

Councils

55% of Councils are now All-Ireland Pollinator Plan partners

Since the publication of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in 2015, local authorities across the island have offered support and adopted pollinator-friendly policies. In addition to training park staff on actions, reducing mowing, and switching to pollinator-friendly planting, staff in many councils have also come up with innovative and creative ways to help the Pollinator Plan gain momentum.

In early 2019, a framework to allow Councils to become formal partners to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan was launched. In becoming Partners, Local Authorities agree to support the ethos of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan; to consider the Plan in their policies, plans, and management decisions where possible; to carry out one pollinator-friendly action in the first year of signing up and plan to carry out at least three more within the following five years. Local authority partners also provide updates on pollinator actions they have planned, implemented or maintained at the end of each year. To date, 24 partner councils have become a network for sharing knowledge and ideas.

With current environmental challenges, including Climate Change and Habitat Loss, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan offers local authorities a toolkit to protect the free ecosystem services provided by pollinating insects, while at the same time helping all types of biodiversity.

To find out more, see <https://pollinators.ie/councils/council-partners/>

Many elements of the Plan have been delivered with the help of the Local Authority Heritage and Biodiversity Officer network (a Heritage Council programme) in the Republic, and by the Biodiversity Officers in Northern Ireland. We would like to thank all for their ongoing support and enthusiasm.



Spreading the message in new ways – Fingal County Council Environment Department

Fingal County Council Environment Department runs an ongoing biodiversity campaign, encouraging Tidy Towns, community and residents groups to use pollen-rich plants and to mow less. In 2019, they created a social media campaign, as well as funding the display of bus shelter posters throughout Fingal. Pollinator Plan materials were purchased and sent to Tidy Towns, community groups, residents' associations and 'Adopt-a-Patch' groups, as well as sharing with council staff. The Anti-Litter/Graffiti competition is run annually and awards €2,000 to each community and residents' group to plant areas for biodiversity. Fingal's libraries also offered Pollinator Plan materials to visitors. The council also sent leaflets and guides to all garden centres in Fingal and to some landscaping companies.

In 2020, Fingal funded the broadcast of a short animated film on pollinators, in Fingal cinemas. All materials – adverts, social media graphics and film – were shared with Local Authorities around the country for their use. The Sports Sustainability Competition was also a forum used to spread the pollinator message. The Greener Communities Competition 2019 highlighted the importance of using pollen-rich plants, reducing mowing and eliminating spraying. This is a consistent message in communication with the public.



- ✓ 22 community groups received funding for pollinator-friendly planting
- ✓ 40 faith communities received materials
- ✓ Fingal County Council distributed over 5,000 Pollinator Plan booklets and 50,000 leaflets to the public
- ✓ Bus shelter posters, cinema advertising, social media campaign

96% of people would like to see more public land (roadside parks, verges, etc.) managed to support pollinators

- TCD survey, 2020



Bremore Castle is just one of the parks managed by Fingal County Council that are encouraging wildflower meadows

Reducing pesticide use - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLR) introduced major changes to grass management across the county, moving towards a pollinator-friendly mowing regime. DLR are also at the forefront of trials in alternatives to chemical pesticides.

Over the last number of years, DLR's Parks and Environment staff have run trials to examine the use of alternative non-chemical weed controls, such as hot water and hot foam. The aim is to reduce the use of chemicals that can impact on nature, including humans and pollinators. There are already a number of housing estates where the use of herbicides is restricted, for example, Marlay Grange, Ludford and Kilcross.

DLR is responsible for weed control on almost 700km of roadway in the county. Up to now, as is the case for many other local authorities around the country, the primary method of weed control used on hard surfaces is spray application of a herbicidal product. In recent years, the method of application was changed to a targeted application method, rather than a spray method, which aimed to reduce the volume of herbicide used and deliver a more efficient and less environmentally hazardous approach. The product used, Nomix dual, also reduced health and safety risks to operatives by eliminating the risks associated with diluting the product before application.



The manual removal of weeds, using scuffle and brush techniques, has also been used by the Cleansing Section in many areas of the county, particularly in areas where residents have requested that herbicide not be used, or in small-scale areas requiring weed control.

The Parks Section are also in the process of reducing their use of herbicide on open spaces and are piloting alternative landscape maintenance regimes at a number of sites throughout the county. The intention is to support the reduction and ultimate elimination of use of herbicides in parks and open spaces, while supporting the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

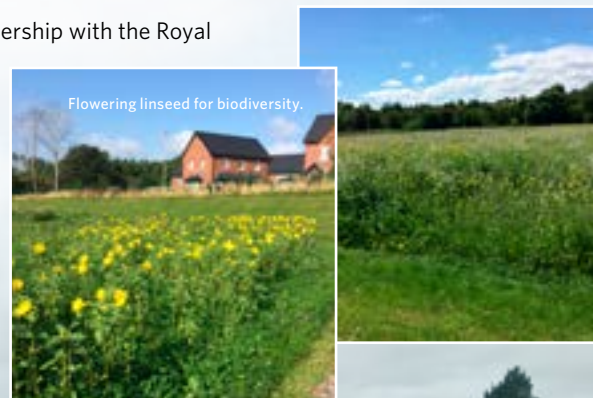
Wildflower amenity areas help people and pollinators - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

At Billy Neill MBE Country Park, the Council worked in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to create a mosaic of habitats to help birds and pollinators.

Wildflower meadows are managed as traditional meadow, with a long flowering season from spring through to autumn to provide a vital food source for our pollinating insects and a variety of native birds.

Ponds were created to form a link with the Enler River, which will improve water quality and benefit aquatic flora and fauna.

- Tracey Connolly, Biodiversity Officer, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council



Seed-rich plants were planted to help feed our threatened birds and increase the wildlife value of the parkland. In the summer, this giant bird table is the perfect habitat for insects, which nesting birds use to feed their chicks.

Bulbs for city bees - Dublin County Council

Dublin City Council's Parks Service is brightening up the city's northside with 10,000m² of spring bulbs, 5,000m² of wildflowers, and 130m² of bee and butterfly bulb mix, sown as part of a city-wide trial, including Artane, Donaghmede, Donnycarney, Finglas Village, Cabra, Ballymun and Santry.

This ongoing work also involved planting over 700,000 bulbs along the main avenue in St. Anne's Park to provide attractive seasonal colour and a source of food for pollinators early in the year. A large-scale wildflower planting scheme was implemented along Malahide Road, one of the main arteries into the city centre, beginning at Clare Hall and covering a distance of five kilometres. A similar scheme runs along the median of the Ballymun Road between Ballymun Village and Santry.

Some 30 white flowering cherry trees, *Prunus yeodoensis*, were planted recently in Artane, along Thorndale Walk. When mature, they will provide a beautiful cherry walk. Further tree planting took place at Ayrfield Estate and Streamville Park. Another 30 trees have been planted on the Stormanstown Green, Glasnevin.

Community groups in the north inner city were provided with thousands of crocus bulbs. Local parks staff also provide groups with advice to help biodiversity. Local schoolchildren in Ballymun created a number of pollinator-friendly areas, with new plants and trees, as part of 'Better Ballymun Day'.



Muscari © Jane Powers

Making a real difference by publishing town pollinator plans - Cork County Council

In 2020, Councillors in the East Cork Municipal District approved Ireland's first whole-town Pollinator Plan for Midleton. In accordance with the AIPP Council guidelines, it very clearly outlines exactly where actions will be taken across Midleton to identify and protect existing

Sample actions table from Midleton's Pollinator Plan:

B. Alter frequency of mowing to allow more native plants to flower

Action	Location
Create meadows (1 cut & lift per year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midleton Lodge Park Ballick Park, Youghal Road/N25 triangle
Roadside verges managed as meadows (1 cut & lift per year) *Introduce 'layered mowing' approach to other verges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R630 Ballincurra Road verges Midleton Northern Relief Road embankments
Short-flowering '6-week meadows' (cut every 6 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Relief Road verges Ballyannan Woodland Walk path edges R907 Youghal Road verges Rocky Road (south of N25) Kennedy Park, riparian area Youghal Road to N25 triangle

* Similar actions will be undertaken at other locations as the plan develops.

habitats, move to pollinator-friendly mowing regimes, plant pollinator-friendly beds, trees and bulbs, provide wild pollinator nesting habitat, and reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides.

It has already been an outstanding success, with some surprising results, including the appearance of hundreds of rare orchids along previously mown roadside verges. Following on from this success, Cork County Council have announced an initiative to develop plans for an additional six Cork towns.



The team removing cuttings at Midleton's Lodge Park Meadow

- ✓ Council published a Pollinator Plan for Midleton; and Pollinator Plans will be prepared for Carrigaline, Kinsale, Bantry, Macroom, Kanturk and Fermoy
- ✓ Created short & long-flowering meadows
- ✓ Raising awareness through training
- ✓ Staff actively involved in monitoring and recording biodiversity

Green Flag for Parks Pollinator Award - An Taisce

The Green Flag Award scheme, run by An Taisce, recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces around the world. Since 2017, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan partnered with An Taisce to run the Green

Flag Pollinator Awards for Parks, with prizes sponsored by Young's Nurseries, Limerick.

The Green Flag Pollinator Awards are helping to create change on the ground and increasing awareness of the importance of pollinators.

Green Flag Pollinator Award Winners:

2017 Awards	Winners
National Winner 2017	Victorian Walled Garden, Phoenix Park, Dublin, OPW
Country Park	Castletown House Demesne, OPW
Town Park	Lloyd Town Park, Tullamore, Offaly Co. Council.
2018 Awards	Winners
National Winner 2018	Castletown House Demesne, operated by the OPW
Town park:	Liffey Linear Park
Country Park:	Ardgillan Demesne
2019 Awards	Winners
National Winner 2019	Malahide Demesne and Talbot Botanical Gardens, Fingal County Council.
Town Park:	Tymon Park, South Dublin County Council
Walled Garden	Ashtown Victorian Walled Garden, OPW
Community Garden	Headford Community Orchard



The national Green Flag for Parks Pollinator award 2019 went to Malahide Demesne and Talbot Botanical Gardens, managed by Fingal County Council.

2020 Awards	Winners
National Winner 2020	Maynooth University Campus
Country Park	Castletown Demesne, OPW
Walled Garden	Victorian Walled Garden, OPW
Community Award	Headford Community Orchard
Highly Commended/ Special Awards 2020	Dublin City Council: Saint Anne's Park Fingal County Council: Millennium Park



Garden Bumblebee, *Bombus hortorum* © Steven Falk



Council adopt bee logo

In early 2019, Kilkenny County Council became the very first All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Council Partner, making a long-term commitment to support pollinators. Kilkenny's Heritage Office has done a huge amount of work to create awareness of the importance of pollinators, including distribution of materials, radio and newspaper campaigns, outreach at agricultural shows, and even a bee-themed St Patrick's Day Parade.

The Heritage Office also commissioned a logo of the garden bumblebee, which was adopted by Kilkenny County Council to demonstrate their commitment to supporting pollinators.

Herbicide-free parks - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is committed to improving and enhancing green spaces for local communities and native wildlife. Conscious of the need to reduce, replace, and where possible, completely eliminate the use of herbicides, Council has committed to significantly reducing herbicide usage over the next three years.

A number of sites, including Bashfordsland Wood Carrickfergus, Diamond Jubilee Wood Whitehead, and Ecos Nature Park Ballymena, are now officially herbicide-free. As well as this, herbicide usage will be significantly reduced in all green spaces across the Borough.

Council has also committed to creating urban wildflower meadows across the Borough. Areas traditionally planted with floral bedding displays have been replaced with sustainable pollinator-friendly flowers and trees. One great example is Marine Gardens in Carrickfergus, with rows and rows of lavender, swarming with bees in summer. This received positive feedback from the public.

Herbicide-free urban meadows and grasslands may seem a little untidy, but are a haven for bees, butterflies and other wildlife. They can also add a beautiful splash of colour across the Borough. Council encourages public support for this initiative and hopes residents will accept some areas looking a little more wild than usual.

Council has also committed to planting 58,000 trees over the next five years - that's one tree for each household. This is a partnership project with the Woodland Trust and all trees planted will be native.

Thanks to Council's efforts around improving our Borough for biodiversity, we have won the Translink



Ecos Nature Park, Ballymena, a herbicide-free park

Ulster in Bloom 'Special Award for Biodiversity' twice for Carrickfergus and Cullybackey, and won the RHS Britain in Bloom 'Gardening for Wildlife Award' for Ballymena.

Our own Mid and East Antrim in Bloom community competitions have a specific award category for 'Gardening for Wildlife' to encourage residents to consider pollinators and wildlife.

- Alison Diver, Growing Communities Officer, Parks and open spaces, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has a wide network of community volunteers, all working to make land more pollinator friendly. The Friends of Ecos Nature Park in Ballymena have created a large native wildflower bank. The volunteers learned how to manage the meadow by traditional means, such as scything and cut and lift each year. They have also set up a butterfly monitoring transect.



63% of people want more wildflowers in parks and 69% want fewer and less harmful chemicals used to kill weeds and insects.

- iReach Insights poll, 2018

Helping pollinators also reduces Carbon emissions - Derry City & Strabane District Council

Derry City & Strabane District Council developed the first Green Infrastructure Plan 2019-2032 in Northern Ireland. Biodiversity is one of the four key themes within this plan, with a key action to create a Pollinator Plan for council-owned green spaces, aligned to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020. In 2020, the Council invested in new equipment to change the grass management regime at key green spaces. This campaign aims to create species-rich grassland on 4% of our estate (28ha). This involves transforming around 50 football pitches' worth of amenity grass to create grasslands rich in native wildflowers. We installed signage at these key green spaces, highlighting the biodiversity benefits of leaving the grass long at these sites, to provide a source of food and habitat for the declining bee population, to help deliver the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. We cut and lift long grass in late August and September, when the wildflowers have completed their full cycle and set their seeds for next year. This helps to remove thick grass



and reduce the fertility to facilitate sustainable species-rich meadows in coming years.

This plan enhances ecological connectivity, contributes towards biodiversity net gain and increases the existing natural capital value of these sites by £6,500/annum. This change prevented 1.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions through reduced grass cutting.

To find out more, see www.derrystrabane.com/gi

- Dr Christine Doherty, Lead Officer for Green Infrastructure of Derry City & Strabane District Council

Remediated landfill site becomes a pollinator haven - Waterford City & County Council

Kilbarry Nature Park, in Waterford City, opened in 2012 and is situated on a remediated landfill site, which closed in 2005. Unlike other public parks that contain non-native planting, the aim at Kilbarry Nature Park is to offer space to enjoy our native species. The park can be used in a wide variety of ways as it includes walking routes, play equipment, integrated wetlands and wildlife areas. It contains large areas of meadow, managed for biodiversity, which are alive with pollinators and other insects from spring through to autumn.

