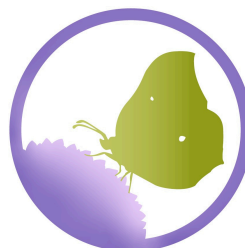


# DISCUSSION PAPER

Pre-draft Consultation for Kildare County Council's  
Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council







## Introduction

Kildare County Council is preparing a new Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP). Following the launch of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan in 2023, all Local Authorities are required to have a local Biodiversity Action Plans in place by the end of 2026.

With the recent appointment of a Biodiversity Officer, under the Heritage Council's Biodiversity Officer Programme, Kildare County Council is commencing this process.

It is anticipated that a new LABAP for Kildare will be completed by the end of 2025. The overarching aims of the plan will be to protect, conserve, restore, record, and promote biodiversity across the county for the subsequent five years.

This discussion paper marks the start of the process; its purpose is to begin engagement and dialogue on the subject of biodiversity, with particular regard to the role that the County Council can play in safeguarding the natural environment.

It is hoped that this brief overview will stimulate conversation and inspire contributions from anyone and everyone with a view on nature and the environment of County Kildare.

It is important that we hear your ideas on how you think we should be addressing the biodiversity crisis at a local level. This is your opportunity to highlight the key issues affecting nature in County Kildare.

## What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is a word that is often used interchangeably with ‘nature’. It comes from the words ‘biological diversity’ and refers to the range and variety of all living things, including plants, animals, fungi, and micro-organisms.

Nature or ‘biodiversity’ meets our most fundamental and critical physical needs for survival, through the services that it provides e.g. oxygen, nutrition, calories, fuel, fibres, materials for building shelter, clean water, clean air, flood control and climate regulation. The biodiversity around us also helps us meet other less tangible, but equally important requirements, including our cultural, recreational, and spiritual needs.

High biodiversity levels are associated with more resilient ecosystems and stable environments. Unfortunately, we also know that biodiversity is in decline locally, nationally and worldwide, with habitat loss being the main driver.

Many people believe that nature has an intrinsic value in and of itself, and therefore deserves protection based on that merit alone. We have also come to recognise that long-term human well-being is inextricably linked with and relies upon nature continuing to provide the services outlined above. It is therefore vital that the declines in biodiversity are halted and reversed from a very basic human-centred perspective also.

## Biodiversity In Ireland

In Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) provides a 6-yearly update on the assessment of the conservation status of habitats and species in Ireland protected under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, Article 17), with the most recent being in 2019 (The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland). That report indicated that, of Ireland’s 59 habitats listed in the directive, most have an unfavourable status with almost half showing ongoing declines, including marine, peatland, grassland and woodland habitats.





According to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 'Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024':

- the populations of 54 (26%) of Ireland's regularly occurring bird species are in severe decline while a further 79 (37%) are showing moderate declines. In all, 63% of Ireland's bird species are in serious trouble.
- only half (50%) of Ireland's rivers are in satisfactory ecological condition, and
- the overall current assessment for nature is 'very poor'. Deteriorating trends dominate, especially for protected habitats and bird populations, and Ireland is not on track to achieve policy objectives for nature.

## Why is Biodiversity in decline?



According to the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'National Biodiversity Indicators: 2020 Status and Trends'. The most important drivers of biodiversity loss are:

- Habitat loss
- Habitat fragmentation
- Unsustainable exploitation
- Pollution, and
- Invasive alien species

Other specific pressures, connected with the above drivers include climate change, development pressure, disturbance by humans, overexploitation, land drainage, intensive agriculture, monoculture forestry and public lighting.

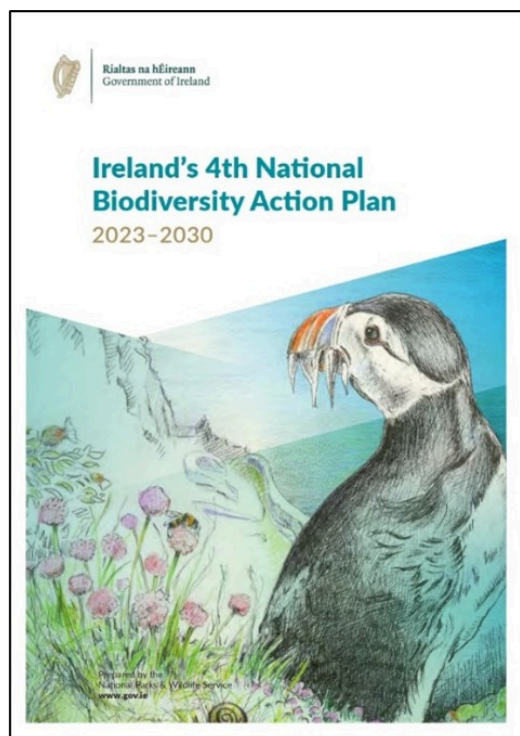


## Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan

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 the ways in which we value and protect nature.

The 4th NBAP strives for a “whole of government, whole of society” approach to the governance and conservation of biodiversity. 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”.

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. It will continue to implement actions within the framework of five strategic objectives, while addressing new and emerging issues:



- 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

## Biodiversity in County Kildare

County Kildare has a rich and diverse natural heritage, deeply intertwined with its unique landscape, geology, soils and past land management. The county is located in the East Midlands of Ireland and has a population of just under 250,000, with large urban centres in the north of the county.

The county's wildlife habitats are varied, including peatlands, grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, rivers, and canals.

Raised bogs, cover a large area of the western part of the county, circa 10,000ha of peatland remain in the County and some of the most easterly raised bogs in the country. These bogs have developed in old lake basins and in flooded drift depressions in the county with Mouds Bog being particularly well-preserved and an internationally important Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

County Kildare has very limited native woodland and all areas of native woodland appear to have regenerated post clearance. Some areas where a native species assemblage occur include areas such as the Natural Heritage Area (NHA) woodlands of Corballis Hill, Killeel and Killinthomas Wood. Elsewhere, woodlands are derived from estate plantings, such as at Moore Abbey in Monasterevin, Kildangan Stud and Carton Demense, in Maynooth. However, these sites often featuring non-native species like sycamore, horse chestnut, beech and non-native conifer species. These woodlands, while having a monotonous ground flora, provide high amenity value and contribute to Kildare's characteristic parkland appearance.

Natural vegetation has persisted mainly along riverbanks, though these areas have often been influenced by plantings. The Rye Water area and associated wetlands in Carton Demesne supports populations of two very rare whorl snail species, while individual stretches at Osberstown and Athgarvan are also of interest.

Open water patches are rare away from the main rivers, which offer limited value to wildfowl. The artificial lake at Carton, Ballynafagh Lake near Prosperous, and the Red Bog Lake, are all notable water bodies in the area. The rivers Barrow, Liffey and Rye Water, are the most important river systems in the County with the Barrow and Rye Water Rivers being protected as SACs.





The Royal Canal and Grand Canals have rich flora that for the Royal Canal includes elements from the Shannon alongside typical aquatic plants. Both canals are protected as NHAs within the County and support a large population of coarse fish and adjacent riparian habitats of importance.

Pollardstown Fen and Mouds Bog are the most important wetland sites in the county both are protected as Special Areas of Conservation.

## Designated Sites

### Natura 2000 Network

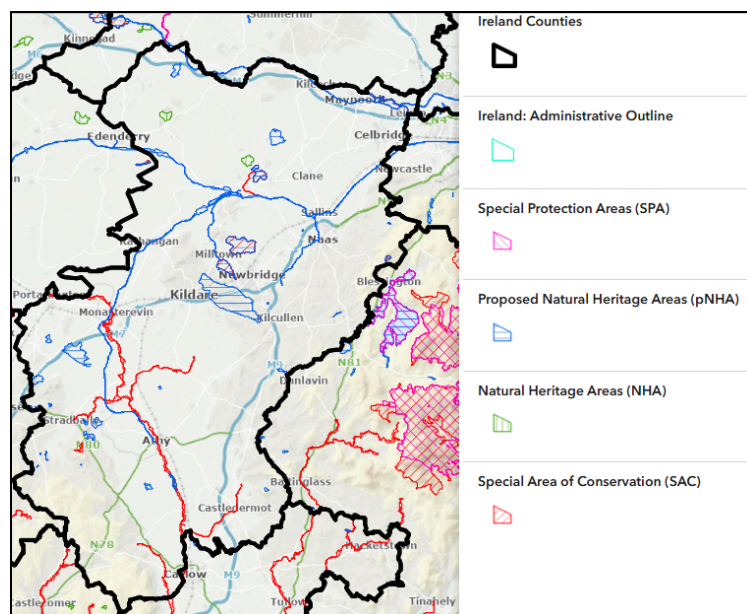
The 'Natura 2000 network' is a selection of specific sites that are legally protected under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), which has been transposed into Irish law through the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations Species.

These sites are made up of habitats of international, national and regional importance, and are protected through the designation of specific areas. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are of European importance for particular habitats, plants and non-avian animals. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are areas of European importance specifically for bird species.

### Natural Heritage Areas in Kildare

In Ireland, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated to protect sites of nature conservation value. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 provides the legal framework for the designation and protection of NHAs. Under the Act NHAs are legally protected from the date they are formally proposed. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) oversees the protection of these areas, ensuring that any development or activity within NHAs does not harm the protected habitats and species.

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995. They have not since been statutorily proposed or designated. These sites are of significance for wildlife and habitats. A process is underway to resurvey and formally designate some pNHAs as NHAs.



**Map 1:** County Kildare Natura 2000 sites and Natural Heritage Areas from NPWS designations viewer

**Table 1:** County Kildare Natura 2000 sites

County Kildare: Natura 2000 Network	
Site Name	Designation
<b>Ballynafagh Bog</b> (000391)	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
<b>Ballynafagh Lake SAC</b> (001387)	SAC
<b>Mouds Bog SAC</b> (002331)	SAC
<b>Pollardstown Fen SAC</b> (000396)	SAC
<b>Poulaphouca Reservoir</b> (004063)	Special Protected Area (SPA)
<b>Red Bog, Kildare</b> (000397)	SAC
<b>River Barrow &amp; River Nore</b> (002162)	SAC
<b>Rye Water Valley/Carton</b> (001398)	SAC



**Table 2:** County Kildare Natural Heritage Sites

<b>County Kildare: Natural Heritage Areas*</b> <b>&amp; Proposed Natural Heritage Areas</b>		
<b>Ballina Bog</b> (000390)	<b>Donadea Wood</b> (001391)	<b>Mouds Bog</b> (000395)
<b>Ballynafagh Bog</b> (000391)	<b>Dunlavin Marshes</b> (001772)	<b>Oakpark</b> (000810)
<b>Ballynafagh Lake</b> (001387)	<b>Grand Canal</b> (002104)	<b>Pollardstown Fen</b> (000396)
<b>Barrow Valley at Tankardstown Bridge</b> (000858)	<b>Hodgestown Bog*</b> (001393)	<b>Poulapouca Reservoir</b> (000731)
<b>Carbury Bog*</b> (001388)	<b>Kilteel Wood</b> (001394)	<b>Red Bog</b> (000397)
<b>Corballis Hill</b> (001389)	<b>Liffey at Oberstown</b> (001395)	<b>Royal Canal</b> (002103)
<b>Curragh (Kildare)</b> (000392)	<b>Liffey Bank above Athgarvan</b> (001396)	<b>Rye Water Valley/Carton</b> (001398)
<b>Derryvullagh Island</b> (001390)	<b>Liffey Valley Meander Belt</b> (000393)	



## What is a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan?

A Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan:

- Provides a structured approach to nature conservation at the local authority level.
- Helps develop objectives, strategies and actions that are needed to protect and restore biodiversity, within respective local authority areas.
- Integrates local, national and international biodiversity commitments and priorities.
- Informs the work of the Kildare County Council Biodiversity Office at a local level.

The revision of the current Kildare Heritage Plan 2019-2025, which has carried the council's 'natural heritage' or biodiversity actions to date, is underway. The priorities and actions in this new Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031 will reflect the changes that have occurred in the physical environments and wider societal contexts, corresponding to new realities relating to ecology, legislation, policy and future Directives.

## Biodiversity Working Group

The biodiversity working group is a non-statutory advisory group established by the local authority to provide observations and advice on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the LABAP. The working group collaborates with the KCC Biodiversity Officer to develop the plan. Once the plan is finalised the working group assist by providing feedback and guidance on the implementation of the objectives and actions, and with monitoring the progress and impact of the plan.

The Biodiversity Working Group is made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups and organisations. The following sectors are currently represented on the Kildare Biodiversity Working Group:

- Local and national environmental NGOs
- Local heritage and biodiversity organisations
- State agencies with large land-holdings and/or with relevance to biodiversity
- Local development and business representatives
- Local educational institutions
- Agricultural representatives
- Locally elected representatives
- Local Authority Staff with roles and responsibilities relating to biodiversity (e.g. Climate team, Parks Team)



## ***Have your say in protecting Biodiversity in County Kildare***

*Kildare County Council invites you to help shape the Draft County Kildare Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031.*

### **Your Opinion Counts**

Kildare County Council is currently seeking submissions from the public, and from groups and organisations, for this first phase of the preparation of the Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP). Sharing your views helps local issues and opportunities be identified and will shape biodiversity objectives and actions for County Kildare.

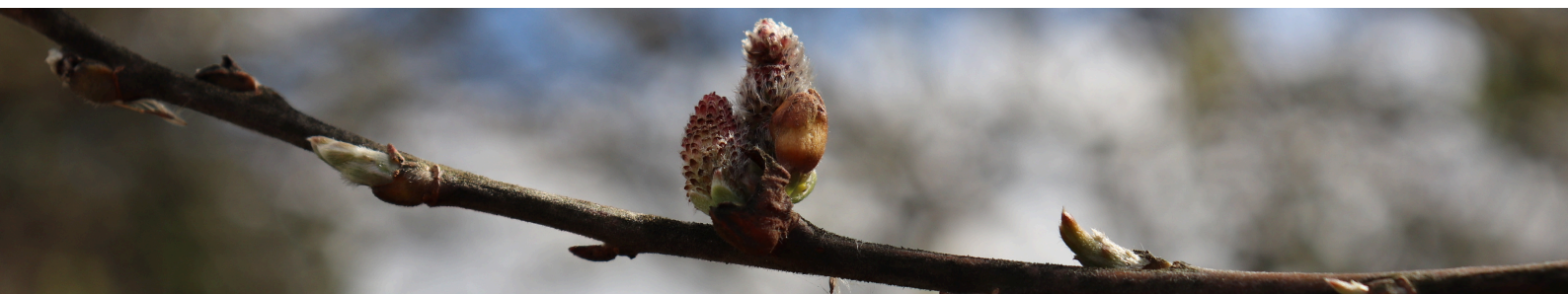
**You can submit your views by any of the following methods:**

**Online Survey:** visit the Online Consultation Portal at [www.consult.kildarecoco.ie](http://www.consult.kildarecoco.ie) to find out more, and to complete the [survey](#).

**E-mail:** [biodiversity@kildarecoco.ie](mailto:biodiversity@kildarecoco.ie)

**By Post:** Biodiversity Officer, Kildare County Council, Aras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, Co. Kildare

All submissions by post or by email must be clearly marked “*Pre-Draft Submission; Biodiversity Action Plan 2026 – 2031*” and must be received by close of business on Friday May 2nd 2025.



Chat to us in-person, by joining our public information and consultation sessions:

Visit one of the following drop-in events to learn more about the consultation process and the various stages in the BAP development.



## KCC Biodiversity Action Plan (Pre-draft) Consultation Events 2025



Date	Time	Activity	Location
Tues 25th March	6pm-8pm	<b>Drop-in Session</b> 6pm-Short talk on Biodiversity of Co. Kildare	The Chamber, <b>Naas Library &amp; Cultural Centre</b> -W91 E1RT
Wed 26th March	1pm-3pm	<b>Drop-in Session</b> 1pm-Short talk on Biodiversity of Co. Kildare	<b>Kildare Town Library</b> -R51 P403
Fri 28th March	2pm-4pm	<b>Drop-in Session</b> 2pm-Short talk on Biodiversity of Co. Kildare	<b>Athy Library</b> -R14 DK33
Tues 1st April	6pm-8pm	<b>Drop-in Session</b> 6pm-Short talk on Biodiversity of Co. Kildare	<b>Leixlip Library</b> -W23 WR96
Thurs 3rd April	3pm-5pm	<b>Drop-in Session</b> 3pm-Short talk on Biodiversity of Co. Kildare	<b>Maynooth Library</b> -W23 WR96
Date	Time	Activity	Location
Tues <b>8th April</b>	7pm-8pm	<b>Online Session</b> Short presentation, followed by Q&A	Send an email to: <a href="mailto:biodiversity@kildarecoco.ie">biodiversity@kildarecoco.ie</a> to receive the meeting link

***All submissions must be received by 5pm on Friday 2nd May 2025***

### Next Steps:

All submissions received will be considered and reviewed. A Draft Biodiversity Action Plan will be prepared in collaboration with the Biodiversity Working Group in the coming months. A Draft Biodiversity Action Plan will go on public display, and a second period of public consultation will then run to ensure engagement and opportunities to contribute are maximised.



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All others by Meabh Boylan



Kildare County Council wishes to acknowledge the role of the Heritage Council in funding the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme and in supporting the preparation of the Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.



**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta**  
**The Heritage Council**

