



# Public Participation Network **Kildare**

## Kildare PPN Draft Submission

Kildare County Council

Draft Biodiversity Action Plan for County Kildare

2026 - 2031

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# INTRODUCTION

Kildare Public Participation Network (Kildare PPN) was established on foot of the Report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government published in 2014, which recommended greater input by communities into decision making at local Government level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of PPNs and they are now operational in all Local Authority areas.

Kildare Public Participation Network (PPN), representing over 800 member groups across community and voluntary, social inclusion, and environmental pillars, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the pre-draft of the County Kildare Biodiversity Action Plan. This plan represents a vital step forward in addressing the biodiversity crisis at a local level. Kildare's natural heritage – from its rare raised bogs to the Rye Water Valley, from native woodlands to canal systems – is both ecologically valuable and irreplaceable. However, as acknowledged in the paper, the county's biodiversity is under considerable pressure, echoing national and global trends.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan provides a much-needed framework to protect, conserve, restore, and promote biodiversity across Kildare over the next five years. As a community-based network, we believe strongly in a collaborative approach that puts people at the centre of local biodiversity action. We therefore offer the following feedback and recommendations.

## **1. Embracing a Whole-of-Community Model**

We support the “whole of government, whole of society” model outlined in the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. To be successful, the LABAP must embed community participation at every level – in planning, implementation, and monitoring.

We recommend:

- Increased funding opportunities and support for community-led biodiversity projects
- Citizen science initiatives and participatory research.
- Training and education opportunities for residents, community groups, and landowners.
- Structures that enable co-creation between the Council and local organisations.

Communities in Kildare including Tidy Towns groups, farmers, youth organisations, schools, and residents’ associations are already doing the work. This plan should amplify and support their efforts.

## **2. Recognising the Value of Local Knowledge**

Many PPN members bring deep local knowledge of the land, habitats, and wildlife. This expertise should be actively included in decision-making, particularly in mapping and planning.

We recommend:

- Facilitating local biodiversity audits and participatory mapping.
- Creating pathways for communities to feed into data collection and monitoring.
- Ensuring traditional ecological knowledge is respected and preserved.

## **3. Supporting Habitat Protection and Nature Restoration**

We endorse strong, action-based commitments to protect and restore the county’s valuable and vulnerable habitats: Kildare’s habitats are under serious pressure. The plan must contain specific, action-based commitments to conserve and restore them.

*Hedgerows and Woodlands:*

- Implement pilot projects on traditional hedgerow management.
- Act on findings from the *County Kildare Hedgerow Appraisal Survey (2022)*.
- Enforce ecological surveys prior to hedgerow removal.

- Simplify the process for securing Tree Preservation Orders.
- Establish a native tree and hedgerow nursery for local planting schemes.

*Bogs, Wetlands, and Waterways:*

- Continue to support the development of a National Peatlands Park.
- Prioritise restoration of Naas Lakes and other sensitive aquatic habitats.
- Extend the Corbally Harbour development to include conservation corridors from Great Connell to Athgarvan.
- Develop the Liffey corridor as a protected regional park, integrating green and blue infrastructure.
- Use nature-based solutions to restore river floodplains.
- Require ecologist-led designs for SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems).
- Use only native species in public landscaping.
- Prohibit works near riverbanks without ecological assessments.

*Community-Led Grants:*

- Introduce a “**Kildare Wild Spaces**” grant scheme to support local biodiversity efforts, or expand the existing Heritage Grant Scheme to include biodiversity restoration projects.

#### **4. Prioritising Urban and Peri-Urban Biodiversity**

With growing urbanisation, nature in towns and villages must not be an afterthought.

We recommend:

- Mandating native and diverse planting in all new developments.
- Including biodiversity as part of estate management responsibilities.
- Encouraging pollinator-friendly verge and green space maintenance.
- Promoting pocket parks, community gardens, and allotments.
- Creating clear biodiversity guidelines for planners, developers, and management companies.

## **5. Education, Awareness and Youth Engagement**

Education is key to long-term change. The LABAP should include clear commitments to public awareness and youth engagement.

We recommend:

- A Community Biodiversity Toolkit or promotion of existing All Ireland Pollinator Plan resources tailored for local use.
- A county-wide campaign on biodiversity loss and what people can do.
- Youth-focused projects through Scouts, schools, and youth clubs.
- Inclusive outreach across all communities and backgrounds.
- Workshops on invasive species and community training in safe removal methods.
- Promoting bans on peat-based products and imported invasive plants.
- Support for biodiversity projects in sports clubs, estates, and housing developments.

## **6. Monitoring, Data and Community Science**

We welcome the plan's focus on evidence-based action. A strong data system should empower both professionals and communities.

We recommend:

- Partnering with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and academic institutions.
- Creating a publicly accessible biodiversity portal for mapping, citizen reporting, and invasive species alerts.
- Developing a county-wide database of rare species and habitats to inform planning decisions.
- Publishing a full list of identified County Biodiversity Sites in the final plan.

## **7. Resourcing the Plan**

A strong plan needs strong support.

We recommend:

- Adequate funding and staffing for the Biodiversity Office.
- Clear coordination between Council departments (e.g. Planning, Housing, Transport, Parks).
- Multi-year funding schemes for community and NGO biodiversity initiatives.
- Annual reporting and accountability mechanisms to track progress.

## **8. Conclusion**

Kildare PPN commends Kildare County Council for initiating this important process and engaging early with the public. The loss of biodiversity is a serious issue, but we also believe there's real hope – especially when local communities are part of the solution. Our network is committed to supporting this work and looks forward to collaborating with the Council, the Biodiversity Officer, and other stakeholders in the months and years ahead.

We encourage the Council to make sure the final plan includes everyone, gives people a say, and shares responsibility. Protecting nature isn't just about wildlife – it's about looking after our communities, our environment, and our future.