



# Councils: actions to help pollinators

**Niamh Lennon**



# Councils: actions to help pollinators

- Importance of Pollinators to Wexford
- Life before the AIPP
- Examples of actions in County Wexford
- Council Guidelines & the Benefits
- Mapping the pollinator patches
- Future Actions and Role of Councils





# Importance of wild pollinators to Wexford



# Life before the AIPP

- Trying to convince managers benefits of changing our practices
- Budget
- Small start and slow progress
- Hard to track progress
- No framework for actions



COUNTY WEXFORD

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

2013-2018



# Life before the AIPP

- **2014 Lets Bee Friendly campaign** – supported by Wexford County Council as an action under the Wexford County Biodiversity Action Plan 2013-2018, aimed at helping safeguard Ireland's bees and other under-threat pollinators.
- **Let it Bee** – 'Let it Bee' signs at pollinator friendly flower beds or wildflower areas
- Aimed at helping schools and public areas such as libraries, parks, community gardens etc. to establish pollinator friendly areas



## Wexford Tidy Towns - Biodiversity Campaign

Bees are the most important pollinating insect because they visit flowers to collect food for their larvae, as well as feeding on floral resources as adults. In Ireland crops such as apples, clover, strawberries and oilseed rape all benefit from pollination and a recent study from the Department of the Environment valued this 'ecosystem service' that bees provide at €85m a year to the economy.

2013: Worldwide study shows the decline of wild bees and other pollinators may be an even more alarming threat to crop yields than the loss of Honey Bees, revealing the irreplaceable contribution of wild insects to global food production.

### Gardener's Advice For Bees

Gardens are extremely important for bees, and vice versa. Bees need flowers for sustenance, and flowers need bees for pollination. It's vital you provide flowers throughout the Bumble Bee's life-cycle, from March to September. It's also a good idea to have at least two nectar or pollen-rich plants in flower at any one time during this period. So 'Let's Bee Friendly' by turning part of your garden into a Bumble Bee haven!

- Flowers clustered into clumps of one species will attract more pollinators than individual plants scattered throughout.
- Leave an area of your lawn uncut during summer to allow Clovers and Bird's-foot Trefoil to flower. Uncut verges and wildflower meadows benefit bees.
- Leaving exposed areas of soil at the edges of lawns or creating south facing banks of soil attracts ground nesting species.



For more information on how you can help the bees go to [www.wexfordtidytowns.com](http://www.wexfordtidytowns.com)





# Examples of actions: County Hall Wildflower Meadow





# County Hall Wildflower Meadow (4980m<sup>2</sup> or 1.2 Acres)





# Examples of Actions: Wildflower beds and planters





# Life Lives on the Edge

- Pilot project on four sections of national primary roads
- Aims to highlight the importance of road verges and hedgerows as crucial wildlife corridors
- Tailored management of roadside vegetation to encourage establishment of native wildflower abundance;
  - reduced and structured mowing regime
  - Removal of cuttings to reduce nutrients in soil
  - Ban on use of pesticides at sites



# Life Lives on the Edge

- Annual baseline survey - ongoing
- Basic species composition
- Inform future verge and hedgerow management practices.



## Wexford puts wild flowers back on the roadsides



**Paddy Woodworth**

Zealous authorities persist in giving roadsides a short back and sides. The Model County is bucking the trend

A friend who now lives in Los Angeles fondly remembers early summer in Ireland as the time "when the roadsides look as if they have been draped in lace".

She is thinking of the delicate white umbels of cow parsley that carpet the margins of country roads in May and June, and the hawthorns that washes the hedgerows above them in a creamy mist.

Sadly, on her return visits her memories often clash with the more common reality today: bare verges mowed like billiard tables, hedgerows not pruned but ripped, torn and battered by crude machine cutting.

This happens again and again, all over the country, and right in the middle of the season for wild flowers and nesting birds. And it happens despite increasing concern

between our fragmented woodlands and are home to many species in their own right, ranging from great trees to small flowers, from mammals to microfauna in the soil. They also provide "ecosystem services", such as buffering against flooding.

Farmers are constrained by law from cutting their hedgerows between March 1st and August 31st under the 1976 Wildlife Act, but zealous county councils and road authorities persist in giving our roadsides a permanent short back and sides.

Will Warham, whose farm at Jamestown in Co Wexford doubles as a nature reserve, had often wondered why this should be so. Some years ago a chance meeting with a local road engineer shed some light.

Health and safety is an obvious concern, and it makes sound sense to keep lines of vision clear on our drunkenly swerving back roads. But he also learned that the rubbish tossed out of cars accumulates unseen in dense summer growth, and becomes a nightmare to clean up come the autumn. This is a vicious circle: careless private pollution becomes a motive for further environmental degradation in the form of constant mowing and hedge-cutting by the public authorities.

He also learned a third and more surprising reason for the constant strimming: there was a perception that tourists arriving off the boat in Rosslare expected to find our hedgerows "neat and tidy".

He reckoned, along with his An Taisce colleague Brian Rickwood, that a lot of visitors might prefer to see the verges studded with colourful blossoms. Both men sit as advisers on strategic policy committees for

"We seem to have developed this 'tidy' approach to life without thinking it through," says Rickwood. "We treat public natural areas as though they were lawns or something. But we found that many people do remember the beauty of spring and summer wild flowers from their youth, and wonder where they've gone."

Warham and Rickwood found an ally on the council administration in Niamh Lennon, who was developing a biodiversity plan for the county, and has now produced an impressive online pamphlet on the value of hedgerows.

"The biodiversity plan gave our ideas a bit of muscle," says Rickwood. Their discussions developed into a quite radical but simple plan to brighten up at least a few stretches of road in the county.

**“Many remember the beauty of spring and summer wild flowers from their youth, and wonder where they've gone**

Lennon came up with the idea of focusing on a different biodiversity theme for every year; the theme for 2013 is hedgerows. The centrepiece is an aptly titled scheme, Life Lives on the Edge, which has just been launched. There will be no verge-strimming and hedgerow-hacking on at least four stretches of Wexford roadside for the spring and summer this year, and with luck in years to come.

The locations for the four pilot areas

■ Hedge school: Brian Rickwood, Jim Hurley and Will Warham keep an eye on uncult hedgerows at Oylgate, in Co Wexford. PHOTOGRAPH: ERIC LUKER

exists, on national roads in the areas of Taggart, Crossabeg, Scarawalsh and Barmtown. Their boundaries are marked by signposts with Life Lives on the Edge at either end of the revegetated stretches.

Although there was some initial resistance to the idea, Rickwood says he has been pleasantly surprised by the positive approach of the council and the National Roads Authority.

"Thinking on the environment has changed," agrees Lennon. "Ten years ago the outcome might have been very different. Environmental teaching in schools is trickling into people's homes, and they are taking issues like this much more seriously. The project is now universally welcomed by council members."

No direct seeding is involved in the project; its success depends on many plant species having remained in the seed bank and on their springing to life under the new regime. Fresh seeds from other areas will also be brought in by birds.

The scheme will be science-based, says Lennon, starting with a recent baseline survey that has established what plants are already present, and monitoring what new ones appear this year and in future.

Other counties are apparently taking notice of the scheme. It would be a welcome development if the roadsides of the Model County became a biodiversity model for the



# Replanting ½ Acre Roundabout M11



# Council Guidelines



- Protect what we have
- Alter the frequency of mowing
- Pollinator Planting
- Provide nesting habitat
- Reduce use of pesticides



# Council Guidelines



## Best Practice in the Use of Pesticides

In addition to the honeybee who lives in hives, we also have 20 different types of bumblebees and 77 different types of solitary bees in Ireland. Bumblebees and solitary bees live entirely in the wild. We need healthy populations of all these bees to carry out pollination if we want to have wildflowers in the landscape, be able to grow our own fruits and vegetables, or buy affordable, locally grown apples or strawberries in our shops. Bees and other pollinators can only survive in a landscape that provides them with food, shelter and safety throughout the year. Already, one third of our 98 bee species are threatened with extinction from Ireland.

Insecticides pose the greatest direct hazard to insect pollinators. However, herbicides are having a much greater negative impact on pollinators because they are so widely used.

Herbicides, Fungicides and Plant Growth Regulators typically have little or no toxicity to pollinators, but many of the plants we spray as weeds are vital sources of food for pollinators, especially in early spring. Pollinators need a range of flowers to feed on from spring through to autumn. The overuse of these chemicals is making it very difficult for them to find enough food to survive in our landscape.

**Pesticides should be used sparingly and only when absolutely necessary, such as in the treatment of invasive species like Japanese Knotweed**

### Do's

- Check the label and select pesticides that are less harmful to pollinators
- Always read, understand and follow the product label instructions fully
- Treat only the target area
- Spot treat rather than use blanket sprays



## Action 19

### Reduce use of Pesticides

- Use pesticides sparingly
- Only when necessary e.g: Japanese knotweed
- Treat only target areas

## Benefits

- Chemical free zone
- Cost saving on purchase of pesticides
- Better for the environment
- Set a good example

# Benefits of Actions to Councils



- Many actions are cost effective ways to manage council lands
- Benefits local food producers
- Contribute toward local tidy town competitions
- Educational benefits
- Good for the environment
- Positive message for Council
- Excellent platform to show case combined efforts



# Importance of signage

Over winter wildflower areas can look more untidy compared to short mown lawns so inform!





# And then even with the signs!







## Actions for Pollinators

# Online Mapping Actions





## Manage my sites

Site has been removed successfully

+ Add Site

Show 10 entries

Search:

Date	Name	Type	Area	Actions
13/01/2017	County Hall planters	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries

Previous 1 Next



# Manage my sites

+ Add Site

Show 10 entries

Search:

Date	Name	Type	Area	Actions
16/02/2017	Clough Roundabout	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   
16/02/2017	Gorey Avenue	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   
16/02/2017	Scarawalsh Life Lives on the Edge	Councils-Actions	0.01 km2	   
16/02/2017	Gorey Community & Tidy Town Groups Pollinator Workshop	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   
16/02/2017	Barntown Life Lives on the Edge	Councils-Actions	0.01 km2	   
06/02/2017	County hall wildflower meadow	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   
06/02/2017	County hall wildflower planters	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   
06/02/2017	County Hall roof planters	Councils-Actions	0 km2	   

Scheme

Manage my sites

--- Attribute name ---  [Show All](#)





# Future Pollinator Projects



Maybe a design award for innovatively designed pollinator pods on public land!  
Exempted Development Class 36 of Schedule 2 Part 1 of Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Picture: K-Abeilles Hotel for Bees built for the 2012 Mutersholtz Archi Festival in France

# Future Projects

- Use existing wildflower meadow to collect wildflower seed
- New bypasses under construction, hoping to get a mile of wildflowers sown on each





# Promote and Share

- Promote the Plan and Guidance within council and with community groups
- Encourage businesses to get involved
- Short on resources? Share your knowledge, resources or land with community groups to achieve actions.



COUNTY WEXFORD

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

2013-2018



Sectoral Guidelines

How-to-Guides





# Thank You

[niamh.lennon@wexfordcoco.ie](mailto:niamh.lennon@wexfordcoco.ie)

