

Kilkenny County Council Pollinator Programme 2022

Introduction

The following report collated by the Heritage Office is a summary of the actions undertaken by various departments across Kilkenny County Council in 2022 to support pollinators, and to meet our commitments as partners with the [All-Ireland Pollinator Plan](#). Each relevant section in the Council was contacted in August and requested to supply information on the pollinator actions which they had undertaken in 2022. Any further information supplied after this date can be added later as required.

The actions undertaken included planting, reducing mowing and pesticide use, managing habitats, and raising awareness. They also fall under the heading of Nature-based Solutions which help address climate action. A summary version of this report will be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre, as required as a condition of being a project partner with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Observations

There has been very good support from sections throughout Kilkenny County Council for the pollinator programme in 2022, including from Municipal District Councils, Heritage, Parks, Environmental Awareness Office and Community; and also from Tidy Towns groups. Some challenges have been identified by staff on which advice and support would be welcome including; staff resources; alternatives to pesticide use; requirement to change contractors contracts; disposal of grass cuttings. The high temperatures and low rainfall in summer 2022 were also a challenge for maintaining some planted areas.

Actions Undertaken (by County Council Section)

Heritage Office

Supporting Tidy Towns: Actively supported Tidy Towns groups in Co. Kilkenny to help pollinators.

- ✓ Contacted all Tidy Towns groups in the county to see what assistance would be most useful to them. Having identified that they needed help uploading maps and data to the national **“Actions for Pollinators” Map**, the heritage office collated their data, maps and photos and uploaded it for them. (see Appendix 1: Tidy Towns Pollinator Actions Report)
- ✓ The Heritage Officer chaired the **Local Authority Tidy Towns Pollinator Award** committee, in partnership with Heritage Officers and the NBDC. A total of 56 Tidy Towns groups entered the award nationally in 2022, including 5 towns/villages in Co. Kilkenny (Coon, Inistioge, Kells, Thomastown, Tullahought). Results due October 2022.

Provided 2,300 free pollinator resources to the public: The Heritage Office purchased and sent 2,300 AIPP pollinator booklets and signs, along with Kilkenny County council pollinator badges and totes to communities, sports clubs, schools, individuals, graveyard groups, businesses, and County Council staff and elected representatives. Co-funded by the Heritage Office and the National Biodiversity Action Plan Grant 2022.

Pledge your Garden for Pollinators Campaign: The Heritage Office ran an awareness campaign (1st-14th April) encouraging people to take simple actions in their gardens and to pledge their gardens for pollinators. This included; 180 adverts across three local radio stations; ½ page adverts in two local newspapers; and a social media campaign. Free advice packs were posted to gardening clubs and gardeners. The campaign was co-funded by the Heritage Council’s County Heritage Plan Programme.

Pollinators and Climate Action – webinar series

The Kilkenny Heritage Office jointly a series of 4 webinars with case studies of local authority heritage projects which support climate action, and delivered a presentation on the Kilkenny Pollinator Programme and the role it plays in supporting climate action. Watch back the webinars <https://kilkennyheritage.ie/2022/02/heritage-and-biodiversity-actions-for-climate-webinar-series/>

Community Section

The **Community Section** included a pollinator awareness campaign into the [2022 Kilkenny County Council grants booklet](#) 2022 to encourage the public to incorporate pollinator actions in applications to Council grant schemes.



Kilkenny County Council grants booklet 2022

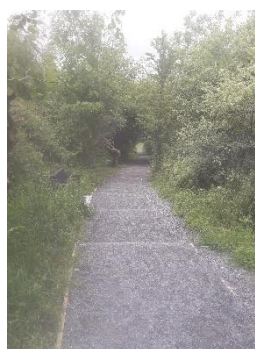
Environmental Awareness Office

The **Environmental Awareness Office** commissioned biodiversity and pollinator workshops with St. John's Senior School and Castlecomer Community School in April/May; and with 6 primary schools and one secondary school in Autumn 2022/Spring 2023. The workshops were co-funded with by the Heritage Office.



Municipal District of Piltown

- ✓ **Minimised the use of pesticides** in footpath and pavement maintenance. Pesticides now only used to treat invasive or noxious weeds such as Japanese knotweed and ragwort.
- ✓ **Reduced mowing frequency** on certain roundabouts and verges.
- ✓ **Poulansy Waterfall Car Park and Visitor Trail:**
 - Minimised disturbance and removal of habitats on existing trail including hedgerows and boundary stone/sod ditches to protect wildlife corridors, fauna and flora
 - Planting in February included over 700 native trees (hazel, alder, elder, willow and rose, honeysuckle) and 215m of double hedgerow comprising approximately 600 plants comprising goat willow, holly, hawthorn and blackthorn.
- ✓ **Newrath Anti-Dumping Initiative:** Following the removal of dumped waste in an unused area of ground in Newrath, the area was planted in January with willow to reinforce natural tree cover adjacent to the River Suir salt marshes.



Municipal District of Callan-Thomastown

- ✓ **Reduced mowing at Abbey Meadows & Moat Field Callan:** 2 meadows (c. 12 acres), cut once/year in August/September
- ✓ **Callan Area Office:** Section of Area Office lawn left un-cut for pollinators
- ✓ **Pesticides:** Decision made this year to stop all spraying of Herbicide in **Callan** as a trial with Tidy Towns.
- ✓ **Reduced mowing at Graiguenamanagh** by-pass: grass only cut 1 metre beside paths and road, the rest of the area is left as wild, cut in late August /September.
- ✓ **Fairgreen Car-park Graiguenamanagh:** bank and area around playground left wild for pollinators, cut once a year, again, 1m strip cut beside footpaths.
- ✓ **Thomastown, Biodiversity Garden** beside Quay Car-park along with area along Quay left wild for pollinators

Municipal District of Kilkenny

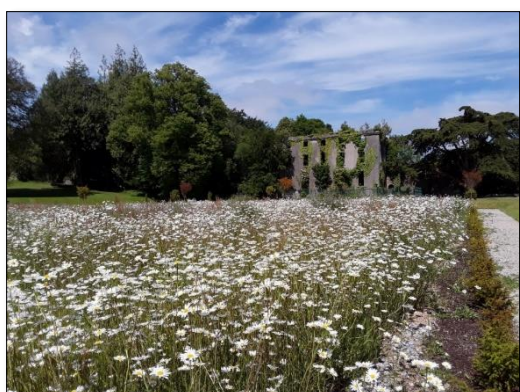
- ✓ Planted and maintained 7 **roundabouts on the Ring Road** with pollinator friendly planting
- ✓ **Planted apple trees** at the start of the Lacken Walk/rear of Maudlin Street
- ✓ Sowed a **wildflower area** at the rear of 76/77 John St.
- ✓ Maintained the pollinator planting at **Butler Gallery**



Parks Department

Woodstock Estate

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.



Ox-eye daisies in full bloom in the summer sunshine at Woodstock Gardens

As part of the restoration of the Victorian Pathways down to Brownsford stream and waterfall, significant removal of the invasive Cherry Laurel was undertaken within the woodland. This clearance was quite dramatic and now allows light to reach the forest floor for the first time in decades, which will allow for natural regeneration. To speed up this regeneration process

are large quantity of native pollinator friendly shrubs and trees, species such as Blackthorn, Guelder Rose, Spindle, Oak and Hazel, were planted. These species will not only help suppress the regrowth of the Laurel they will also provide a vital source of food for our pollinators, particularly in spring when bees emerge from hibernation. The Woodstock Waterfall Loop Walk was officially opened in May 2022.

The use of pesticides in Woodstock Garden has reduced by up to 80% over recent years and staff have changed the way they deploy same so as to minimise any negative impacts to bees and insects, changes in practices include only spraying in early morning when insects are least active.

*Wild garlic flourishing under the trees
in the arboretum at Woodstock*



Biodiversity Ferrybank Co Kilkenny, Ferrybank Neighbourhood park

The Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park is a recent addition to the amenity offering of South Kilkenny. The park, extending to c.5 acres, incorporates a large playground, walkways, planted flowerbeds and wild meadows.

To encourage and support pollinators approximately 20% of the site is managed as a wild meadow which is only cut once a year in the autumn with the grass cutting removed to encourage native wildflowers and weeds.

In May of this year a new wildflower area was added within the Park. This area extends to 100sq.m and was planted with a seed mix to support butterflies and bees. This initiative complements the existing 200sq.m flowerbed which is jammed packed with beneficial pollinator plants, such as Verbena, Cat Mint and Lavender.



In addition to the above, a significant number of pollinator friendly trees have been planted in the Park which we will add to over the coming years.

Pollinator Friendly Planting Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park

Changes in mowing regime

Attitudes towards grass cutting is changing amongst the population and whilst some still prefer the traditional mown lawn it is critical that Local Authorities continue to lead by example and promote the message about the importance of leaving and creating space for pollinators.

To this end, we have made significant changes to our grass cutting regime and where possible traditional fortnightly cycles of mowing grass short is being replaced with longer mowing cycles of six

weeks to encourage pollinators. These pollinator areas are mainly on embankments, wide road verges and in bigger residential areas with large greens, the latter is achievable with buy-in and support from local resident committees and Tidy Towns etc. Signage and media campaigns to inform the public on the reasoning behind these changing practices continues to play an important role in educating and obtaining buy-in for this necessary shift in policy.

The above changes are already yielding very positive dividends with an abundance of Dandelions and Daisies on display in early summer, with locations such as the Kilkenny Ring Road and Graiguenamanagh Relief Road looking particularly good.



Graiguenamanagh Relief Road early summer 2022

The Parks Department is also managing the following areas under a one cut and lift per year regime:

- ✓ **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, and **cuttings** removed.
- ✓ **Bishopmeadows** (11.5ha). Upper area made up of dredged river material following flood relief scheme, lower area in floodplain. Grass cut annually in September with 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.
- ✓ **Melville Heights & Glendine Woods**, are the newest residential areas, who signed up this year, to our one cut per year regime, for larges area of the respective open green spaces.

Flora and Fauna awareness signage

We feel very strongly about providing educational signage on particular amenity spaces in terms of local history, flora and fauna. We believe this provides the visitor with a richer experience and greater appreciation of the natural environment. To this end, were appropriate, funding applications for the development of amenity spaces, in the main, include for the provision for site specific flora and fauna signage as same is seen as an integral part of the amenity space or trail offering.



Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed

A collaboration project between the Project Office, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and community, provided for the transformation of a disused toilet block on the Convent Road in Graiguenamanagh into a very attractive Men's Shed workshop. The works also included hard and soft landscaping improvements to the Health Centre and Library forecourt to the rear of the building. The species of plant and bulbs used were selected for their beneficial properties for pollinators. In addition, a number of the Men's Shed members are keen beekeepers and were delighted when advised that a new green living roof would be installed on the building to encourage pollinators as part of the project. The building was officially opened in May this year.



Local Biodiversity Action Fund

In conjunction with the Heritage Office, the Parks Section applied for funding under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund for invasive species control in both Silaire Wood and Woodstock Gardens. This builds on the actions set out in the management plans for invasive species prepared in 2021 with assistance from the same fund. The application was successful and will allow for the purchase of a flail to control invasive Laurel growth and to hire in contractors to assist in cutting and mulching this dominant shrub within Woodstock Gardens. The funding awarded for Silaire Woods in Graiguenamanagh facilitated the pulling of large stands of Himalayan Balsam along the River Barrow section of the wood. Himalayan Balsam is a significant issue on the River Barrow having totally colonised many sections of river bank. The timing to pull the plant is key as same needs to commence immediately prior to the plant flowering and going to seed. The seeds are dispersed by wind and water on the river's edge and colonise the river bank where they set seed. Working groups are beginning to gather in towns in Carlow and Kilkenny to 'Balsam bash' in an effort to control the plant.

A co-ordinated approach is needed due to the prolific nature of the plant to set seed; thus, one section cannot be treated in isolation.



Volunteers from Graiguenamanagh Canoe Club helping at the Balsam bash in Silaire Wood in June 2022

Dearbhala Ledwidge
Heritage Officer
Aug 2022

APPENDIX 1:



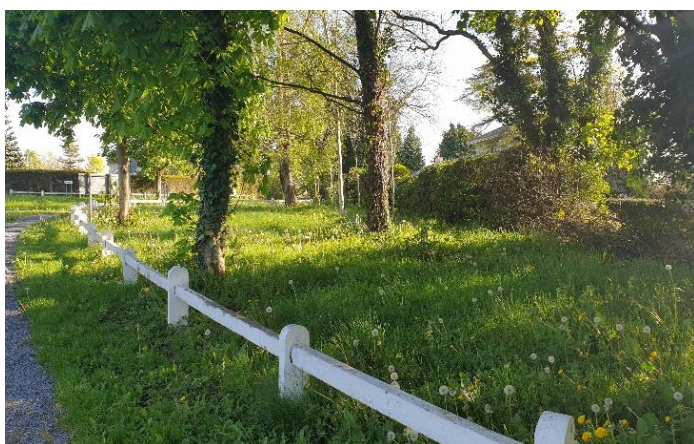
Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh



Tidy Town Groups Pollinator Actions, Co. Kilkenny, 2022 (Report):

The Heritage Office of Kilkenny County Council gathered information on pollinator actions undertaken by different Tidy Town/ community groups across Kilkenny in 2022. The information was then logged and mapped onto the national Pollinator Actions Map. We created a simple 'Actions for Pollinators in Co. Kilkenny' survey that was sent out to 22 local groups. The purpose of this survey was to highlight the different actions undertaken by Tidy Town groups across Kilkenny and contribute more data to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. The logged information also benefits Tidy Town groups as it supports their future Tidy Town applications and helps groups obtain points in to the Local Authority Pollinator Award. **Inistioge, Mooncoin, Bennettsbridge, Ballyragget, Coon Tidy Towns** and **Keep Kilkenny Beautiful** were groups that sent back information to be mapped.

Bennettsbridge Tidy Towns enabled grassed areas to develop by reducing mowing regimes and not cutting out self- seeded native flowers:



Regenerated grassed area with native self- seeded wild flowers – Bennettsbridge Tidy Towns

Inistioge Tidy Towns conducted pollinator friendly planting (verbena bonariensis, scabious, Japanese anemone, lady's mantle, lavender and cat mint) and made active efforts to not use pesticides. The old graveyard in Inistioge proved to be a challenge to maintain due to its stony soil and uneven surface – to combat this the Tidy Towns group sowed a grass mix that requires an annual trimming. Over a four-year period, they were able to see the benefits without using weedkiller – the graveyard is now carpeted by grass with two pollinator friendly planted areas:



Cat mint planting



Inistioge graveyard photographed 31.05.2022

Coon Tidy Towns planted an area (below Priests House) and included a Bee Garden and Bee Hotel. They also introduced Swift Boxes at the local Creamery:



Swift boxes – Coon Tidy Towns



Bee garden and hotel - Coon Tidy Towns

Mooncoin Tidy Towns participated in a pollinator friendly planting project in conjunction with the Green Schools Committee from Scoil Mhuire, Mooncoin. The Junior Pollinator Plan was also promoted in this action. Pollinator friendly plants such as bidens pink princess, fuchsia halo, snapdragon and antirinum sonnet mixed were potted.



Pollinator friendly planting – Mooncoin Tidy Towns and the Green Schools Committee from Scoil Mhuire, Mooncoin.

Keep Kilkenny Beautiful took on many actions as part of the Kilkenny Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The removal of invasive species from river banks in Kilkenny City was undertaken in collaboration with Nore Vision. KKB volunteers participated in an invasive species training and identification course in 2021. As a result of their work, the river banks have improved significantly in biodiversity.



Young balsam collected – volunteers hung the balsam in bundles to dry out, die and signal to other pickers where removal was undertaken. Second photo by KKB portrays the improvement of the Nore banks due to removal of invasive plants such as balsam and giant hogweed.

Ballyragget Tidy Towns

Ballyragget Tidy Towns reduced mowing to enable roadside verges to prosper in their natural habitats. They also planted pollinator friendly plants throughout different parts of the village (e.g. *Cirsium horridulum*, cardinal flower, lavender).



Roadside verges natural habitat



Sample of pollinator planting, Ballyragget.

The Tidy Town groups who responded were happy to get involved with this initiative and will remain in touch to provide updates on future pollinator action projects. We, in the Heritage Office, are aware that Tidy Town Groups undertake a significant amount of work and actions in their local areas. We wanted to help the Tidy Town groups in Kilkenny by gathering the data on our survey and uploading it to the National Pollinator Map. To promote further communications on pollinator actions the Heritage Office intend to get in touch with all Tidy Town Groups across the County and update our communication/ mailing list. This will be done by publicising awareness on our social media page and through word of mouth.

Kilkenny County Council is a partner with the All- Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021- 2025, an initiative of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Special thank you to all Tidy Town groups that participated.

Laura Murphy,
Clerical Officer,
Heritage Office,
Kilkenny County Council.