Action
	4.6	Advance a policy of 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG), wherever possible, through strategies, plans, developments, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Green and Blue Infrastructure with specific evidence-based and locally relevant biodiversity and environmental measures, through the review of the next County Development Plan.
	4.7	Introduce a specific land use zoning purely for nature preservation and restoration (i.e. stronger protection than the F: Open Space and Amenity zoning, currently offers) through the review of the next County Development Plan.
	4.8	Investigate the feasibility of phasing out rodenticide and pesticide use in Kildare County Council operated facilities, campuses, depots and in service-provision throughout the county (except for ecological necessity, e.g. relating to the eradication of invasive species).
	4.9	Continue to develop biodiversity measures as part of housing estate management responsibilities, once 'taken in charge' by KCC.
	4.10	Support the work of environmental non-governmental organisations and communities working to promote and conserve peatlands throughout the county.
	4.11	Support the establishment and expansion of community gardens and allotments through local authority initiatives in conjunction with private landowners and on public land, in both urban and rural communities, as set out in the KCC Allotment Strategy and County Development Plan.
	4.12	Update biodiversity guidelines for developers, private gardens and community action for County Kildare.
	4.13	Report annually on the Public Sector Duty on Biodiversity, as mandated by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023, for Kildare County Council.
	4.14	Increase funding and capacity in the Nature and Heritage Team, to provide for additional roles, such as a team of ecologists for cross-department all support, including Parks, Roads, Environment, and Planning, and Biodiversity Officers with specific responsibilities for Community and Project work.
	4.15	Investigate the feasibility of a percentage of development contributions to be ring-fenced for nature restoration efforts/projects.
Objective 5: Support Community-led Initiatives	5.1	Provide funding and practical supports to local community, TidyTowns and other voluntary groups, engaged in actions addressing biodiversity loss and restoration, e.g. managing landscapes for wildlife, managing invasive species, participating in citizen science, creating biodiverse spaces, and protecting and monitoring the health of the local environment.



Objective	Action Reference	Action
	5.2	Support the biodiversity/e-NGO groups in the county with their work relating to training communities in citizen science initiatives (including those focusing on water quality).
	5.3	Continue to prepare, roll-out and update Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), in partnership, where appropriate with LEADER, subject to funding.
	5.4	Continue to run a biodiversity 'small grants' scheme, and provide information and support for the public, to undertake biodiversity action in public spaces.
	5.5	Conservation-focused community groups should be supported with tools and equipment to carry out citizen science, particularly to monitor regenerating habitats.



3.2 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

The LABAP sits within a hierarchy of plans and has been informed by and is consistent with the aims and objectives of other plans, programmes and strategies developed at national, regional and local levels. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

National Level

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (2018).
- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework First Revision (2025).
- Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage (2022).
- Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028 (2023).
- The 4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023 - 2030 (2024) (discussed further in Section 3.1.1 below).
- Climate Action Plan (2025).

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly 2019 - 2031.
- The Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029.
- The Kildare Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029.
- The County Kildare Heritage Plan 2019 - 2025.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans within the Republic of Ireland will also serve to complement their Northern Ireland counterparts, which include:

- Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland
- Biodiversity Strategy (Draft Nature Recovery Strategy)
- Climate Change Adaptation Programme and Action Plan for Northern Ireland

3.2.1 The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023 - 2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to protect and value nature. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to '*act for nature*.' This plan provides the overarching arching framework for delivering biodiversity conservation through LABAPs.



This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. The five overarching objectives to address new and emerging issues include the following:

- 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 NBAP contains actions pertaining to the preparation to LABAPs under *Objective One: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity* and *Objective Three: Secure Nature's Contribution to People*, including the following:

Table 3-2: NBAP Actions pertaining to the preparation of Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans

Action Number	Action
1C5	The Heritage Council will publish updated guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans and their integration with City and County Development Plans.
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.
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.

Local Authorities are expected to align their LABAPs with national commitments defined in the NBAP to ensure a cohesive approach to biodiversity conservation across the country.



4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

This section of the report documents the SEA Screening undertaken.

Stage 1 Applicability Analysis was undertaken initially. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.1 of this report (Table 4-1 and Table 4-2).

Stage 2 Screening Analysis was then undertaken. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.2 of this report (Table 4-3, Table 4-4 and Table 4-5).

4.1 Stage 1 - SEA Applicability Analysis

Table 4-1: SEA Applicability Analysis

SEA Applicability Analysis	
Status of Plan/Programme (P/P) Maker	
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	The LABAP has been prepared by a local authority.
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	The LABAP is required by administrative provisions. The local authority is required to prepare the LABAP by the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030. The NBAP has been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The NPWS is an executive agency within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) of the Government of Ireland.
Nature of the Plan/Programme	
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	LABAPs are non-statutory land use plans.
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No.
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No.
Exemptions	



SEA Applicability Analysis	
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No.

Table 4-2: Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis

Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis	
Applicability Analysis Criterion	Outcome (Yes or No)
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	Yes
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	Yes
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No
Conclusion	
Having regard to the SEA Screening Process defined in Section 2.4, it has been concluded that Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis is required to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and whether a full SEA of the plan is needed.	



4.2 Stage 2 - SEA Screening Analysis

To inform the Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis, an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the LABAP Actions has been undertaken. This evaluation is presented in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3: Evaluation of Potential Environmental Effects of LABAP Actions

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 1: Landscapes for Nature	1.1	Identify and map all local authority owned land holdings, categorise and rank, then identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Risk to site, b) Suitability for nature restoration, and c) Assess for protection through statutory planning. 	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline surveying in the Plan area. Developing an understanding of council-owned land holdings in County Kildare, risk associated with such and the potential for nature restoration of such will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted sustainability improvements. This Action will not result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.2	Identify, map and where possible create site inventories for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) to determine areas with high biodiversity value. Investigate feasibility of legal protection for high biodiversity value sites, through statutory plans.	<p>This action proposes the carrying out of baseline surveying in the Plan area. Developing an understanding and an inventory of Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) in County Kildare and the potential for legal protection of said sites will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially contribute to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements.</p> <p>LIBS are areas of local interest or significance which form an integral part of the ecological network and provide a range of ecosystem services in the local authority. This Action will not result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.3	Create a “Kildare Ecological Network” map and site list, of all sites of ecological and geological importance to include designated sites.	This action proposes the undertaking of baseline ecological mapping in the Plan area. Developing an inventory of the Kildare Ecological Network will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and will contribute to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This Action will not result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.4	Review and update the County Kildare Wetland Survey 2012-2014 and develop a Wetlands Action Plan based on the findings.	The action proposes the undertaking of a wetland survey for wetland habitats in the Plan Area, which will underpin and support the effective implementation of the LABAP and will potentially lead to focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action supports the development and implementation of a Wetlands Action Plan for County Kildare. The prospective Wetlands Action Plan will be subject to mandatory SEA and AA Screening during the draft Plan and Plan-making processes. The action, in and of itself, will not result in any significant, adverse environmental effects.
	1.5	Support the development of Management Plans for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites, as appropriate.	This action supports the preparation and implementation of Management Plans for LIBS within the Plan area. The development of Management Plans for LIBS will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action supports the development and implementation of Management Plans in County Kildare.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			Such Management Plans will be subject to mandatory SEA and AA Screening during the draft Plan and Plan-making processes. The action has the potential to result in benefits for environmental receptors such as Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna. This action does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	1.6	Prepare a Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan (including green, blue and brown infrastructure) that can inform the delineation of core areas, stepping stones, and corridors, that would identify ecologically sensitive areas to be excluded from any potential amenity/ tourism plans and that may inform the designation of an interconnected Nature Reserve, Regional Park, a potential National Peatlands Park, inter alia.	<p>This action supports the development of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan which will provide an evidence-based framework to guide the delineation of core areas, stepping stones, and ecological corridors, and identify sensitive areas for exclusion from inappropriate amenity or tourism development.</p> <p>The prospective Masterplan, which will be subject to its own SEA and AA processes, will support the delivery of biodiversity objectives at a strategic level and has the potential to enhance environmental protection through integrated land-use planning. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.</p>
	1.7	Support LAWPRO and other key stakeholders to identify and support waterbody, wetland and water quality projects to develop co-benefits for climate action and biodiversity.	<p>The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) works on behalf of Ireland's 31 local authorities to protect and restore good water quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, ground and coastal water through catchment science and local community engagement.</p> <p>This action pertains to Kildare County Council supporting LAWPRO and other key stakeholders in identifying and delivering waterbody, wetland, and water quality-projects (which will be subject to project-level EIA and AA Screenings).</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			The action will contribute to the protection and enhancement of aquatic ecosystems and promote collaborative approaches to integrated water management. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	1.8	Continue to promote 'Nature Based Solutions' in urban and rural areas, and in existing towns and villages.	<p>Nature-based Solutions (NBS) are actions to address societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems, benefiting both biodiversity and human well-being. The integration of NBS will underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan Area. The action will not generate any negative environmental effects.</p> <p>The continued development of any NBS infrastructure will be undertaken under the applicable land use planning framework and will require appropriate planning consent. These statutory land use plans are subject to their own SEA and AA.</p> <p>The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment. It does not provide a framework or criteria for NBS development.</p>
	1.9	Prepare a County Policy for Wildlife-Friendly Lighting.	Reducing artificial light in ecologically sensitive areas is an effective way of protecting light-sensitive species such as bats and small mammals. This action supports the preparation of a County Policy which will guide the reduction of light pollution and its associated impacts on biodiversity.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			The action has the potential to protect light-sensitive species and enhance ecological connectivity. This action, in and of itself, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.
	1.10	Actively support the implementation of national biodiversity initiatives, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.	This action will fully align the Objectives of this Plan with the Aims and Objectives of higher-order Plans, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Alignment of lower-order Plans with higher-order Plans avoids conflicts with targets/objectives, ensures compliance and contributes to the achievement of national targets and ambitions. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Devise a Kildare County Council Tree Management Plan b) Promote native tree and broadleaf planting within the council and throughout the community c) Promote the “Right Tree, Right Place” message 	This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Plan area through the implementation of a Tree Management Plan, with the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse environmental effects.
	1.12	Support the development of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for County Kildare.	<p>This action supports the development of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for County Kildare. The implementation of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan will ensure appropriate management of invasive species and protection of native or vulnerable species in County Kildare.</p> <p>Such a Management Plan will be subject to mandatory SEA and AA Screening during the draft Plan and Plan-making processes.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			This action has the potential to result in positive effects on Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna. The action, in isolation, does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	1.13	Promote habitat mapping in all Master Plans, Settlement Plans, including in smaller settlements, towns, villages, rural settlements and nodes, and require that trees and hedgerows are also identified for surface water management properties.	This action supports the undertaking and inclusion of habitat mapping in Plans within County Kildare. This will ensure that trees and hedgerows are identified for their surface water management functions and will, in turn, have the potential to enhance biodiversity protection in the Plan area through informed planning. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.
Objective 2: Engagement, Assessment and Understanding	2.1	Contribute to the development a communications 'toolkit', with materials, messaging and informative content on key biodiversity topics.	This action is engagement and training-based. Communications 'toolkits' facilitate and encourage learning and development at local levels. The development of such toolkits in County Kildare can aid to improve understanding of the biodiversity of the County. This action has the potential to improve awareness and knowledge of local biodiversity in County Kildare, which will effectively underpin and support improvements in the Plan area. In isolation, this action does not have the potential to generate any significant, adverse environmental effects.
	2.2	Develop a 'Community Biodiversity Demonstration Garden' for use in training and capacity-building on all aspects of biodiversity (and climate action) for Community Groups, KCC Staff and potentially as a best practice regional demonstration site.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The development of such a Community Garden will foster wider public interest in the local biodiversity and potentially increase environmental stewardship.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	2.3	Explore opportunities to encourage and/or grant-aid local nurseries (business and community) to cultivate indigenous hedgerow species and indigenous broadleaf tree species, with best practice guidance, logistical and potentially financial supports where possible.	<p>This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general.</p> <p>This action has the potential to contribute to the conservation of ecosystems with native flora by promoting the cultivation of indigenous hedgerow and broadleaf species. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.</p>
	2.4	Continue to pursue an inclusive and targeted approach towards working with new and already engaged/active groups by supporting them to raise awareness of biodiversity and take nature-positive actions.	<p>This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The continuation of collaborating with new and existing community groups will increase environmental stewardship within the community.</p> <p>This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.</p>
	2.5	Actively investigate opportunities to improve incentivisation of community biodiversity actions through awards and grants schemes, e.g. Pride of Place and Tidy Towns scoring, and via implementing biodiversity conditions on KCC-administered community funding.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	2.6	Support the KCC Environmental Awareness Officer in providing composting educational materials and workshops to community groups, schools, residential and industrial estates and businesses to increase basic horticulture skills within the public space, such as group composting schemes where food and gardening waste is collected and can be used locally.	<p>This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The provision of materials and information through the local authority will increase accessibility for members of the wider community and contribute to increased environmental stewardship.</p> <p>This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.</p>
	2.7	Engage with young people through targeted youth-focused nature-positive projects being run by Scouts, pre-schools, schools, youth clubs and community biodiversity groups/organisations. Encourage and support actions that work with the staff who maintain and manage the grounds and campuses for these young people, to embed the learning.	This action will engage youth groups in nature-positive projects and will foster awareness of biodiversity via schools, youth clubs and community groups. This action will, in turn, create a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at local levels in County Kildare and will improve long-term stewardship of biodiversity in the County. The action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	2.8	<p>Support the preservation and passing on of ecological field-skills and knowledge, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) supporting/hosting specialist field clubs b) knowledge-share events and opportunities c) supporting third-level placements for ecology/zoology/botany amongst others, and d) explore course development with the Education and Training Board (ETB) 	This action will create and foster a collaborative and hands-on approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action has the potential to increase biodiversity knowledge ,skills and expertise through the provision of third-level educational programmes and placements.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	2.9	Work with relevant agencies, public bodies and local groups annually to continue to assess wildfire risk to bogs and upland habitats and their management and explore publication of “fire risk maps”.	Bogs in poor conditions (i.e., low moisture content) have a higher risk of wildfires, which can result in significant financial, anthropological, environmental and ecological losses. Drier areas of bog are generally dominated by heather (a highly flammable species in dry weather), which provides cover for protected bird species such as Red Grouse, Snipe and Curlew. The management of such habitats to minimise wildfire risk is therefore crucial. The action has positive implications for a range of environmental receptors, including biodiversity, flora and fauna, population and human health, air and climate, and material assets. No negative effects have been identified in relation to the implementation of this action.
	2.10	Work with Kildare Local Enterprise Office to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives via demo projects at regional hubs b) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives as part of sustainable economic development (e.g. farm diversification opportunities) 	The action proposes to integrate biodiversity initiatives into the sustainable economic development of County Kildare, through the operations of the Kildare Local Enterprise Office. The action has the potential to foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity and sustainable development in the Plan Area, contributing to the effective implementation of the Plan. This is positive for both biodiversity and population and human health. The action does not have the potential to generate negative environmental effects.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.11	Support collaborative projects with farming groups to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) raise awareness of positive action already being taken, b) highlight importance of farmland for biodiversity, c) facilitate community connecting to the land, natural and cultural heritage, d) focus on semi-natural grasslands e) promote EIP opportunities, Hare's Corner, Farming for Nature, inter alia. 	The action is centred around a collaborative approach to acknowledging and featuring the significance of farmlands for supporting biodiversity. The action is awareness-oriented and has the potential to improve biodiversity-related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within County Kildare. The action, in and of itself, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects on any receptor.
	2.12	Investigate the feasibility of a national campaign to dissuade the public from planting Laurel hedging via the Biodiversity Officer Network.	<p>Laurel Hedging (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>) is an established invasive species throughout Ireland, primarily in the southeast and midlands. <i>P. laurocerasus</i> poses risk to native species by outcompeting and suppressing regeneration of native species.</p> <p>The action has the potential to preserve ecosystems with native species by preventing disturbances to native habitats and/or undue ecological competition for native species. This action, in and of itself, does not have the potential to result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects.</p>
	2.13	Provide guidance and supports to develop nature-based tourism responsibly.	This action supports the development of guidance to support the development of nature-based tourism within the Plan area in a responsible manner. The action will encourage tourism initiatives that are aligned with biodiversity protection, thus supporting the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Objective 3: Recording, Monitoring and Data Management	3.1	Continue to commission and publish ecological surveys, where appropriate, to gather baseline and/or regular monitoring data on under-surveyed aspects of Kildare's natural heritage, for the purposes of informing county policies and priorities and to provide an evidence base for the Council in meeting its obligations under European and Irish Environmental legislation, subject to available resources.	This action proposes the undertaking of ecological surveying in County Kildare. Data gathering, as proposed in this action, will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and will contribute to more focused biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.2	Update Kildare County Council's Pollinator Plan, and as part of that process design-in ways to assess changes in sample local pollinator populations, resulting from the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions at site level.	The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a cross-sectoral framework to create landscapes and environmental conditions where pollinator species can survive and thrive. The action is centred around the revision and update of the Kildare County Council Pollinator Plan, which will then inform and support focused and target pollinator-friendly biodiversity initiatives in County Kildare. The action, being research/review-based, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	3.3	Review accessibility of, and provide signposting and training on the accessing and interpretation of, water quality data, to inform the public.	<p>This action supports the assessment and review of the accessibility of data by the public, and the provision of training to support public understanding of said data.</p> <p>This action has the potential to promote community engagement in the Plan area and will thus support the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Kildare. This action, in isolation, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	3.4	Support the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) to have up to date biological records for Kildare by ensuring survey results from KCC projects and surveys are fed into the national database.	<p>This action will ensure that ecological survey results from Kildare County Council projects are incorporated into the NBDC national database.</p> <p>This will augment the availability of up-to-date biological records to inform biodiversity planning and management. This action has the potential to generate positive effects for biodiversity. It will not, in and of itself, result in a real, significant environmental effect.</p>
	3.5	Develop a 'Citizen Science Strategy for Kildare' – in conjunction with existing environmental non-governmental organisations and natural heritage groups in the county.	<p>Citizen science initiatives enable data collection by members of the public to contribute to research and add to the national dataset on Ireland's biodiversity and biological data. Such research can help identify trends in biodiversity and improve understanding of the ecological baseline in the Plan Area.</p> <p>The action has the potential to improve awareness and knowledge of local biodiversity in County Kildare, which will underpin and support improvements in the area. In isolation, the action, in and of itself, does not have the potential to generate any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>
Objective 4: Embed Action Across Kildare County Council	4.1	Support delivery of Part 8 projects and local authority owned development with best practice guidance for development, at inception, design and delivery, with best-practice guidance for development.	<p>Developments carried out by Local Authorities, Part 8 developments, provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity by integrating enhancement measures into the design of the proposed development.</p> <p>The action supports the integration of biodiversity improvements into the planning process, which will potentially contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and co-benefits for other environmental components. The action, in and of itself, will not generate any negative environmental effects.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.2	Develop and deliver a biodiversity education programme for all staff, including elected members, to upskill awareness, knowledge and understanding, especially with regard to the council's legal obligations to nature protection, invasive species management, nature restoration and reporting.	This action promotes biodiversity related training within the Local Authority's staff members. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan area by improving knowledge and awareness across different functions of the Local Authority. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.
	4.3	Develop a regional working group for professional stakeholders of (internationally and nationally) protected sites for infrequent but regular information sharing, and to coordinate the monitoring, protection and management of these sites.	This action supports the development of a regional working group for key stakeholders of protected sites, providing a platform for information sharing and coordination. It will strengthen collaboration in the monitoring, protection, and management of sensitive sites. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	4.4	Consider the progression of a bond scheme on landscaping and biodiversity conditions for new developments.	This action supports the establishment of a bond scheme to integrate landscaping and biodiversity considerations in new developments. In isolation, this action does not have the potential to result in any significant, adverse environmental effects.
	4.5	Strengthen hedgerow preservation by establishing a hedgerow protection policy using a quality rating system (e.g. Level 1 - Retain at all costs = townland boundary, Level 2 - Consider alternatives = other high quality / high nature value hedgerows, Level 3 – minimise removal = medium quality nature value, Level 4- Low value hedgerows, such as non-native, invasive species, e.g. Laurel, Leylandii).	Hedgerows hold features of archaeological, geological, social and natural heritage, and are important wildlife corridors and habitats, serving as refuges for biodiversity. The development of a hedgerow protection policy will underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action in and of itself is not expected to result in any significant, adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.6	Advance a policy of 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG), wherever possible, through strategies, plans, developments, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Green and Blue Infrastructure with specific evidence-based and locally relevant biodiversity and environmental measures, through the review of the next County Development Plan.	<p>Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development which centres around improving biodiversity at a site by encouraging developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features and therefore arrest the loss of biodiversity and restore ecological networks.</p> <p>The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and improvements within the land-use framework and development planning process. The action has the potential to contribute to realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and generate co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have potential to generate any negative environmental effects. The framework and criteria for BNG will be established under the next County Development Plan, which will be subject to its own SEA and AA processes.</p>
	4.7	Introduce a specific land use zoning purely for nature preservation and restoration (i.e. stronger protection than the F: Open Space and Amenity zoning, currently offers) through the review of the next County Development Plan.	<p>The action supports the integration of nature preservation considerations and restoration within the land-use framework and development planning process.</p> <p>The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and enhancement opportunities within County policies and has the potential to contribute to realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and generate co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have potential to generate any negative environmental effects. This zoning objective will be established under the next County Development Plan, which will be subject to its own SEA and AA processes.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.8	Investigate the feasibility of phasing out rodenticide and pesticide use in Kildare County Council operated facilities, campuses, depots and in service-provision throughout the county (except for ecological necessity, e.g. relating to the eradication of invasive species).	The action has the potential to result in direct positive effects for biodiversity and population and human health, and indirect positive effects for the water and soils environments, without affecting any environmental receptor in a negative fashion. In isolation, this action does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.
	4.9	Continue to develop biodiversity measures as part of housing estate management responsibilities, once 'taken in charge' by KCC.	The action proposes the integration of biodiversity enhancement measures as part of KCC's housing estate management responsibilities. The action will result in biodiversity improvements at the locations where such measures are carried out, and result in direct positive effects on receiving biodiversity, flora and fauna (i.e. key species and habitats), and potentially result in indirect positive effects on soils, water and local air quality. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in adverse effects on the receiving environment.
	4.10	Support the work of environmental non-governmental organisations and communities working to promote and conserve peatlands throughout the county.	This action supports the promotion and conservation of peatlands via collaboration with non-governmental organisations and community groups. This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.11	Support the establishment and expansion of community gardens and allotments through local authority initiatives in conjunction with private landowners and on public land, in both urban and rural communities, as set out in the KCC Allotment Strategy and County Development Plan.	<p>This action supports the aims and objectives of the Kildare County Council Allotment and Community Garden Strategy 2024-2030. Allotments and community gardens can become a unique and valuable aspect in the provision of greenspace in communities for recreation as well as offering habitats for wildlife.</p> <p>The action has the potential to contribute to the wellbeing of the wider community (population and human health). This action, in and of itself, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>
	4.12	Update biodiversity guidelines for developers, private gardens and community action for County Kildare.	<p>This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Plan Area, with the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any negative environmental effects.</p>
	4.13	Report annually on the Public Sector Duty on Biodiversity, as mandated by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023, for Kildare County Council.	<p>This action involves the preparation and publication of annual reports on biodiversity, as required under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023. The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations into council operations and promotes awareness. This action, in and of itself, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>
	4.14	Increase funding and capacity in the Nature and Heritage Team, to provide for additional roles, such as a team of ecologists for cross-department all support, including Parks, Roads, Environment, and Planning, and Biodiversity Officers with specific responsibilities for Community and Project work.	<p>This action supports the strengthening of the Kildare County Council Nature and Heritage Team by increasing staffing and resources. The action supports improved management and protection of biodiversity across council functions. This action, in and of itself, will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.15	Investigate the feasibility of a percentage of development contributions to be ring-fenced for nature restoration efforts/projects.	<p>The action proposes assessing the feasibility of allocating a percentage of development contributions (from new development within the Plan Area) to be directed to funding nature restoration efforts and projects.</p> <p>The action has the potential to underpin and support the delivery of the Plan, as well as contribute to biodiversity improvements generally within the Plan Area. However, as the action is largely review-based, it will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>
Objective 5: Support Community-led Initiatives	5.1	Provide funding and practical supports to local community, TidyTowns and other voluntary groups, engaged in actions addressing biodiversity loss and restoration, e.g. managing landscapes for wildlife, managing invasive species, participating in citizen science, creating biodiverse spaces, and protecting and monitoring the health of the local environment.	<p>This action will create and foster a collaborative and hands-on approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.</p>
	5.2	Support the biodiversity/e-NGO groups in the county with their work relating to training communities in citizen science initiatives (including those focusing on water quality).	<p>Citizen science initiatives enable data collection by members of the public to contribute to research and add to the national dataset on Ireland's biodiversity and biological data. Such research can help identify trends in biodiversity and improve understanding of the ecological baseline and water quality in the Plan Area.</p> <p>The action has the potential to improve awareness and knowledge of local biodiversity in County Kildare, which will underpin and support improvements in the area. In isolation, the action, in and of itself, does not have the potential to generate any significant, adverse environmental effects.</p>



Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	5.3	Continue to prepare, roll-out and update Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), in partnership, where appropriate with LEADER, subject to funding.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans in County Kildare, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	5.4	Continue to run a biodiversity 'small grants' scheme, and provide information and support for the public, to undertake biodiversity action in public spaces.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.
	5.5	Conservation-focused community groups should be supported with tools and equipment to carry out citizen science, particularly to monitor regenerating habitats.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Kildare, which in turn will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action intends to support community groups through the provision tools and equipment to undertake citizen science. The action will not result in the occurrence of any significant, adverse environmental effects, in and of itself.



Table 4-4: Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Environmental Effects - Characteristics of the Plan

Potential Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Plan or Programme having regard, in particular to:	
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>	<p>The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the plan area, including local authority controlled lands. The LABAP defines a vision for biodiversity in the plan area, and themes, aims and targets for achieving this vision. The LABAP proposes several biodiversity management related projects and activities, including projects and activities at specific areas. These projects and activities all relate to biodiversity protection and enhancement, however.</p> <p>The LABAP does not propose or support any intensive land use or development projects outside the land use planning framework and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.</p> <p>Considering the Precautionary Principle enshrined in European Union (EU) environmental law, the Objectives and Actions in the LABAP should be assessed having regard to criteria defined in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The LABAP is defined as a Tier 2 Local Action Plan under The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). The LABAP is therefore a lower order plan in the context of the European, national, regional and local plan hierarchy.</p> <p>Local Action Plans set out specific objectives and actions for managing and protecting heritage in a particular area, such as biodiversity, archives, archaeology, heritage engagement, education etc., within the context of a higher order heritage related plan, for example. Each Local Action Plan is developed by a Working Group that includes representatives from relevant stakeholders and is led by heritage professionals within the local authority. The LABAP fits into this tier of plans.</p> <p>The LABAP supports the development of lower order area specific biodiversity management plans and supports the implementation of biodiversity related measures defined in inter-related plans, including the County Development Plan.</p>



Potential Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Plan or Programme having regard, in particular to:	
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The LABAP supports and promotes the integration of biodiversity protection and enhancement measures into development and activities occurring in the Plan area and supports ecological sustainability. The LABAP does not, however, stipulate specific development planning requirements and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	<p>Biodiversity in the plan area faces a number of known threats and pressures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development (residential, commercial, infrastructural and agricultural), • Agricultural activity and expansion, • Urbanisation, • The spread of invasive species, • Pollution (e.g., air, noise, water, light pollution), • Climate change, • Recreational activity, • Land abandonment, • Urban wastewater, • Changes in the hydrological environment. <p>These threats and pressures may cause a range of negative impacts on biodiversity, including habitat loss, reduction and fragmentation; disturbance to key species; reduction in species density, impacts on designated sites and locally important non-designated sites present or connected to the plan area, or changes to indicators of conservation value (i.e. water quality, air quality, habitat quality).</p> <p>The LABAP defines a variety of actions to address these threats and pressures.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g., plans linked to waste-management or water protection).	<p>The LABAP is a non-statutory land use plan. It does, however, support the achievement of aims of EU nature-related legislation at a local level, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, • Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (the 'Nature Restoration Law'), • Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ('the Birds Directive'),



Potential Significant Effects

Characteristics of the Plan or Programme having regard, in particular to:

- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'),
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended,
- Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ('the Water Framework Directive'),
- European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722/2003), as amended ,
- Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy ('the Marine Strategy Framework Directive'),
- European Communities (Marine Strategy Framework) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 249/2011), as amended,
- Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks ('the Floods Directive'),
- European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 122/2010), as amended,
- Directive 2006/113/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the quality required of shellfish waters ('the Shellfish Waters Directive'),
- European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 268/2006), as amended.



Table 4-5: Criteria for Determining Potential for Significant Effects - Characteristics of the Effects

Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.</p>	<p>The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the Plan area. It defines the biodiversity actions that support and promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice biodiversity management and improvement, • Local authority biodiversity protection and enhancement initiatives, • The improvement of biodiversity on local authority controlled lands, • Biodiversity training and awareness events, • Biodiversity education and training, • Planting of native species (i.e. trees, shrubs, plants etc.) • Ecological surveying and mapping to identify areas of risk from threats and pressure and areas for targeted biodiversity protection/enhancement action, • Collaborating with key stakeholders and the public to achieve biodiversity aims. <p>The range of actions defined in the LABAP have the potential to have a range of likely, slight to very significant, temporary to long-term, positive environmental effects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects on biodiversity, including habitats, key species, designated sites and locally important non-designated sites. • Indirect positive effects on water quality and hydrology - e.g., through the promotion of the use Nature Based Solutions in drainage management and the protection of the aquatic environment. • Positive effects on population and human health - e.g., - through the protection and enhancement of areas of biodiversity that provide amenity value, and support public health and well-being. • Positive effects on the soils environment - e.g., biodiversity has the potential to improve soil quality, structure and function.



Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects on Climate - e.g., through the promotion of areas of enhanced biodiversity that can contribute to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) sequestration levels and protect against the effects of climate change related events (i.e. floods, erosion etc.). • Positive effects on landscape and visual amenity - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage that contributes to scenic value and visual amenity. <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. They have been carefully reviewed, and it has been concluded that these actions do not have the potential to have unintended negative effects on the receiving environment.</p> <p>The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. There is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.</p>
The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>The LABAP is in harmony and consistent with inter-related plans, including land use plans relevant to the plan area, higher order heritage related plans, the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, the national Climate Action Plan and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The range of positive effects that may be realised by the implementation of the LABAP have the potential to interact and combine with positive effects associated with biodiversity measures defined in these inter-related plans to create larger, more significant positive effects.</p> <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to interact and combine with negative effects associated with measures defined in these inter-related plans or projects to create larger, more significant negative effects.</p>



Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
The transboundary nature of the effects.	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in or connected to the plan area. These effects will be relatively localised however given that the LABAP is a local action plan. These effects have the potential to be transmitted to areas surrounding and outside the local authority functional area via environmental pathways. It is unlikely these effects will be transmitted to Northern Ireland or any other country outside of Ireland however given the distance from the local authority functional area to these other countries and the lack of direct environmental pathways from the functional area to said countries. Actions in the LABAP that may benefit migratory birds have some degree of potential to create positive effects beyond the national boundary of Ireland, however.</p> <p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the ability to be transmitted beyond the national boundary of Ireland.</p>
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents).	<p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to create risks to human health or the environment.</p>
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in the plan area or connected to the plan area via environmental pathways, including elements that may up the receiving biodiversity environment such as habitats, key species, designated sites and non-designated locally important sites.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • Intensive land-use. 	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects that contribute to enhanced biodiversity and natural heritage; enhanced water, soil or air quality in the plan area, and more sustainable, ecologically diverse land use.</p> <p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that may affect special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (including built or archaeological heritage), or contribute to the exceedance of environmental quality standards, in the plan area.</p> <p>The LABAP does not support or promote intensive land use or development projects that may create negative environmental effects.</p>



Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, community or international protection status.	<p>There are a variety of sites designated for their ecological value (e.g., Special protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, proposed Natural Heritage Areas) present in and connected to the plan area. The actions in the LABAP have been carefully designed to support the protection and enhancement of these designated sites.</p> <p>There are sites in the plan area that are designated for their landscape and visual amenity value. The implementation of the LABAP has the potential to have positive effects on landscape and visual amenity generally and such designated sites - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage settings that contributes to landscape character, scenic value and visual amenity.</p>

Table 4-6: Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

Summary of SEA Screening Analysis
Having regard to the evaluation undertaken in Table 4-3 and the Stage 2 Screening Analysis undertaken in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5, it is concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.



5. CONCLUSIONS

An SEA Screening Assessment was undertaken to determine the need for an SEA for the Kildare County Council LABAP. It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP. The principal reasons for this are as follows:

- The LABAP does not introduce any source of negative environmental effect.
- All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. There is no requirement to integrate further environmental considerations into the LABAP given its intrinsic nature, its stated aims and objectives, and the potential positive effects associated with its actions.
- The LABAP is in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes.
- The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects.
- The LABAP is not a statutory land use plan. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. It aligns with and supports with policy defined in the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029.

Therefore, a full SEA of the LABAP is not required.

The local authority is now required to consult with the Environmental Authorities on the above conclusion.



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