



Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan

2025-2030



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Inside Cover

Logos etc?

Acknowledgement to the HC/BO Programme?

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Contents

Welcome Page	4
Welcome Page	5
Introduction	6
Vision.....	7
Biodiversity – What is it and why is it important?	8
Context of the Plan	9
Consultation at pre-draft stage.....	12
Offaly BAP 2025 – 2030 (Working) Strategic Objectives	14
Biodiversity in Offaly (Habitats and Biodiversity)	15
Designated Sites for Nature	15
Natura 2000 Sites (European Sites)	15
Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas	18
Other Sites for Environmental and Ecological Protection	21
Locally Important Sites.....	22
Threats to biodiversity in Offaly.....	24
Habitat loss & Fragmentation	24
Climate Change	24
Alien Invasive Species	25
Pollution.....	25
Work So Far	27
Sustainable Development Goals.....	30
Objectives and Actions.....	33
Surveys and Monitoring.....	33
Actions for Biodiversity	34
Invasive Alien Species (AIS)	35
Building Resilience	35
Awareness and Engagement.....	36
Appendix One: NBAP Actions relevant for local authorities.....	37
What next?.....	0
Implementing the plan.....	0
Resourcing the plan	0
Monitoring success	0
Acknowledgments.....	1
Further Reading	2

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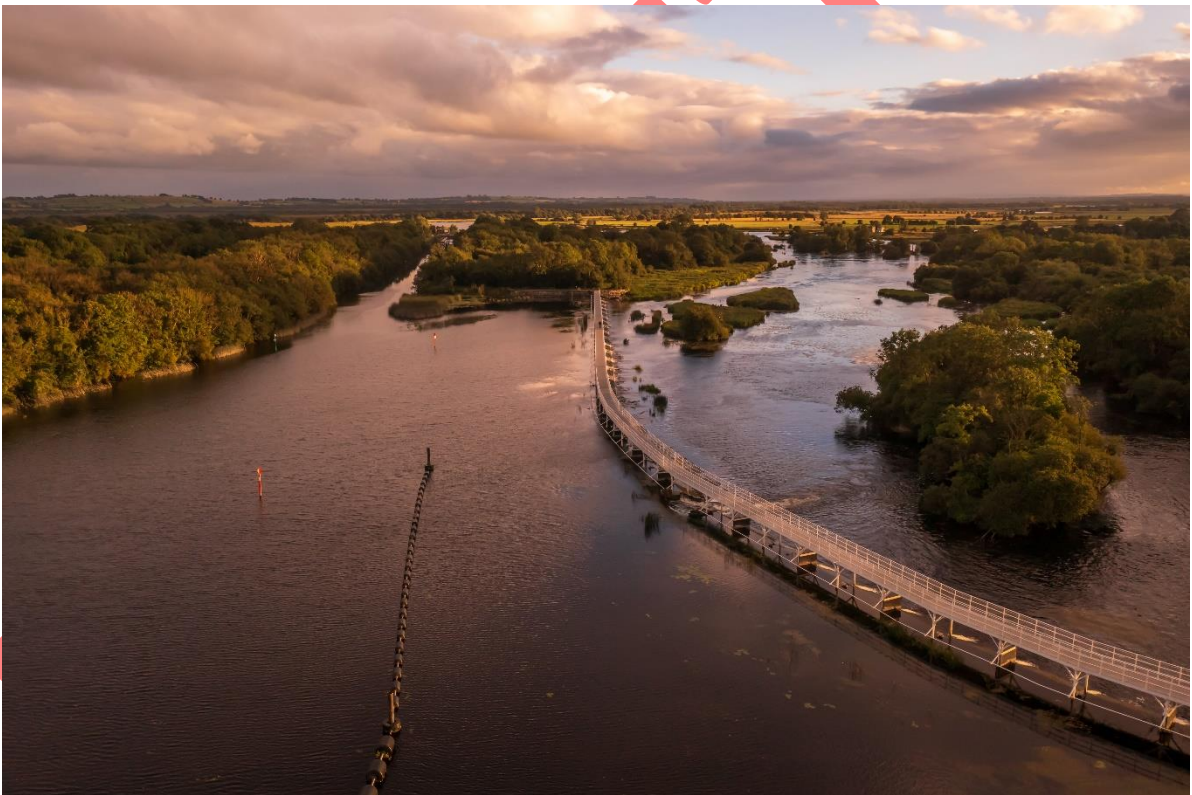


Figure 1: River Shannon at Meelick Weir looking into County Offaly - Paul Moore



Figure 2: Slieve Bloom valley in autumn – Paul Moore

Introduction

The Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030 sets out the role of Offaly County Council working in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver the actions listed over the 5-year lifespan of the plan. This is the first stand-alone Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for Offaly, with previous biodiversity objectives included in the five [Offaly Heritage Plans](#). This plan is written in the context of the [4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030](#). The plan was developed under the guidance of **The Heritage Council**, to which the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme is intrinsically linked. This plan was carefully considered in the context of the [Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027](#) and other relevant local and regional plans such as the [Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029](#). In accordance with the commitments set out in the [Ireland's Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024](#) the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan (Offaly BAP) has been assessed for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) impact at SDG target level, and will progress towards meeting 12 out of the 17 SDG's.

The Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan was developed through the work of the **Offaly Biodiversity Working Group** (BWG) which was created under the **Offaly Heritage Forum** for this purpose. The BWG brought together local and national experts on a myriad of subject's form, species, habitats, conservation, planning, community and policy. Additionally, representatives from across the Offaly County Council sections participated greatly to form the actions and objectives contained. Finally, the submission made by individuals, groups, organisations and agencies during the two consultation phases were clear and insightful and helped form the actions of the plan.



Figure 3: Barn Owl - Declan Franks (Offaly Barn Owl Project)

Vision

To build on the past work of Offaly County Council and by communities across the county to protect and enhance our natural areas to benefit biodiversity and people. To do this we will work with communities, farmers and landowners, state bodies, business and anyone who possesses similar values. We want to protect the nature on our doorsteps, in the wider countryside and in the wilder more remote parts of the county. Nature should be accessible to all, and we need biodiversity rich sites close to where people live, but we also need to give our habitats and native species space where it is required for them to thrive, by managing our existing habitats and creating new ones. Our work will ensure we build climate resilience into our plans and projects to ensure our native flora and fauna are protected by the effects of climate change.



Figure 4: Charleville Wood in bloom - Paul Moore

Biodiversity – What is it and why is it important?

The term “Biodiversity” is the combination of two words, “biological” and “diversity”, and it is used to refer to the variety of all living things in a particular place. However, it is important to remember that biodiversity is much more than just the number of different plants or animals, and is best understood when divided into its four separate levels as follows:

1. *Species Diversity*: refers to the number of different types of plants, animals, fungi, bacteria and other living organisms, both wild and domesticated.
2. *Genetic Diversity*: refers to the unique DNA which an individual plant or animal possesses. Genetic diversity is essential for populations of different species to remain healthy and functional.
3. *Habitat Diversity*: refers to the ‘home’ of different species, and provides its specific requirements in terms of food, shelter and a means of reproduction.
4. *Ecosystems Diversity*: refers to the relationships between different species, their habitats, food-webs, and their local non-living environment (geology, hydrology and micro-climate).

Ecosystem diversity is the most important of these, as it recognises that a species, or a habitat, does not exist independently of its surroundings. Therefore, in order to protect an individual species or habitat, appropriate conservation measures must be extended to the community and physical environment in which it exists. As such, in the context of biodiversity conservation, it is vital that ecosystems diversity is understood, promoted and protected.

The conservation of biodiversity forms part of the United Nation’s SDG’s. In a perfect world, biodiversity would be protected for its own sake, but in the real world, biodiversity is generally distilled into the services it can provide for society. These “Ecosystem Services” can be broken down into regulating services, provisioning services, supporting services, and cultural services, and they have become increasingly recognised and valued as a result of our increasing awareness of climate change and biodiversity loss, and the impacts these are having both globally and locally.

1. *Provisioning Services*: Drinking Water, Food, Medicine, Clothing Textiles, Shelter Materials (timber, stone), Fuels.
2. *Regulating Services*: Water Flow (flood management and drainage), Water Purification, Air Quality, Pollination, Organic Matter Decomposition, Carbon Storage.
3. *Supporting Services*: Soil Creation, Nutrient Cycling, Photosynthesis, Water Cycle.
4. *Cultural Services*: Folklore and Heritage, Religious and Spiritual, Artistic and Aesthetic, Knowledge and Social Relationships

Context of the Plan

What is a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP)

The LABAP is designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at the local authority level. It outlines the objectives, strategies, and actions needed to protect and enhance biodiversity within respective local authority areas.

The plan is developed in the context of both national and international biodiversity commitments as well as regional and local policies, priorities and local consultation and is aligned with existing environmental policies and legislation. A Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan provides the context for the local authority to work with and support local communities, agencies, NGOs and landowners to develop projects to record and conserve their local biodiversity within a regional and national context.

Up until 2024, actions for biodiversity have been incorporated in the Offaly Heritage Plans. The Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-2027 looked forward to the appointment of the biodiversity officer and stated that the plan will be revisited and expanded with their arrival. Now with a full-time biodiversity officer in place since March 2023; increased financial and staff resources and focus on the biodiversity crisis, a more in-depth plan is being rolled-out.

Under the actions of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, it is a requirement for all government departments and local authorities to have Biodiversity Action Plans in place by the end of 2026. With this target to meet, Offaly County Council undertook the process in 2024 to set out its plan for the 5-year period between 2025 and 2030.

Context of the LABAP

The [4th National Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (NBAP) was published on 25 January 2024. It is the national plan setting out the high-level strategic objectives for government to action and achieve over the period of the plan (2023 – 2030).

National Biodiversity Action Plan - Overall Strategic Objectives

1. Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
2. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
3. Secure Nature's Contribution to People
4. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
5. Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

Of the 195 actions listed under the 5 strategic objectives, 23 actions from 5 strategic objectives are deemed the responsibility of our local authorities. These actions are listed on Table 13 – [NBAP Actions relevant to local authorities](#) in the Appendix One.

LABAP Development Stages

A LABAP is developed over a series of stages to ensure it fulfils its brief. For example, a Biodiversity Working Group was formed to guide and steer the process. In addition, consultation with the public and other appropriate stakeholders must take place at both pre-draft and draft stages. The Plan also aligns with other national, regional and local policies such as the County Development Plan, which all takes time to consider and carryout. An indicative timeline with key stages is illustrated below as set out by the Heritage Council in their guidelines for the preparation of the LABAPs.

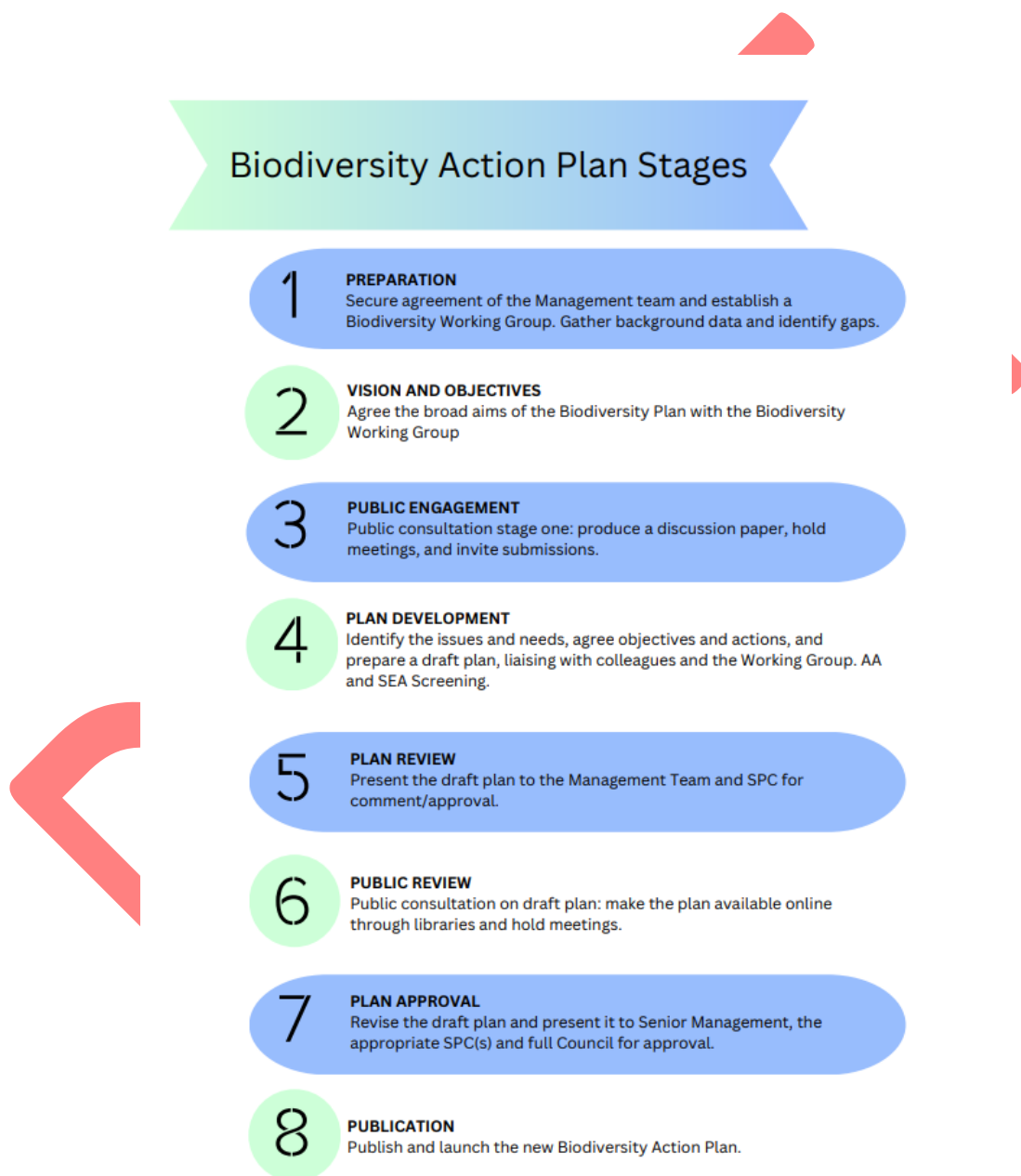


Figure 5: Indicative LABAP timeline - The Heritage Council

Offaly Biodiversity Working Group

The establishment of a Biodiversity Working Group is a pivotal step in the development and implementation of a LABAP. The primary role of this working group is to provide guidance and expertise throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring and review phases of the LABAP.

Responsibilities include reviewing existing biodiversity data, identifying key conservation priorities, recommending strategies and actions, and monitoring the progress of the LABAP's implementation. The working group also serves as a liaison between the Local Authority and various key stakeholders, ensuring that the plan is both comprehensive and community backed.

Offaly Biodiversity Working Group Members

Brian Caffrey – BirdWatch Ireland, Head of Surveys and Monitoring

Caroline Lalor – FarmPeat, Project Manager/Ecologist

Cathal Flood/Basil Mannion - LAWPRO

Colm Malone – NPWS Conservation Ranger

Fiona Devery – Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland - Offaly County Recorder

George Smith – Bryophyte recorder for Offaly and Ecologist (Blackthorn Ecology)

James Condrón – Offaly County Council A/Senior Executive Planner

Pat Foley – Offaly PPN Rep (environment)/Offaly Heritage Forum

Ricky Whelan – Offaly County Council Biodiversity Officer



Figure 6: Members of the Offaly Biodiversity Working Group L to R: James Condrón, Brian Caffrey, Fiona Devery, Ricky Whelan, Caroline Lalor, George Smith and Pat Foley - Ricky Whelan

Consultation at pre-draft stage

Extensive consultation took place during the Offaly BAP pre-draft stage. Public consultation took place over the course of six weeks between Monday, March 11th and Wednesday, April 24th, 2024. A range of meetings and events were arranged and promoted via print, broadcast and social media. A full list of consultative measures is listed in Table 1 below. Further to public consultation, key stakeholders such as the environmental NGOs, the IFA, Bord Na Móna, Coillte and others were invited to make submissions. Finally, internal engagement within Offaly County Council took place via council meetings, Special Policy Committee Meetings (SPCs), cross-departmental meetings and with management.

Table 1: Consultation efforts during the Offaly BAP pre-draft phase

Consultation Type (Pre-draft stage)	Number Completed	Description
Public (in person)	10	Public walk-in, group meetings, events
Offaly County Council Internal	9	Council meetings, MD meetings, Strategic Policy Committees, Think-Ins
Public (online)	1	Online consultation meeting
Media - Print/Broadcast/Online	4	Midlands Radio 103 - Let's Go Green, press release publications (local print + online media)
Biodiversity Working Group	3	Scheduled meetings (February, May, July)
Heritage Forum	1	May meeting
Social Media Campaign Posts	15	Various - Offaly County Council social media platforms

All submissions received during the consultation period were acknowledged, filed and considered by the Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) at its 2nd meeting held on May 1st, 2024. Suggestions that met the criteria have been integrated into the list of action found on Table 12 in the [Objectives and Actions](#) section of this plan.



Figure 7: Ricky Whelan OCC Biodiversity Officer, XX, XX, Fiona Devery, Ekaterina Koneva, Bernie Finneran, Adrian Haines and XX at the Birr MD Public-Walk-In event in April 2024 - Offaly County Council

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Offaly BAP 2025 – 2030 (Working) Strategic Objectives

The Offaly Biodiversity Group is a working group of the Offaly Heritage Forum and met for the first time in February 2024 and decided on a working list of key strategic objectives to be included in the Offaly LABAP. They are...

1. Surveys + Monitoring
2. Action for Biodiversity
3. Alien Invasive Species
4. Building Resilience
5. Awareness + Engagement

Strategic Objectives

Surveys + Monitoring

Actions under this objective will aim to help identify the condition of habitats and the diversity and extent of our plant and wildlife populations. It is vital that we survey these groups and monitor their condition over time. These surveys help us to identify key priority areas for action and how efforts and resources should be directed over the life of the plan. For example, past actions delivered under the Offaly Heritage Plans have included County Swift Surveys which have resulted in interventions and direct conservation action for Swifts in Offaly.

Actions for Biodiversity

Actions included under this objective will relate to direct and physical interventions and projects to increase, improve and benefit our habitats, flora and fauna within the county. The Tullamore Living River project and the Syngesfield Demesne project in the Birr area are examples of the type of direct action that can be taken to increase habitats and benefit biodiversity in the county.

Alien Invasive Species (AIS)

Actions here will link directly to national policy and work to identify and eradicate Alien Invasive Species. For example, Offaly County Council has an ongoing and successful Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) which was identified as a problem species in 2009. Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was identified as a problem on the Camcor River in 2017, works to reduce and monitor its distribution are ongoing. Because of the threat of new or previously unrecorded Alien Invasive Species (AIS) to the flora and fauna of the county we need to keep this objective and related actions to the fore front of our plans.

Building Resilience

Actions here will refer to futureproofing our approach to making our habitats and conservation projects climate resilient in terms of changing weather patterns, more frequent flooding events and wildfires being relevant examples. These actions together with the actions listed in the [Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029](#) will be vital in conserving the habitats and species here in Offaly.

Awareness + Engagement

Actions under this objective focus on building awareness of environmental topics and biodiversity across the county by engaging with communities, groups and key stakeholders. This will include sharing the joy of biodiversity, recording what is in your area as well as awareness of the threats and issues affecting wildlife and wild places and how we can all be involved in the solutions. Actions might include, the hosting of events, conducting training and upskilling events for community groups,

citizen science initiatives and promoting schools' biodiversity programmes such as the green flag initiatives.

Biodiversity in Offaly (Habitats and Biodiversity)

Offaly is rich in biodiversity and contains many habitats and perhaps is best known for its bogs. These bogs dominate the country's landscape, but other important biodiversity sites help complete the overall mosaic, from the eskers to the Shannon Callows and the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Many of these important areas are protected under national and European legislation and are detailed below. Between them they host protected plants and animals and without these key sites we couldn't boast the huge diversity of native flora and fauna that calls County Offaly home. These sites are tremendously important for biodiversity but are afforded certain protections due to their designations. This is not to undervalue the non-designated areas in our county, the area we might refer to as the wider countryside, includes farmland, cutaway bog, rivers, hedgerows and a suite of other habitats that are home to the bulk of the county's plants and animals. Our wider countryside must also be respected, managed and enhanced to protect the nature it contains.

Designated Sites for Nature

There are a number of designations which offer protection or require that particular areas of our natural heritage are managed. These are set out in the [Offaly County Development Plan 2021 - 2027](#) and are set out here for context.

These include:

- Natura 2000 sites - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)
- Other sites for environmental or ecological protection such as Wildlife Sites (including Statutory Nature Reserves), Ramsar Sites, Flora Protection Order Sites, Wildfowl Sanctuaries, Biogenetic Reserves and Sites designated for the protection of plant species and habitats.

Natura 2000 Sites (European Sites)

Both Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas form part of the 'Natura 2000' network of sites throughout Europe, also known as European sites. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are listed in Annex I (habitats) and Annex II (species – not birds) of the EU Habitats Directive have been selected because they support habitats and plant and animal species that are rare or threatened in Europe and require particular measures, including the designation of protected sites, to conserve them. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which were established under Annex 1 of the Birds Directive, have been selected because they support populations of birds of particular species that are rare or threatened in Europe and require particular measures, including the designation of protected areas to conserve them. The Birds Directive also recognises that habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats to the conservation of wild birds and therefore

places great emphasis on the protection of habitats, such as wetland landscapes, for endangered as well as regularly occurring migratory species.

Table 2: Special Areas of Conservation in County Offaly

Site Name	Site Code
All Saints Bog and Esker SAC	000566
Charleville Wood SAC	000571
Clara Bog SAC	000572
Clonaslee Eskers and Derry Bog SAC	000859
Ferbane Bog SAC	000575
Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC	000576
Island Fen SAC	002236
Lisduff Fen SAC	002147
Mongan Bog SAC	000580
Moyclare Bog SAC	000581
Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC	001776
Raheenmore Bog SAC	000582
Ridge Road, Southwest of Rapemills SAC	000919
River Barrow and River Nore SAC	002162
River Shannon Callows SAC	000216
Sharavogue Bog SAC	000585
Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC	000412
The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC	000925

Table 3: Special Protection Areas in County Offaly

Site Name	Site Code
All Saints Bog SPA	004103
Dovegrove Callows SPA	004137
Middle Shannon Callows SPA	004096
Mongan Bog SPA	004017
River Little Brosna Callows SPA	004086
Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA	004160

It is a requirement under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), for a County Development Plan to include objectives for the conservation and protection of Natura 2000 sites (European sites) and other sites. A Planning Authority must have regard to any European Site when making a decision in relation to a plan or project. All plans or projects, unless they are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site, are required to be subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment, to determine if they are likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, in view of the site's conservation objectives, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

A project or plan may only proceed if it can be concluded on the basis of Appropriate Assessment that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. If adverse effects are likely, or in cases of doubt, then derogation under Article 6 (4) shall apply, but only in cases of imperative reasons of overriding public interest or based on human health or public safety if it relates to a priority habitat or species.

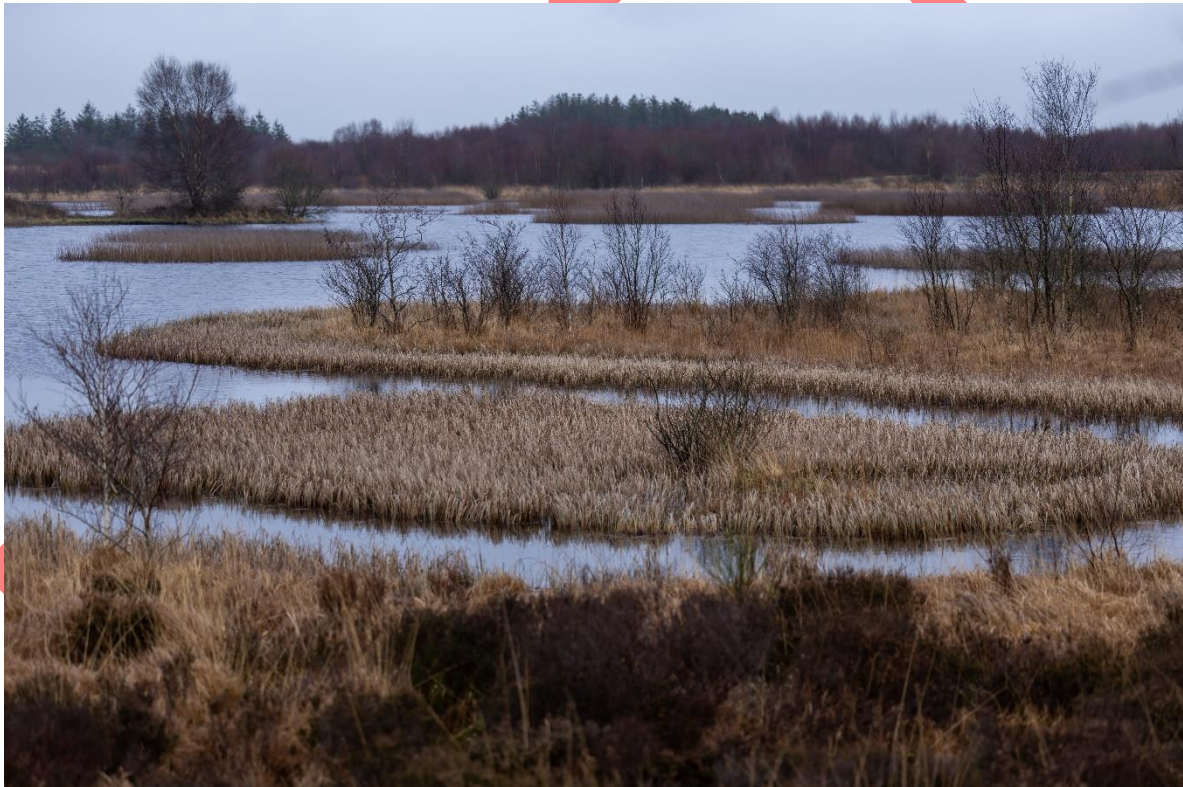


Figure 8: Bog wetlands, Lough Boora - Paul Moore

Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated sites of national importance for habitats and species in Ireland. NHAs are established under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, but are conserved and protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976 (as amended). In addition, there are 51 pNHAs in County Offaly, published on a non-statutory basis in 1995, which are of significance for wildlife and habitats but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated.

Table 4: Natural Heritage Areas in County Offaly

Site Name	Site Code
Black Castle Bog NHA	000570
Cangort Bog NHA	000890
Clonydonnin Bog NHA	000565
Daingean Bog NHA	002033
Hawkswood Bog NHA	002355
River Little Brosna Callows NHA	000564
Screggan Bog NHA	000921

Table 5: Proposed Natural Heritage Areas in County Offaly

Site Name	Site Code
All Saints Bog and Esker	000566
Annaghmore Lough Fen (Offaly)	000413
Ballintemple Bog	000882
Ballyduff Esker	000885
Ballyduff Wood	001777
Banagher (domestic dwelling, occupied)	000567
Birr (domestic dwelling No. 1, occupied)	000569
Birr (domestic dwelling No. 2, occupied)	000658
Brackens dwelling, near Whiteford	002058
Camcor Wood	000889
Charleville Wood	000571
Clara Bog	000572
Cloghanbeg	002059
Clonad Wood	000574
Clonlyon Glebe Bog	000893
Clonfinlough Esker	000892
Clorhane Wood	000894
Derrykeel Meadows	000897
Doon Esker Wood	001830
Dovegrove Callows	000010
Drumakeenan, Eagle Hill and Perrys Mill	000900
Drumakeenan National School	002064
Ferbane Bog	000575

Fin Lough (Offaly)	000576
Golden Grove Woods	000903
Grand Canal	002104
Kilcormac Esker	000906
Kinnitty (domestic dwelling, occupied)	000579
Lough Boora	001365
Lough Coura	000909
Lough Nahinch (Tipperary)	000936
Lough Nanag Esker	000910
Miltown, Shinrone	002065
Mongan Bog	000580
Mount St. Joseph Woods	000913
Moyclare Bog	000581
Murphys Bridge Esker	001775
Pallas Lough	000916
Pilgrims Road Esker	001776
Raheen Lough	000917
Raheenmore Bog	000582
Ridge Road, SW of Rapemills	000919
River Shannon Callows	000216
Roscrea Bog	000583
Ross and Glens Eskers	000920
Sharavogue Bog	000585
Slieve Bloom Mountains	000412
St. Josephs, Mountheaton	002063
The Long Derries, Edenderry	000925
Woodfield Bog	000586
Woodville Woods	000927

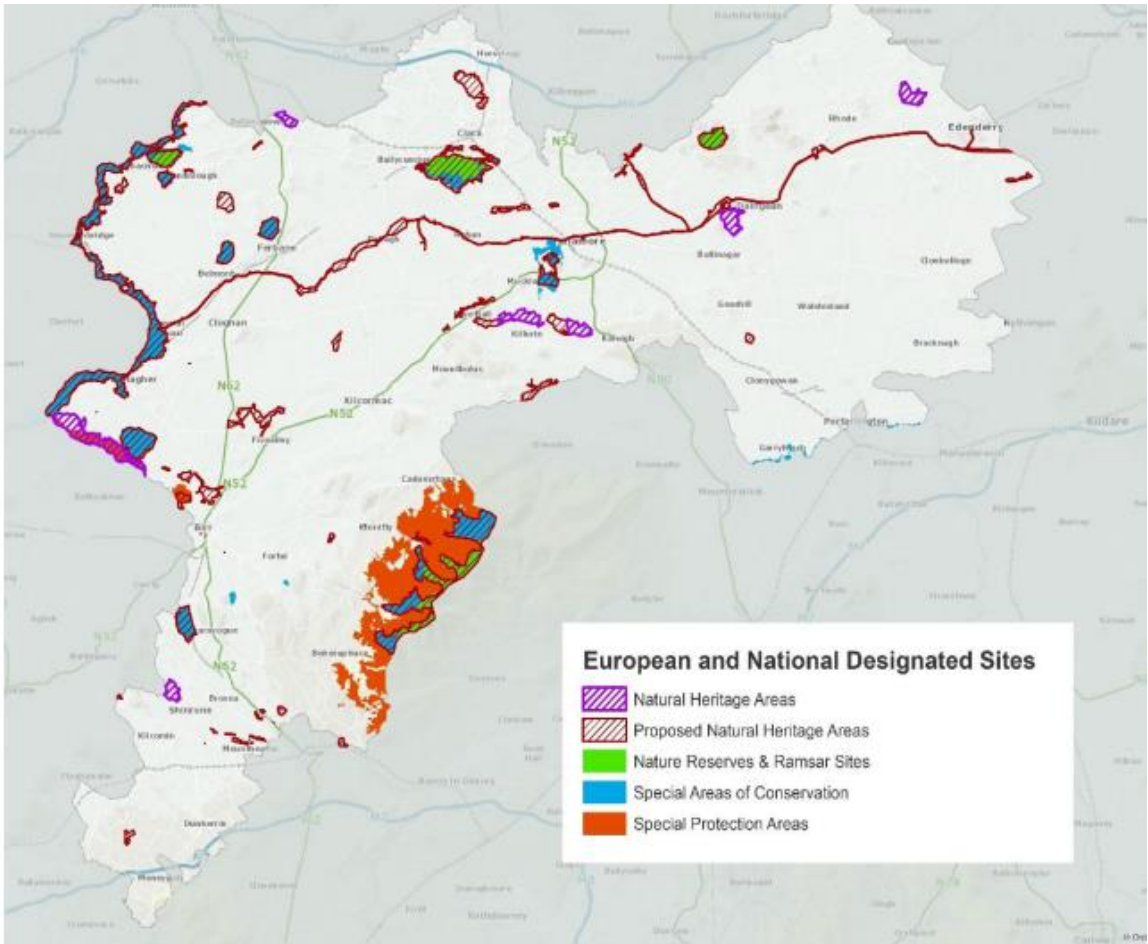


Figure 9: European and National Designated Sites

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Other Sites for Environmental and Ecological Protection

There are a number of other sites across the county that have been designated for environmental and/or ecological protection. It is imperative that these sites are protected and conserved for the protection of flora and fauna, for their significant amenity value and for their ongoing educational resource value.

There are four Statutory Nature Reserves in County Offaly as listed in Table 4.6 below. Statutory Nature Reserves have been given a priority designation in association with the EU Habitats Directive. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands came into force for Ireland on 15 March 1985. Ireland presently has 45 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance and 4 of these are located in County Offaly covering a total area of 2,979 hectares. Biogenetic Reserves are designated by the Council of Europe and are natural habitats which are especially valuable for nature conservation in Europe. There are currently fourteen Biogenetic Reserves in Ireland, four of which are in County Offaly.

Table 6: Statutory Reserves in County Offaly

Nature Reserve	Area (ha)	Main Habitat
Slieve Bloom Mountain	2,300	Blanket Bog
Clara Bog	460	Raised Bog
Mongan Bog	119	Raised Bog
Raheenmore Bog	162	Raised Bog

Table 7: Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR) Sites in County Offaly

Ramsar Site	Site Number
Slieve Bloom Mountains	335
Clara Bog	415
Mongan Bog	416
Raheenmore Bog	417

Ramsar Site	Site Number
Slieve Bloom Mountains	335
Clara Bog	415
Mongan Bog	416
Raheenmore Bog	417

Table 8: Biogenetic Reserves

Site Name
Slieve Bloom Mountains
Clara Bog
Mongan Bog
Raheenmore Bog



Figure 10: Bog Pool - © Tina Claffey

Locally Important Sites

Locally important sites may be considered as sites or areas of non-designated lands that are of greater importance to biodiversity than other lands. These may for example include, woodland, natural and semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, ponds and other wetland habitats, remnant areas of raised bog, eskers, demesne parkland and other such habitats. These sites are often well known and recognised locally but are without the same protections afforded to designated sites.

It is an objective of this plan to identify and map such sites and group them together with designated sites to form an Ecological Network Map of County Offaly. This map will allow us to identify key areas of biodiversity interest as well as wildlife corridors and stepping stones between larger biodiversity areas. It will also identify opportunities to improve connectivity between these areas.

This will help slow and stop habitat fragmentation and improve the overall resilience of these habitats and the movement of species including native aquatic animals, mammals, birds and plants.



Figure 11: New Habitats at Tullamore Wetlands – Tom O’Hanlon

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Threats to biodiversity in Offaly

We have a great diversity of habitats and species in County Offaly, however the extent and number has shrunk considerably to that of the past. Our biodiversity globally and nationally is under threat from a range of issues. Table 9, gives an overview of the main threats facing the various habitats and their associated species in Offaly. There are many threats to our biodiversity in Offaly. The main threats are described in detail below:

Habitat loss & Fragmentation

The National Biodiversity Plan identifies habitat loss and degradation as the main factor eroding biodiversity in Ireland today. Although Ireland's landscape and habitats have been modified by human activity since the retreat of the last Ice Age, the pace and scale of change rapidly accelerated from the latter half of the 20th century. Habitat loss and degradation can happen through both legal and illegal activities, from legitimate land clearance to illegal peat harvesting or deliberate fires in our uplands. The rapid development of houses, roads and other infrastructure in our towns and countryside, together with major changes in agricultural and other land-use practices have led to a major loss of habitats and habitat fragmentation. Fragmentation happens when, for example, a road cuts through a patch of landscape creating two smaller landscape patches. Smaller habitat patches generally support fewer species and support lower population numbers of the species present. The removal of landscape features such as removing hedgerows, further reduces available habitat and reduces connectivity. Increasing fragmentation leads to a loss of connection and/or increasing distance between patches, which has negative consequences for the ability of plants and animals to move through the landscape and to sustain viable populations.

Climate Change

The biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis are intrinsically linked. Climate change accelerates the destruction of the natural world through droughts, flooding and wildfires, while the loss and unsustainable use of nature are, in turn, key drivers of climate change. Climate change can affect our habitats and species in a myriad of ways. Drier and hotter weather conditions will increase the risk of wildfires. In recent years Offaly has experienced large-scale wildfires in the Slieve Bloom Mountains which destroyed vast areas of upland blanket bog and forestry and impacted on vulnerable ground nesting birds including our threatened Hen Harrier. Unseasonal summer floods have significantly impacted on our lowland wet grasslands, nowhere more than along the Shannon Callows which were once a stronghold for breeding Corncrake and where ground nesting wading bird species such as the Curlew and Redshank are in decline. The increasingly early flowering period of trees, shrubs and plants is causing all sorts of difficulties for insects and their avian predators. Their lifecycles are fine-tuned to coincide with the flowering period of certain plants, which ensures an abundance of food supply during the breeding season. Changes to flowering periods as a result of climate change may prove problematic for many species.

But just as the crises are linked, so are the solutions. Nature is a vital ally in the fight against climate change. Nature-based solutions, such as protecting and restoring peatlands, other wetlands, increased care & management of hedgerows and forest ecosystems will be essential for emission reduction and climate adaptation.

Alien Invasive Species

Alien Invasive species are plants or animals that have been introduced in Ireland outside their natural range. Alien species can sometimes become 'invasive' when they spread rapidly and outcompete the native flora and fauna. In Offaly, the problem with invasive species is mainly limited to alien plant species that grow in and along some of our hedgerows, woodlands and watercourses. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam have been monitored and managed for years but require ongoing management to eradicate fully. Rhododendron Ponticum and Cherry Laurel cast a dense shade in some woodlands, preventing ground flora from establishing and new tree saplings emerging. New emerging threats are being identified continuously, with a significant Alpine Newt population being identified in 2023 following aquatic habitat surveying, as well as the dramatic spread of the Quagga Mussel in the Shannon catchment. Threats from alien species must be monitored, quantified and managed accordingly in line with national requirements and in-line with international best practice.

Pollution

All forms of pollution pose a serious threat to biodiversity, but nutrient pollution of waterbodies, pesticide pollution of soils and waterbodies and light pollution are the most relevant forms of pollution in Offaly. Nitrogen and phosphorus are common pollutants in our rivers, originating from chemical fertilizers and manure that are applied to fields to increase crop growth, any unabsorbed nitrogen and phosphorus leaches into nearby rivers and groundwater, leading to eutrophication of ecosystems and sewage overflows contribute to the nutrient loading on our rivers. The common use of pesticides in farming has raised concerns about their potential adverse effects on pollinators and farmland birds.

Light might not be the first type of pollution that comes to mind, but artificial light can have negative impacts on biodiversity. Many animals have evolved to be nocturnal such as Bats, Moths and Barn Owls. They hunt or move around under the cover of complete darkness, with only the light from the moon or stars to guide their flight. Lighting can impact on bats' roosting sites, commuting routes and foraging areas and disturb bats' feeding behaviour.

Table 9: Primary threats to habitat types in Offaly

Habitat	Primary threats to habitats and associated flora + fauna
Grassland	Intensification of farming practices or abandonment
Hedgerows	Removal of hedgerows and lack of proper hedgerow management
Woodland	Lack of woodland management, invasive species, extreme weather events such as storms & droughts
Rivers	Nutrient enrichment, water pollution, channel straightening, barriers to fish migration, river maintenance, extreme rainfall events
Wetlands	Infilling and drainage
Uplands	Wildfires, forestry, disturbance
Bogs	Peat harvesting, wildfires
Gardens	Use of glyphosate based "weed killer"



Figure 12: Common Frogs - © Tina Claffey

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Work So Far

Before the appointment of a biodiversity officer to Offaly County Council in March 2023, biodiversity matters were looked after under the remit of the heritage officer. The role of a heritage officer involves all aspects of a county's heritage, including, built, cultural and natural (biodiversity) heritage. County biodiversity actions and priorities were addressed under the Offaly Heritage plan 2023 – 2027 and the four previous plans. These plans have been formulated by the heritage officer together with the Offaly Heritage Forum which consists of members representing all heritage areas.

There have been many biodiversity programmes and projects actioned throughout the respective heritage plans from events and advocacy, alien invasive species monitoring and eradication to implementing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Some examples include:

- The **Offaly Naturalists Field Club** was established in 2007 with the first summer school convened in Kinnitty that year. Since then, a full annual programme of events has been scheduled with the Offaly County Council Heritage Office, collaborating with expert naturalists and organisations. Events vary in their focus, are free and open to all to attend. Since the beginning, hundreds of events have been hosted under the banner and people have been emerged in Offaly's natural heritage at events hosted across the county. The Offaly Naturalist's Field Club Summer School hosted by John Feehan attracts enthusiasts from around the country.
- **Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam** monitoring and control measures were implemented in the county as early as 2009. Since then, a programme of staff training in identification and treatment, physical and chemical control by OCC staff and contractors and monitoring has significantly reduced the prevalence of both species across the county. This approach has been very successful and has been replicated across other local authorities.
- The **All-Ireland Pollinator Plan** has been adopted by Offaly County Council and many actions implemented in its day-to-day operations and its policies. The most notable of these is a halt on the use of glyphosate by our local authority since May 2022 following the adoption of the policy by elected members. Offaly County Council has also been involved in No Mow May, and pollinator friendly management of sites, including many burial grounds under the care of the council.
- **Ecological surveys** including, county hedgerow surveys, invasive species, Swifts, Barn Owls, Tufa Springs and Grasslands have all been commissioned and complete with a range of follow-on projects and conservation measures completed.
- **Publications** on the rich natural heritage of Offaly have been produced, many in partnership with John Feehan such as The Wildflowers of Offaly and others in collaboration with the Heritage Officer Network, the Heritage Council and partners such as Saving Swifts and Gardening for Biodiversity.

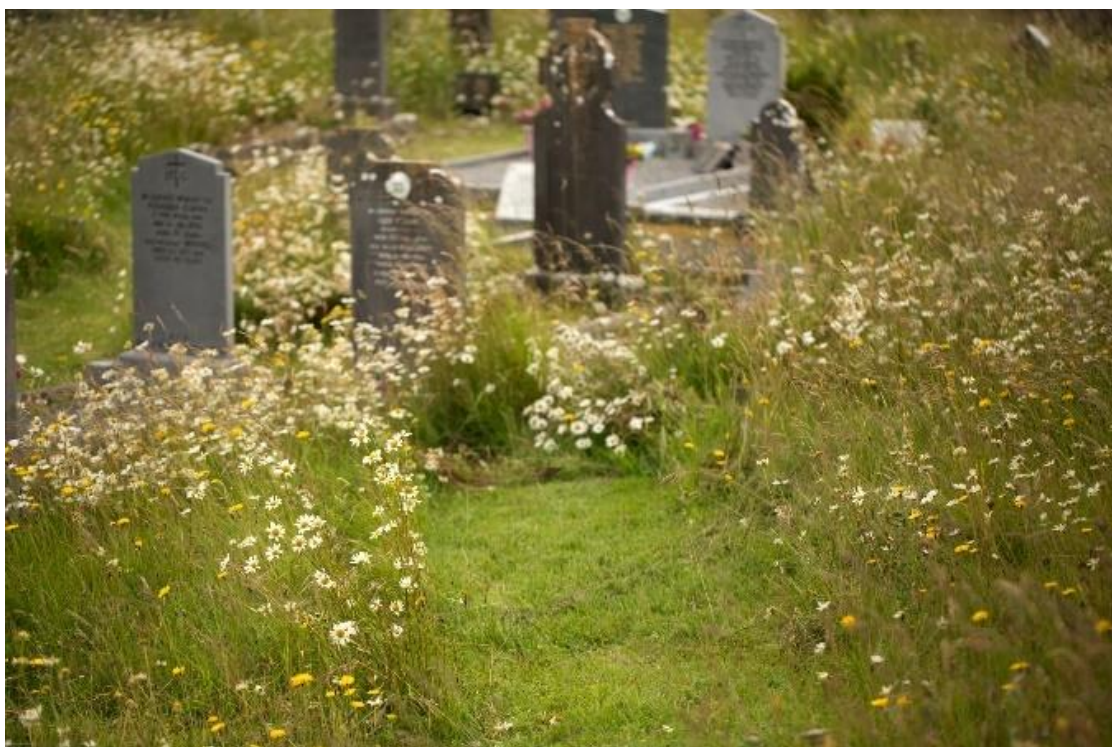


Figure 13: Clonoghill Cemetery in bloom - © Tina Claffey

- Offaly County Council is actively **managing Syngefield Demesne** in Birr for biodiversity and has created a new wetland in Tullamore as part of the **Tullamore Living River Project**.
- Offaly County Council has been **engaged with communities** in implementing biodiversity measures locally, for example, through supporting the creation of local biodiversity action plans and projects through training and knowledge-sharing events together with groups including the Tidy Towns Network.
- Offaly County has hosted **staff training** on topics such as, pollinators, planning for biodiversity, Nature Based Solutions (NBS) and Alien Invasive Species Management and the conservation of Swifts through the planning process.
- Offaly County Council has been active in **raising awareness of biodiversity** through many initiatives including the hosting of events annually during Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week, awareness campaigns broadcast on regional radio and through its support of and involvement in the In Your Nature Podcast, as well as constant and ongoing social media activity.



Figure 14: Silver River - Paul Moore

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Sustainable Development Goals



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all 193 United Nations member states in 2015. It is a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” and provides an internationally agreed framework to balance the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The Framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) and 169 targets with the overall objective of achieving a more sustainable, prosperous and peaceful future for all.

The Sustainable Development Goals, National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 acknowledges that local government “has a crucial role to play in translating national policies into tangible practical actions that can help to concretise the SDG objectives into our individual and communities’ behaviours and goals.” Following this Ireland’s second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 under Strategic Objective 2 focuses on integration of the SDG’s in “Local Authority work to better support the localisation of the SDG’s” and incorporate specific actions to do so which include:

- i. Showcasing, sharing and building on existing initiatives.
- ii. Capacity building and awareness raising.
- iii. Embedding the SDGs in Governance and reporting frameworks.
- iv. Incorporating the SDGs within local planning frameworks.
- v. Community Engagement

Furthermore, local authorities are recognised as one of Agenda 2030’s nine ‘Major Groups’, which play a crucial role in sustainable development and Agenda 2030 also highlights the particular role of local authorities and communities in sustainable urban development.

In accordance with the commitments set out in the SDG National Implementation Plan 2022-2024 the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan has been assessed for SDG impact at SDG target level. The assessment was carried out consider each of the 50 actions under the five strategic objectives. It can be seen in the SDG Wheel Figure 10 that the Offaly BAP 2025-2030 will progress towards meeting 12 out of the 17 SDG’s. The assessment also indicated that the Offaly BAP 2025-2030 is contributing to the progression of 33 out of 169 total SDG targets.



Figure 15: SDGs progressed in the Offaly BAP 2025 - 2030

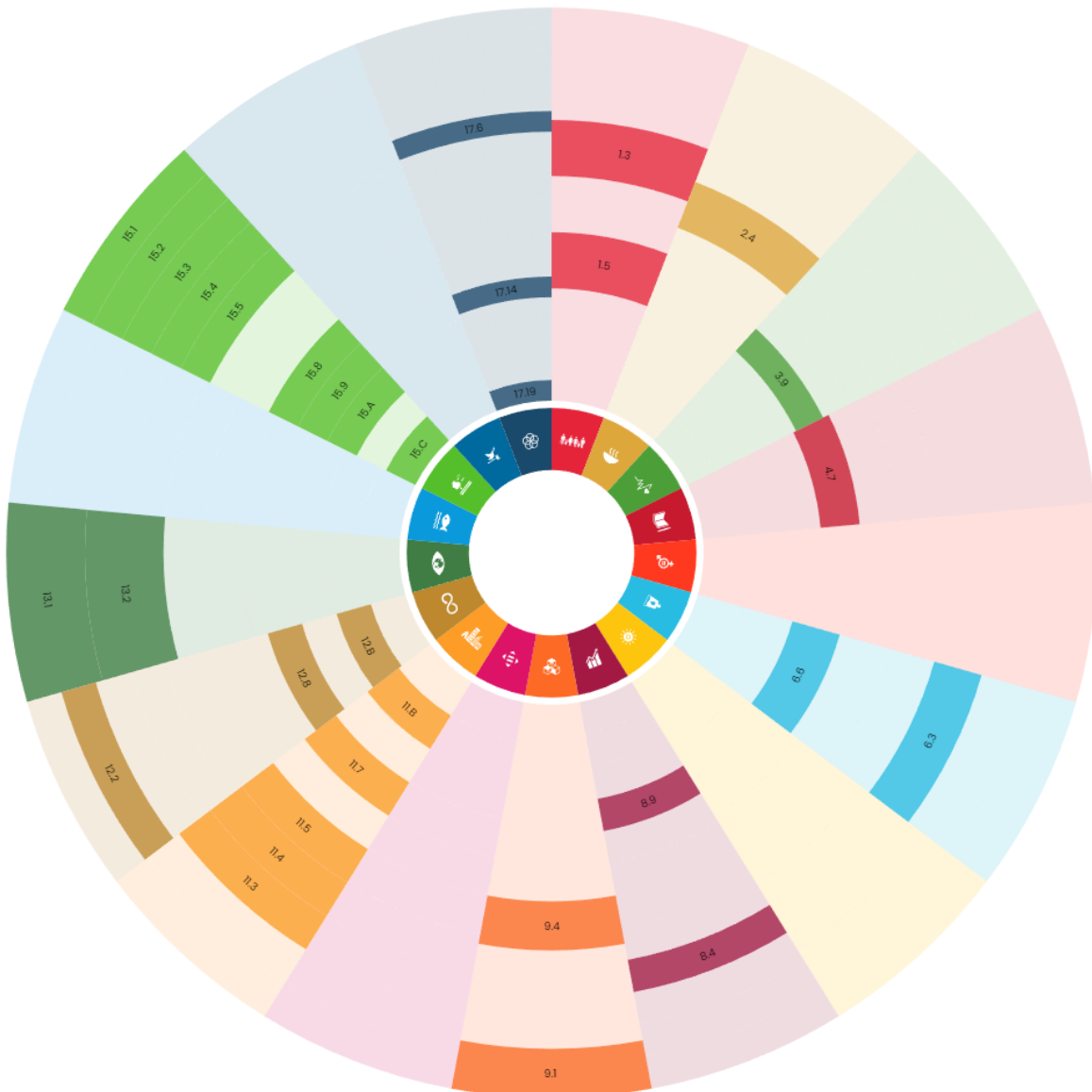




Figure 16: SDG Wheel demonstrating the progression of the Offaly 2025 - 2030 to meeting the UN SDDG's

The findings and information provided in Figure 16 highlights the broad scope of the Offaly BAP 2025-2030 and the importance of progressing sustainable development locally in Offaly. It demonstrates that the impact extends beyond biodiversity action and into other dimensions of sustainability such as economic, social and health.

In Table 10 the top 2 SDGs in which the Offaly BAP 2025-2030 will contribute towards are SDG 15 Life on Land, and SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Table 10: Top two SDGS contributed to under the Offaly Biodiversity Plan 2025 - 2030

	SDG 15 Life on Land	The actions set out in the Offaly BAP 2025-2030 progress 9 out of 12 targets under SDG 15 (See Table 11).
	SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	The actions set out in the Offaly BAP 2025-2030 progress 5 out of 10 targets under SDG 11 (See Table 11).

The findings of the SDG assessment will strengthen coherence between local Policy and National Policies in relation to sustainable development for all.

Table 11: SDG Targets progressed under SDG 15 and SDG 11 through the Offaly BAP 2025 - 2030

SDG 15 - Life on Land
15.1 - Conserve and restore terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems
15.2 - End deforestation and restore degraded forests
15.3 - End desertification and restore degraded land
15.4 - Ensure conservation of mountain ecosystems
15.5 - Protect biodiversity and natural habitats
15.8 - Prevent invasive alien species on land and in water ecosystems
15.9 - Integrate ecosystem and biodiversity in governmental planning
15.A - Increase financial resources to conserve and sustainably use ecosystem and biodiversity
15.C - Combat global poaching and trafficking
SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
11.3 - Inclusive and sustainable urbanization
11.4 - Protect the world's cultural and natural heritage
11.5 - Reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters
11.7 - Provide access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces
11.B - Implement policies for inclusion, resource efficiency and disaster risk reduction

Objectives and Actions

The actions of the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030 are listed in the following table. Actions have been grouped under five strategic objectives categories listed below. Given the nature of the plan, actions will often overlap and apply to more than one category.

Surveys and Monitoring

Table 12: Strategic Objectives and Actions of the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030

No	Action	Indicators	Partners
1	Support Citizen Science Initiatives to encourage awareness and recording of species together with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.		NBDC
2	Commission a full county wetland survey.	Survey complete	
3	To conduct baseline surveys/assessments and develop a masterplan for management of biodiversity at/along new amenity infrastructure (i.e. greenways, bike trails)		
4	Create "Offaly Ecological Network" map + site list, of all sites of ecological importance in the county to include, Natura 2000 sites, NHA/pNHAs and locally important sites.	Ecological Network Map Produced	
5	Implement a process to monitor the changes resulting in the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions at council level.		
6	Commission ecological surveys to help inform county policy and related projects.		
7	Work to enhance quarry habitats for biodiversity following the end of commercial extraction through the planning process.		Quarry owners, OCC Planning section

Actions for Biodiversity

No	Action	Indicators	Partners
8	Establish Offaly County Council Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Group.	Group formed, meetings held, plan reviewed at intervals	
9	Create an Offaly County Council flagship site managed for biodiversity in the Edenderry MD, akin to that of Tullamore Wetlands and Syngefield Demesne.	Manage new site in Edenderry MD.	MD Offices, OCC Climate Team,
10	Create Management Plans for Syngefield Demesne, Bludndell Park and Tullamore Wetlands.	Plans in place	
11	Formalise policy to ban glyphosate-based herbicide by OCC (except for specific circumstances - Invasive Species eradication).	Formal policy adopted	
12	Enhance biodiversity potential of OCC parks (creating site specific plans where required).	Plans in place	MD Offices
13	Create and agree 10-year plans for burial grounds to protect and improve species diversity.		OCC Water + Environment, Cemetery committees, local vol groups, parish groups
14	Support local communities with the creation + implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans.		TT Network, Local groups, PPN, OCC Community Section
15	Work with faith communities to identify lands within respective dioceses suitable to implement biodiversity measures in collaboration with local parish and communities.		
16	Implement the recommendations of the Offaly Hedgerow Survey 2024.		
17	Implement the recommendations of the Offaly Tree Guidelines 2023 - 2028.		OCC Climate Team
18	Support ENGOS, landowners and local communities in the delivery of conservation initiatives for priority species.		ENGOS, Landowners
19	Support ENGOS, landowners and local communities in the conservation of existing wetlands and creation of new aquatic habitats.		LAWPRO, IFI, An Taisce, HSI, IFA
20	Implement actions of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for Councils.		NBDC, MDs
21	Support initiatives under the Water Framework Directive that contribute to the restoration of ecology in water bodies, and the Blue Dot Catchments Programme.		LAWPRO, OCC Water + Environment Section
22	Protect existing and maximise nesting opportunities arising from new developments for Swift, House Sparrow, House Martin, Swallow, bats & insects.		BWI, Planning, Housing

Invasive Alien Species (AIS)

No	Action	Indicators	Partners
23	Continue control of invasive flora and fauna species - Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam being the two main AIS plant species of concern in Offaly.		
24	Prioritise the assessment and management of new IAS discoveries in the county in collaboration with other counties + agencies.		County Councils, NPWS, NBDC
25	Support research and monitoring projects focusing on AIS in Offaly		
26	Upgrade the county alien invasive species management strategy/GIS Mapping		

Building Resilience

No	Action	Indicators	Partners
27	Undertake review of Ecological Network Map (see Action 4) to identify important biodiversity corridors/stepping stones and gaps and pinch-points which may be addressed to create and enhance connectivity for biodiversity between sites.	List of potential projects produced	OCC Planning, Forward Planning,
28	Work with relevant agencies annually to continue to assess wildfire risk to bogs and upland habitats and management of same.		Laois CoCo, Offaly Fire Service, NPWS, Coilte
29	Consider provision being made for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for planning applications, to be included in the next County Development Plan.	Adopt approved development standards	OCC Forward Planning, Housing
30	Include climate resilience and future proofing into new biodiversity projects, plans and policies.		
31	Undertake study to identify the habitats and species most at risk from climate change in the county.		
32	Explore funding models for carbon offsetting to fund local wetland and woodland development.		
33	Develop targeted county policies which will result in improved habitats and benefit biodiversity (e.g. Light and Nocturnal Species).		
34	Promote the use of Nature Based Solutions (NBS) in local authority projects.		

Awareness and Engagement

No	Action	Indicators	Partners
35	Support the establishment and work of voluntary biodiversity groups carrying out citizen science projects in Offaly, such as an Offaly Bat Group.	New groups established; new citizen science led surveys underway	
36	Create county policy on bat friendly lighting.		
37	Plan annual schedule of OCC staff biodiversity training.		
38	Plan an annual schedule of biodiversity training and awareness raising events for relevant community groups/public.		
39	Pilot a biodiversity initiatives in a social housing scheme which may include; green roofs, green walls, wetland & ponds SUDS, green carparking, nest boxes in facades, wildflower meadows and wildlife friendly shrubs and trees in open space.		
40	All Council housing, parks and infrastructure projects to include biodiversity enhancement proposals.		
41	Research + support the creation of a biodiversity demonstration garden with a community partner.		
42	Initiate a project in collaboration with farming groups to highlight and celebrate the importance of farmland for biodiversity.		IFA, Macra na Feirme, CI
43	Promote and expand the delivery of the Green Schools Programme in the county.		EAO, An Taisce
44	Promote and expand the delivery of the Heritage in Schools Programme in the county.		HO, HC
45	Advocate for the protection + enhancement of nature and spaces for nature in Offaly through print, broadcast, social media and through other media such as podcasts, online video and short films.		
46	Work with Local Enterprise Office Offaly to promote biodiversity friendly initiatives as part of sustainable economic development.		OCC LEO,
47	Work with OCC Culture and Creativity Team to promote biodiversity through creative projects, and with support from the Creative Ireland programme.		OCC C+C Team, Libraries, Arts Office
48	Work with all OCC sections to make biodiversity enhancements where opportunities arise (e.g. Regeneration, Roads).		OCC sections
49	Conduct awareness campaign on the importance of stone walls/structures for biodiversity		BSBI, BBS
50	Build links with sports clubs and promote adoption of biodiversity positive measures on club grounds (i.e. through the GAA Green Clubs Programme).		

Appendix One: NBAP Actions relevant for local authorities

Following are the selected Actions and Objectives in the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 which are allocated to or of most relevance to local authorities. For the full plan see <https://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-action-plan>.

Target	Action number	Action	Partner(s)	Indicator
Objective 1: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole of-Society Approach to Biodiversity				
Outcome 1A. Governance structures and reporting outputs have improved				
From 2024, progress reports will be submitted annually to relevant Groups/Committees	1A8	The Minister will receive a report on progress on the implementation on the NBAP at least once a year and will bring that report to Cabinet	All Relevant Bodies	Reports to Cabinet
Outcome 1B. Organisational capacity and resources for biodiversity have increased at all levels of Government				
By 2024, cross- departmental capacity and capability required to achieve biodiversity targets reviewed	1B3	All relevant Departments and Government Bodies will explore the biodiversity expertise and training requirements across government to ensure the appropriate expertise is available to implement this Plan	All relevant Departments and Government Bodies	Number of new training courses; Number of staff assigned to biodiversity tasks
By 2026, all Local Authorities have increased capacity to facilitate and implement all required duties relating to biodiversity at the local level	1B9	The Heritage Council will work with Local Authorities on establishing a Biodiversity Officer Programme with a dedicated Biodiversity Officer in each Local Authority	The Heritage Council	Number of Biodiversity Officers in Local Authorities
Outcome 1C: Responsibility for biodiversity is shared across the whole of government				

Target	Action number	Action	Partner(s)	Indicator
By the end of 2026, all Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan in place	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	All Local Authorities	Number of Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans in place; Number of Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans in development
Outcome 1D: Biodiversity initiatives are supported across the whole of society				
By 2027, all Local Authorities are supported to carry out biodiversity related projects on an annual basis	1D5	NPWS will continue to support Local Authorities biodiversity projects through the LBAF, which includes action on invasive alien species, throughout the lifetime of this Plan	NPWS	Amount of funding drawn down through the LBAF
By 2026, Ireland has mainstreamed the engagement of the public and stakeholders in biodiversity-related environmental policy implementation and the conservation of biodiversity	1D12	DAFM, DHLGH and other relevant stakeholders will build and enhance engagement with terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine stakeholders and the wider community to promote the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the responsible, sustainable use of resources	DAFM, DHLGH	Number of outreach events undertaken to promote Ireland's biodiversity and ecosystems; Number of public consultations and fora held to support stakeholder and wider community involvement in environmental policy implementation relating to biodiversity
Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs				
Outcome 2A: The protection of existing designated areas and protected species is strengthened and conservation and restoration within the existing protected area network are enhanced				
By 2024, Ireland has identified preliminary areas that will be pledged as future protected areas under the EU Biodiversity Strategy	2A8	NPWS, with relevant stakeholders will identify areas that will be pledged as protected areas following the criteria laid out under the EU Biodiversity Strategy	NPWS and relevant stakeholders	Extent of pledged areas

Target	Action number	Action	Partner(s)	Indicator
Outcome 2B: Biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside are conserved and restored – agriculture & forestry				
By 2030, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the use and risk of pesticides is reduced by 50% by 2030	2B6	DAFM, Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders will implement existing and new measures to reduce chemical pesticide use, in line with the EU regulatory framework for pesticides	DAFM, Local Authorities and relevant stakeholders	Percentage reduction in use and risk of chemical pesticides, and the use of hazardous pesticide, in line with the EU regulatory framework for pesticides
Continued support for native tree planting	2B11	DAFM will continue to promote and/or support native tree planting by Local Authorities and other State/semi-state bodies	DAFM	Increase in area under native tree cover; Uptake of any relevant schemes for Local Authorities or other State/ semi-state bodies
By 2027, a diversified national and local native plant stock is available for tree and landscape planting schemes	2B12	Local Authorities, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), NPWS and OPW will encourage a more reliable supply and use native species, varieties, and landraces from appropriate native sources in their landscaping works, where possible	Local Authorities, TII, NPWS and OPW	Availability of national/local sources of native species, varieties, and landraces; % of native trees used in landscaping works compared to benchmark
By 2030, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the decline of pollinators is halted and reversed	2B13	NBDC with partners in Northern Ireland and other actors listed in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 will implement appropriate actions listed in the Plan and support farmland pollinator conservation activities post-2025	NBDC and relevant stakeholders	Number of All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions implemented; Evidence of action to support farmland pollinators post-2026
Outcome 2C: Biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside are conserved and restored – peatlands & climate action				
By 2025, nature-based solutions are contributing to national climate ambitions	2C7	To support the National Climate Objective of achieving a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy, DECC, DAFM, DHLGH, Local Authorities, and Climate Action Regional Offices will promote terrestrial nature-based solutions in national, regional, and local rural and urban programmes	All relevant stakeholders	Number of programs and policies that incorporate nature-based solutions

Target	Action number	Action	Partner(s)	Indicator
Outcome 2D: Biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine and freshwater environment are conserved and restored				
By 2027, protection and restoration measures detailed in Ireland's third RBMP are implemented to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed, that freshwater resources are protected so that there is no further deterioration; and where required, Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastal water bodies are restored to at least good ecological status	2D1	Relevant bodies such as DHLGH, DAFM, Local Authorities and partners will deliver a RBMP to better protect, enhance and monitor the ecological status of water during the third cycle of the RBMP	All Relevant Bodies	National Biodiversity Indicators (NBI)-B.7.ii Number of freshwater habitats reported as 'Good Ecological Status' under Water Framework Directive (WFD) monitoring Status of water quality in Ireland; Number of RBMP measures (Programme of Measures) implemented
By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place	2D5	OPW will work with relevant authorities to ensure that Flood Risk Management planning and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), EIA and Appropriate Assessment (AA), minimises loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services through policies to promote more catchment-wide and non-structural flood risk management measures	OPW and relevant stakeholders	Assessment to identify and promote natural flood management techniques that may be suitable for application in Ireland; Inclusion of catchment- wide and non-structural measures within the options assessed by Flood Risk Management Plans
By 2030, 300 km of rivers are restored to a free-flowing state	2D21	DHLGH, Inland Fisheries Ireland, OPW and other relevant bodies will explore the restoration of 300 km of rivers to a free-flowing state	DHLGH, IFI, OPW and other relevant bodies	Km of rivers restored to a free-flowing state
Outcome 2F: A National Restoration Plan is in place to contribute to the ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and global restoration targets				
By 2027, implementation of a National Restoration Plan has begun	2F5	DHLGH and all stakeholders across Government, will put in place restoration measures as described in the National Restoration Plan, within the appropriate timeframes	DHLGH and relevant stakeholders	Restoration measures in place according to the timeframe to be outlined in the National Restoration Plan
Outcome 2H: Invasive alien species (IAS) are controlled and managed on an all-island basis to reduce the harmful impact they have on biodiversity and measures are undertaken to tackle the introduction and spread of new IAS to the environment				

Target	Action number	Action	Partner(s)	Indicator
By 2030, IAS are controlled, managed, and where possible, eradicated	2H2	NPWS, together with other relevant Departments and public bodies, will develop national plans to implement aspects of the EU IAS Regulation and relevant national legislation, as well as work on cooperative plans where there is an all-island or North-South aspect for IAS impacts	NPWS and relevant stakeholders	National plans are in place to implement the relevant articles of the EU IAS Regulation (1143/2014) fulfilling Member State obligations; National Management Plan for Invasive Alien Species will be developed and implemented as set out in the programme for government; All-island cooperation on IAS between relevant authorities is agreed
Objective 3: Secure Nature's Contribution to People				
Outcome 3A: Ireland's natural heritage and biocultural diversity is recognised, valued, enhanced and promoted in policy and practice				
By the end of 2027, the biocultural value of green and blue urban environments (GBUE) in all local authority areas is enhanced	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	Number of LBAPs which include actions on enhancing the biocultural value of GBUE
Outcome 3C: Planning and development will facilitate and secure biodiversity's contributions to people				
By 2030, shared responsibility for the conservation of biodiversity acted on	3C1	All Public Authorities and private sector bodies move towards no net loss of biodiversity through strategies, planning, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Blue-Green infrastructure	All relevant stakeholders	Number of plans articulating no net loss targets

Target	Action number	Action	Partner(s)	Indicator
By 2024, guidance is available on best practice for biodiversity, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions in planning and development	3C2	The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) will work to prepare and publish a Case Study Paper examining best practice in integrating green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and ecosystem services into the preparation of land use plans	OPR	Case Study Paper published by 2027
By 2030, the objectives of the NBAP, where relevant, are aligned with and integrated, within the statutory land use plans of the Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities and within LBAPs	3C3	All Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, City and County Development Plans, Local Area Plans and LBAP's shall be aligned with the objectives of the NBAP, where relevant	DHLGH, [Regional Assemblies, Planning Authorities, Local Authorities, Office of the Planning Regulator]	Number of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, City and County Development Plans, Local Area Plans and LBAPs that align with the objectives of the NBAP
Objective 4: Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity				
Outcome 4B: Data relevant to biodiversity and ecosystems, including conservation needs, is widely accessible and standardised				
By 2030, biodiversity and related data is widely accessible	4B7	NPWS and other relevant bodies will ensure that biodiversity and related data adheres to national open data policy	NPWS	Number of open data sets relating to biodiversity
Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives				
Outcome 5A: Science, policy and action on biodiversity conservation and restoration is effectively coordinated in an all-island approach				
By 2025, the All-Island Pollinator Plan (AIPP) is supported	5A5	Relevant bodies will continue to support and utilise the All- Ireland Pollinator Plan	Relevant bodies	Number of AIPP actions achieved

What next?

Implementing the plan

The future success of The Plan depends upon the input from all organisations and groups involved in looking after our natural heritage. Joint action is the foundation of the biodiversity plan initiative. The Offaly BAP will provide the focus for all groups involved. The development of a strong working partnership between the local authority and the voluntary sector, community groups, state agencies, businesses and landowners is essential for successful implementation of the action plan. Offaly County Council will be the main coordinating body overseeing the implementation of the biodiversity actions. The local authority will also provide support for other organisations and private landowners, to see where and how they can contribute towards the implementation of the actions. The Biodiversity Officer shall be the main coordinator within the County Council and act as the contact person for issues related to the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Resourcing the plan

Offaly County Council has one full-time Biodiversity Officer who is tasked with overseeing the delivery of this plan.

The current funding directly available to deliver the Action Plan in Offaly is around €130,000 per year. This may change but it provides a framework for the scope of the actions proposed. This figure includes the internal biodiversity budget and funding allocations from the Heritage Council and biodiversity grant funding available via the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF) from The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Monitoring success

The Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030 will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the implementation group and with regular updates from the Biodiversity Officer to the Offaly Heritage Forum. A mid-way review will take place in 2027 to track progress and to help ensure the actions of the plan will be completed during its 5-year lifespan. Progress will be reported via the [Offaly County Council Annual Report](#).

Acknowledgments

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Further Reading

Biodiversity strategy for 2030

- https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

National Biodiversity Action Plan

- National Biodiversity Action Plan (Draft) 2023 – 2027
([file:///C:/Users/rwhelan/Downloads/233057_f1a92f68-e668-498d-a56c-df777a19b549%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/rwhelan/Downloads/233057_f1a92f68-e668-498d-a56c-df777a19b549%20(1).pdf))

UN Sustainable Development Goals

- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Offaly Heritage Strategy 2023 - 2027

- <https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Offaly-Heritage-Plan-2023-27.pdf>

Biodiversity Action Strategy for Offaly, 2005, OCC

- (https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Council/Council_Services_A-Z/Heritage_Conservation/Biodiversity_Strategy_2005.pdf)

Other Relevant County Plans

- County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 (<https://www.offaly.ie/draft-offaly-county-development-plan-2021-2027/>)
- Corporate Plan 2019 - 2024 (<https://www.offaly.ie/corporate-plan-publication/>)

Other Relevant Publications

- County Offaly – The State of the Wild 2007, J Feehan
(https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Council/Council_Services_A-Z/Heritage_Conservation/State-of-the-wild-report-in-Offaly-2007.pdf)