

# Kilkenny County Council Pollinator Programme 2019

## Actions undertaken in support of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan Report to Kilkenny County Council



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Heritage Officer

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An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

An Chomhairle Oidhreacht  
The Heritage Council



## Kilkenny County Council Pollinator Programme 2019

### Introduction

Kilkenny County Council has undertaken a comprehensive Pollinator Programme in 2019, in accordance with our Framework Agreement with the National Biodiversity Data Centre for delivery of actions in support of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.

The programme has been enthusiastically supported by the Elected Representatives and actions has been undertaken by many sections of the Council including; Heritage, Parks, Environment, Facilities Management, Area Offices, Kilkenny City Outdoor staff, Local Enterprise Office, and Community. The programme is led and co-ordinated by the Heritage Office.

Where possible, pollinator actions have been incorporated into existing work programmes. Kilkenny County Council had previously undertaken a range of biodiversity and pollinator friendly actions and work programmes, prior to the development of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. However, we have found that having the Plan and the Framework Agreement has facilitated a co-ordinated approach and focus.

As this is the first year of our Pollinator Programme we've made a concerted effort into raising awareness and encouraging a broad range of sections to participate. We plan to continue building on this engagement in future years.

This report presents the work undertaken by the Council under the following 2 headings:

- i. Strategic Actions
- ii. Actions as outlined in the NBDC guidance document "Councils: actions to help pollinators".



### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

#### ✓ Framework Agreement Signed

In March 2019 Kilkenny County Council was the first local authority in Ireland to sign a Framework Agreement with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to formally commit to supporting the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.

This built on the support from the Elected Representatives who, at a meeting of Kilkenny County Council in July 2018, agreed to adopt the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, and also to adopt the garden bumble (*Bombus hortorum*) as the Kilkenny County Council emblem.



Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr, Eamon Aylward and Chief Executive Colette Byrne signing the framework agreement for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

✓ **Kilkenny County Council Pollinator Committee Established**

A Pollinator Committee, co-ordinated by the Heritage Office, and reporting to Director of Services, was established in March 2019 to oversee the Programme, with representatives from the following Council Departments; Heritage, Parks, Environment, Corporate, Area Engineers, Water Services, Kilkenny Outdoor staff. The committee meets quarterly.

✓ **Addressing national and local plans, policies and programmes**

In addition to supporting the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Kilkenny County Councils Pollinator Programme addresses relevant policies in national and local plans and strategies as follows:

- ✓ National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021.
  - Action 4.1.8 to *“Implement the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan including: making the Irish countryside more pollinator friendly; raising awareness of pollinators; supporting beekeepers and growers; expanding knowledge of pollinators; and collecting evidence to track changes”*.
- ✓ Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, and the National Adaptation Framework, 2018.
- ✓ Kilkenny County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
- ✓ Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy (Arts, Heritage, Libraries) 2018-2022.
  - Objective 1 to *“Support the implementation of key national and local legislation, policies, programmes and plans which identify, protect and promote Kilkenny’s heritage”*.
- ✓ Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020.
  - Section 8.2 *“To conserve, enhance and manage the county’s natural heritage including its biodiversity, landscapes and geological heritage and to promote understanding of and sustainable access to it.”*
- ✓ Kilkenny Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022.
- ✓ Kilkenny Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021.
  - Action 12.7.8. *“Support community participation in recording, presenting and caring for heritage”*.

✓ **Funding**

The primary source of funding for these initiatives was Kilkenny County Council. Additional funding was kindly provided for specific actions through:

- i. The National Biodiversity Action Plan Local Authorities Fund, from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- ii. The County Heritage Plan Fund, from the Heritage Council,
- iii. Creative Ireland

It has been identified by our Pollinator Committee that additional resources will be required from 2020 onwards to implement some actions including, changes to our grass mowing regimes; a reduction in the use of pesticides which requires increased staff and funding resources; and capital works required at sites managed for pollinators.

The Director of Services has requested that there is a specific allocation for our Pollinator Programme in 2020. This will be decided at the Council budget meetings in late 2019.

## **ACTIONS IN NBDC GUIDANCE DOCUMENT “COUNCILS: ACTIONS TO HELP POLLINATORS”.**

Kilkenny County Council has undertaken the following actions from the suite of 30 actions listed in the NBDC guidance document “Councils: actions to help pollinators”:

### **A: PROTECT WHAT YOU HAVE**

#### ***Action 1: Manage and restore semi-natural habitats and their native plants on council land***

- ✓ The Heritage Office, in partnership with the Parks Department, commissioned ecologist Deborah D’Arcy to undertake habitat surveys in July 2019 at two Council owned sites in order to identify and map the habitats at the sites, and provide recommendations on how the Council can best manage these habitats to support pollinators.

##### **(i) County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny:**

The grounds include a variety of habitats including moderately species rich dry grassland, amenity grassland, mature and semi-mature trees, hedges and ornamental planting.

The Facilities Manager will advise and oversee all management activities carried out in County Hall and to ensure that they are in line with the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, and will oversee the implementation of the relevant recommendations from the report, including:

- One cutting of grass per year in Sept/October
- Installation of signage to highlight the areas managed for pollinators
- Minimising/avoiding the use of pesticides in line with the Pollinator Friendly Pesticide Code
- Planting of native, pollinator friendly plants, as required

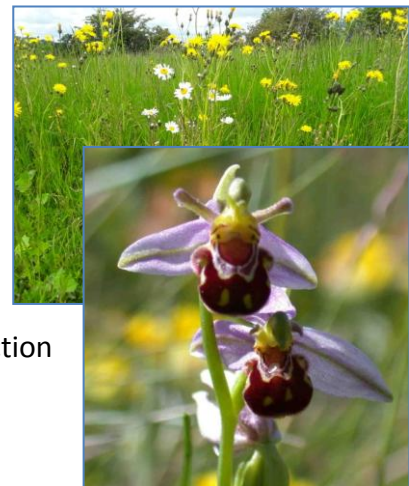


Common spotted orchid, County Hall Grounds. July 2019

##### **(ii) Dunmore Civic Amenity & Recycling Centre:**

The site is a former landfill, now capped, and currently a civic amenity facility. The predominant habitat is dry meadow grassland. Other habitats include dry calcareous grassland, wet grassland, woodland, hedges and ornamental planting.

The Environment Section is currently investigating long term uses for this site, and the habitat survey will be used to inform suitable uses, including protection of pollinators and their habitats.



Wildflowers, Dunmore Landfill

**Action 2: Identify and protect existing sources of food and shelter for pollinators on general council land**

The following areas were planted with pollinator friendly planting a number of years ago, and they continue to be maintained for pollinators:

- ✓ The Parks Department & staff at Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum maintain pollinator friendly planting at the Winter Garden, Upper Terrace and Walled Garden, Woodstock. Species include ox-eye daisy, marigold, primrose, wild angelica, wild carrot etc.



Woodstock Gardens

- ✓ Kilkenny Area Outdoor staff maintain the large pollinator friendly planting scheme at the Peace Park, Kilkenny City. Species include Mentha sp., Nepeta sp., Lavandula sp., Verbena bonariensis, Anemone hupehensis, Rudbeckia sp., Aster sp., Foeniculum vulgare.



Peace Park, Kilkenny City

- ✓ Kilkenny Area Outdoor staff maintain the perennial pollinator friendly planting at the Link Road Roundabout Hebron (N10). The area (650m<sup>2</sup>) includes a range of summer and autumn flowering herbaceous perennials chosen for pollinator benefits. The main species are Rudbeckia Goldstrum, Sedum spectabile 'Autumn Joy', Achillea, Marjoram, Oregano, Thymus.



Link Road Roundabout, N10

- ✓ Kilkenny Area Outdoor staff maintain the existing pollinator friendly beds at Canal Square river bank, Talbots Tower, and James Green.

## **B: ALTER THE FREQUENCY OF MOWING**

### ***Action 4: Create at least 5 meadows (one cut and lift per year)***

- ✓ The Parks Department is managing the following 3 areas with one cut and lift per year. It should be noted that the issue of disposing of the cuttings is a challenge, and we would welcome advice on this, including examples of how other local authorities are dealing with this.
- ✓ **Dukesmeadows** (4.8ha). Area made up of dredged river material following flood relief scheme. Variety of grassland and small copses of trees. Grass cut annually in September, cuttings removed. Accessible to public but under-used due to access through residential area.
- ✓ **Bishopsmeadows** (11.5ha). Upper area made up of dredged river material following flood relief scheme, lower area in floodplain. Grass cut annually in September, cuttings removed. Good access for public and very well used. Forms part of River Nore linear Park (North)
- ✓ **Pococke Valley** (0.7ha). A wet site in a large area of open space in a residential area. Difficult to cut frequently and also no need to do so. This was the first year leaving it uncut until September. Some issues raised by adjacent homeowners.

## **C: POLLINATOR FRIENDLY PLANTING**

### **Action 11: For new works ensure that 75% of ornamental planting is pollinator friendly**

- ✓ The Parks Department purchased a selection of pollinator friendly plants and bulbs for the Peace Park in Kilkenny City to augment existing planting, with funding from the Local Authority Biodiversity Action Grant.
- ✓ Kilkenny Area Outdoor staff planted pollinator friendly plants in the beds at the front of County Hall.



County Hall

- ✓ A new Biodiversity Community Garden was created by Thomastown Community Network in the Upper Paddock, Thomastown, and opened on June 8th. The park was designed by Mary Reynolds with an emphasis on pollinator friendly planting and management. The land was leased from Kilkenny County Council, and the Parks Department provided some funding under the 2019 Amenity Grants. <https://kclr96fm.com/events/opening-of-thomastown-biodiversity-community-garden/>

### **Action 13: Make some urban planters pollinator friendly**

- ✓ Kilkenny Area Outdoor staff planted 11 urban planters at Canal Square with pollinator friendly plants including Dahlia sp., Echinacea sp. Salvia sp., Gaura lindheimeri, Bidens sp., Salvia officinalis, Thymus vulgaris, Coreopsis sp., Marguerita sp., Tanacetum sp.



### **D: PROVIDE NESTING HABITATS**

#### **Action 16: Bare earth/sand banks for wild pollinator nesting**

- ✓ Cubs of 1st Kilkenny Scouting Troup created a “Bee Bank” on the south-facing embankment on Kilkenny’s ring-road near the Castlecomer round-about for International Bee Day (20<sup>th</sup> May 2019), guided by Lorcán Scott, Wildlife Officer Heritage Council. The Heritage Office provided “Managed for Wildlife Signs”.

### **E: REDUCE THE USE OF PESTICIDES**

#### **Action 19: Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides**

- ✓ The Kilkenny Area Office has eliminated the use of pesticides on the Rose Garden at County Hall and is using garlic spray instead.
- ✓ Kilkenny County Council Landscape Architect and the Heritage Officer gave a joint presentation to Strategic Policy Committee 5 (Environmental Protection, Water Services and Energy) on the use of Glyphosate on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb.
- ✓ The Parks Department organised a demonstration of a chemical free weed control system for all relevant staff (Nov 19<sup>th</sup>).

Note: The Council faces challenges in relation to this action, e.g. in managing the public perception of less tidy areas; increased staff resources required for manual weed control; the need for practical advice on suitable alternatives to chemical weed control.

### **F: RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF POLLINATORS WITHIN THE LOCAL AREA**

#### **Action 21: Build actions on pollinators into existing frameworks and initiatives**

- ✓ The Kilkenny County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024, co-ordinated by the Environment Section, adopted in Sept 2019, references the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and includes a number of specific actions to support pollinators. <https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Environment/Climate-Change/Climate-Change-Adaptation-Strategy-2019-2024/Climate-Change-Adaptation-Strategy.pdf>

- ✓ The Heritage Office commissioned a logo of the garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*), which was adopted by Kilkenny County Council to demonstrate our commitment to supporting pollinators. This is being made available for all sections to use in PR and communications.



- ✓ The October issue of “Kilkenny County Council Community Newsletter: Issue 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019” prepared by the Community Section and accessed by community groups and individuals throughout the county, has a pollinator theme.



- ✓ The St. Patricks Day Committee choose the theme “Bring Back the Bees” for the Kilkenny St. Patricks Day Parade 2019. Prizes for the best float from (a) a school, and (b) a community were provided by the Heritage Office. The prizes comprised a free visit from ecologist Dr. Fiona MacGowan to provide them with advice on how to make their school/community pollinator friendly. Mooneroe National School and the Filipino Community were the 2 winners. The Filipino Community kindly nominated their visit to the Sisters of Mercy residence, Talbots Inch.



“Bring Back the Bees” was the theme of the Kilkenny St. Patricks Day Parade 2019

- ✓ The Heritage Office supported the Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce bid to win the National Enterprise Towns Award (Aug 2019), meeting the judges to tell them about the Council’s pollinator programme and providing copies of “Businesses: actions to support pollinators” guidelines at an event in the Parade Tower.
- ✓ The Heritage Officer presented the Report on Pollinator Actions 2019 to each of the 4 Kilkenny County Council Municipal District Council’s in Q4.



Bernadette Roberts, Heritage Office, meeting NETA judges (26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2019)

- ✓ Thomastown Area Office is providing on-going support to Graiguenamanagh’s Men’s Shed on a bee-keeping project to encourage more bee-keeping in the area.
- ✓ The Heritage Office commissioned an ecologist to prepare a habitat report of Glenmore village for Glenmore Tidy Towns committee. The report includes recommendations to support pollinators, and advice on addressing the “Nature & Biodiversity” category in the national Tidy Towns competition.
- ✓ The Heritage Officer gave a presentation to the Thomastown-Callan Municipal District Council on the Council’s Pollinator Programme on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019.
- ✓ The Fairytale Festival, co-ordinated by the Environment Section of Kilkenny County Council and BEAT FM, at Woodstock Gardens and Arboretum (July 19<sup>th</sup>) had a pollinator theme, including workshops and bee themed displays.



Fairytale Festival at Woodstock

- ✓ A radio advert encouraging people to take simple actions to support pollinators was commissioned by the Heritage Office, and aired on local radio station KCLR from 13<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This was part of a series of heritage adverts co-funded by the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan Programme.
- ✓ The Heritage Officer promoted the work that the Council is undertaking to support pollinators on “*Ceol agus Comhra*” on Community Radio Kilkenny City (15<sup>th</sup> March).
- ✓ The Environment Section hosted a tent at the Iverk Agricultural Show, Piltown (approx. attendance of 40,000). Biodiversity and the All Ireland Pollinator Plan were the main themes. The keynote speaker was Hannah Hamilton who spoke on the importance of Biodiversity. A kids activity zone focused on biodiversity and All Ireland Pollinator literature was handed out along with biodiversity themed merchandise.



#### **Action 24: Promote & distribute pollinator friendly guidelines to other sectors locally.**

- ✓ The Heritage Office sent letters to the 9 Golf Clubs and Pitch and Putt Clubs in the County encouraging them to support pollinators, and provided copies of the “Pollinator Friendly Management of Golf Courses” guidelines. A press release re same was also issued to the local press (23<sup>rd</sup> Aug) <https://www.kilkennypeople.ie/news/kilkenny-news/473026/kilkenny-golf-courses-urged-to-help-our-pollinators.html>
- ✓ The Environment Section sent copies of the guidance document “Faith Communities: Actions to help pollinators” in letters to the successful recipients of the Kilkenny County Council Graveyard Grants Scheme 2019, along with a request that works should be undertaken in a pollinator friendly way. The application form will be revised in 2020 to include this as a condition of the grant.
- ✓ The Local Enterprise Office distributed 90 of the guidance documents “Businesses: actions to help pollinators” at a Business Women’s Network meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October.
- ✓ “Farmland: actions to help pollinators” brochures were distributed to visitors at the Kilkenny County Council stand at the Iverk Agricultural Show, 24<sup>th</sup> August.
- ✓ Keep Kilkenny Beautiful (Tidy Towns Group) hosts an annual awards evening inviting resident associations and businesses from Kilkenny City to celebrate the city achievements in the national competition. This year (29<sup>th</sup> October), the Environment Office had a biodiversity and pollinator information stand with pollinator information leaflets merchandise.



Cllr. Martin Brett, Mayor Kilkenny Municipal District, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick and Bernadette Maloney, Environmental Awareness Officer at the KKB Awards, Oct 2019.

- ✓ The Environment section notified all Kilkenny schools of the Community Environment Action Fund (formerly Agenda 21 grant), and provided them with a link to Kilkenny County Councils Publication “Biodiversity in Schools” to assist them to identify possible biodiversity projects that could be applied for under the fund. A high percentage of applications received were for pollinator and biodiversity projects. These will be announced later in 2019 and delivered in 2020.

#### **Action 25: Promote & distribute the Junior Pollinator Plan to schools**

- ✓ The Environment Awareness Officer disseminated copies of the Junior Pollinator Plan to schools participating in the Green Schools Programme.

- ✓ The Heritage Officer met with the grounds keeper and a teacher in Kilkenny College to provide advice and information, including copies of the Junior Pollinator Plan (June 10<sup>th</sup>).
- ✓ The Heritage Office provided 5 free Heritage in School visits to Gael Scoil Osraí, focusing on pollinators, co-funded by the Heritage Council and Creative Ireland (Creative Associates Partnership).

### Action 26: Facilitate or deliver training on pollinators

- ✓ The Heritage Officer gave 2 presentations to the Kilkenny Tidy Towns Network on the topic of supporting pollinators in towns and villages (27<sup>th</sup> Feb & 25<sup>th</sup> July).
- ✓ The Environmental Awareness Officer organised a talk by Catherine Keena, Countryside Management Specialist Teagasc for the Kilkenny Tidy Towns Network on 22<sup>nd</sup> October about making hedgerows fit for birds and bees, as part of national Hedgerow Week.

### Action 27: Fund a special pollinator award in the Tidy Towns competition

- ✓ Kilkenny County Council contributes €500 to the Local Authority Pollinator Award in the national Tidy Towns competition.
- ✓ The Heritage Officer chairs the national committee of Heritage Officers and Biodiversity Officers who co-ordinate the award in partnership with the NBDC.
- ✓ 5 towns and villages from County Kilkenny entered the Local Authority Pollinator Award in 2019 (Kilkenny City, Tullahought, Inistioge, Coon, Kells).
- ✓ Co. Kilkenny won 2 regional Local Authority Pollinator Awards (Kilkenny City won the Large town category; Tullahought won the small town category).



Members of Tullahought Tidy Towns, with Dearbhala Ledwidge, Heritage Officer; and Dr. Una Fitzpatrick, National Biodiversity Data Centre, at the National Tidy Towns Awards, The Helix, DCU.



Members of Keep Kilkenny Beautiful with Ian Gardner, Senior Engineer Kilkenny Area; Dearbhala Ledwidge, Heritage Officer; and Dr. Una Fitzpatrick, National Biodiversity Data Centre, at the National Tidy Towns Awards, The Helix, DCU.

- ✓ The Heritage Officer co-presented the Regional Local Authority Pollinator Awards with Mr. Patrick O’ Donovan T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, to Tullahought Tidy Towns and Keep Kilkenny Beautiful at the awards ceremony co-ordinated by the national Tidy Towns Unit, at Terryglas, Co. Tipperary on 25<sup>th</sup> November.



**Action 28: Promote and get involved in other pollinator related initiatives**

- ✓ The Heritage Office commissioned and purchased a wide range of pollinator materials to help raise awareness. These were distributed to Elected Representatives, County Council staff, communities, Tidy Towns Groups, Golf Clubs, Businesses, Schools, Graveyard Committees and other groups and individuals around the county. They were also disseminated at key public events such as St. Patricks Parade, the Fairytale Festival, and the Iverk Agricultural Show. The materials included the following:

- ✓ Merchandise featuring the County Council bee logo:

- Tee-shirts
- Badges
- Notebooks
- Pull-up banner



- ✓ Pollinator resources produced by the National Biodiversity Data Centres including advice brochures, posters and “Managed for Wildlife” This action was funded by the National Biodiversity Action Plan Local Authority Grants Scheme 2019.

- ✓ The Heritage Officer & Environmental Awareness Officer attended the launch of National Hedgerow Week at Teagasc, Kildalton Agriculture & Horticulture College (21<sup>st</sup> Oct). The message from Minister of State Andrew Doyle to farmers, contractors and local authorities is to manage hedges “fit for birds & bees”.



Minister Andrew Doyle TD, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, with staff from Teagasc, Kilkenny County Council & Waterford County Council at Kildalton College.

## **F: Tracking Progress**

### **Action 29: Log your “Actions for Pollinators” on the mapping system**

- ✓ Council land which is being managed for pollinators is currently being mapped onto the Actions for Pollinators mapping system.
- ✓ The Council actively encourages Tidy Towns groups, schools etc to map land which they are managing for pollinators onto the Actions for Pollinators mapping system.

### **Conclusions & Recommendations**

Kilkenny County Council has delivered a significant number and range of projects in 2019 in support of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. This represents a successful start to Kilkenny County Council’s Pollinator Programme.

As noted in the report, the Council faces a number of challenges in implementing some of the actions, specifically the disposal of the increased volume of grass in areas which are being managed under the one-cut-and-lift regime, and also issues arising from the reduction in the use of pesticides, e.g suitable alternatives; the increased staff resources associated with manual weed control; and changes in public perception of less “tidiness”. We would welcome advice from the National Biodiversity Data Centre and other local authorities.

Notwithstanding this challenge, there is a commitment throughout Kilkenny County Council to seek to build on and enhance our Pollinator Programme in 2020 and beyond.

**Dearbhala Ledwidge, Heritage Officer, Kilkenny County Council**

**Dec 2019**